

Words That Start With B
Reader's Theatre Adaptation: BREAST

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Cast of Characters

CLARISSA – student, mother has just been diagnosed with breast cancer, easily embarrassed
 ROCCO – student, trouble-maker
 KEVIN – student, best friends with Rocco
 AMANDA – student, very nosy and a bit whiny
 MATTIE – student, a bit of a know-it all, very proper
 MR. CAMPBELL – their teacher

CLARISSA stands apart from the scene to deliver the following monologue directly to the audience.

CLARISSA: Of all the cancers in the world, my mother had to get breast cancer. I don't even like to think about the B word, let alone say it. Just the thought of saying it out loud makes my voice box shrivel up to the size of a raisin and my cheeks burn. As if the B word itself wasn't bad enough, now every time I hear it I will immediately think 'cancer' like in that game where someone says a word and you blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. I had to say it out loud three times for the guidance counsellor, who thinks that voicing your fears is the first step towards conquering them. By the time I returned to class we had moved on from geography to reading circles.

CLARISSA moves into the scene, taking her place among the group.

ROCCO: Where were you?

KEVIN: Yeah, where were you?

CLARISSA: It's none of your business.

AMANDA: See was in guidance, I saw her.

ROCCO: Guidance? Really? Are you failing?

CLARISSA: No I am not failing.

ROCCO: Are you parents getting divorced or something?

AMANDA: No, stupid, Clarissa doesn't have a dad.

CLARISSA: I do so have a dad, Amanda.

AMANDA: Well you don't live with him or anything.

CLARISSA: Excuse me, but if you don't mind I'd like to work on the book.

KEVIN: Come on, you can tell us!

MATTIE: Guys leave her alone, I'm sure she doesn't want to talk about it.

CLARISSA: Exactly. Thank you, Mattie.

MATTIE: Besides, you wouldn't want people bothering you if your mother had cancer.

The group gasps, reacting to this news.

AMANDA: Does she really, Clarissa?

MATTIE: Of course she does! My mom's a nurse and she talked to her at the hospital last week.
(*To Clarissa*) I'm very sorry, Clarissa.

ROCCO: Is it bad? Like is she going to die?

MATTIE: Rocco!

AMANDA: What kind of cancer is it? My grandpa died of lung cancer.

CLARISSA: It's none of your business.

AMANDA: Skin cancer?

CLARISSA: No!

KEVIN: Brain cancer?

CLARISSA: No!

ROCCO: Arm cancer?

MATTIE: There's no such thing as arm cancer, Rocco, how stupid can you be?

ROCCO: I'm not stupid, idiot!

KEVIN: If we guess it, will you say it?

CLARISSA: No, no, NO!

MATTIE: It's a lady cancer.

ROCCO and KEVIN giggle and make silly faces, ROCCO using his hands to make pretend breasts over his chest. AMANDA gasps.

MATTIE: That is rude and inappropriate!

AMANDA: I'm telling! Mr. Campbell!

MR. CAMPBELL: Is everything okay, group four?

CLARISSA: Shh, just forget it, okay?

MR. CAMPBELL: Amanda?

AMANDA: Mr. Campbell, Rocco is being rude and insensitive.

MR. CAMPBELL: Is that so, Rocco?

ROCCO: No!

MR. CAMPBELL: Will someone tell me what he was doing? Clarissa?

CLARISSA shakes her head.

MR. CAMPBELL: Does that mean you don't know or you won't tell?

CLARISSA shrugs.

MR. CAMPBELL: Use your words please, Clarissa. Expression is a wonderful thing.

CLARISSA: He was doing something rude with his hands.

MR CAMPBELL: What was he doing?

CLARISSA: He was making, I mean he pretended his hands were. . .

MR. CAMPBELL: Yes, Clarissa?

CLARISSA: He was pretending his hands were, you know...

MR. CAMPBELL: I'm afraid I don't. He was pretending his hands were. . .

CLARISSA: *(in a very soft voice)* Breasts.

End Scene.