

The Story of Esther—Readers Theatre

Adapted from "The Story of Esther" by Connie Cook

List of Characters

Narrators 1 & 2
King Ahasuerus

Esther
Mordecai

Haman
Messenger

Narrator 1: Today you are going to hear a story about a brave young lady named Esther who became queen of Persia and saved her people from being destroyed.

Narrator 2: Every March, all around the world, Jews celebrate Purim, a holiday to remind them of a time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from being killed. They fast, have a feast, and retell the story of how they were saved. As we tell this story today, it is customary to boo, hiss, or stamp your feet whenever you hear the name **Haman**. And then, cheer whenever you hear the names **Esther** or **Mordecai**.

Narrator 1: Long ago Jerusalem was invaded, the city was destroyed and many Jews were carried away as slaves into Persia. After many years, some of the Jews were allowed to go back, but some stayed in Persia.

Narrator 2: One of these Jews still in Persia was a young girl named Esther. (*cheers*) She was an orphan and was raised by her cousin, Mordecai (*cheers*), who loved her like his own daughter.

Narrator 1: The king of Persia was named King Ahasuerus. One day, he held a great feast. He wanted his wife, Vashti, to come to the feast, but she refused. This made the King angry—after all he *was* the king—so and he sent Vashti away and decided to find a new, more obedient, queen.

Royal Messenger: The King desires a new queen. All the young women of Persia are to be brought to the palace. The girl that pleases the King will become the new queen.

Narrator 2: Finally, all the girls are gathered at the palace and presented to the king. After looking over all the maidens the King makes his choice.

King: hummm... This is an easy choice. I choose this one for my queen. What is your name?

Esther: My name is Esther, Your Majesty.

Narrator 1: Later that evening Esther meets with her cousin, Mordecai.

Esther: Mordecai, did you hear? The king has chosen *me* to be his queen!

Mordecai: Yes, my child, you have been chosen. But don't forget that you are a Jew. Many people in this country hate the Jews. You must keep it a secret.

Esther: I will not tell anyone, cousin, not even the King

Narrator 1: Esther becomes the Queen and lives in the palace. She is a kind, good person. Sometime later, her cousin comes to warn her of something.

Mordecai: Esther, Listen carefully. I over-heard two of the Kings guards talking. They were plotting to kill the King. You must warn him!

Esther: Thank you and don't worry; I will tell the King what you have told me right away.

Narrator 2: Esther tells the King of the plot and this saves his life. But shortly after this, the King promotes a man named Haman to be above all the princes in his court.

Haman: My name is Haman. I am a great person in the palace, and therefore all the people must bow down to me.

Narrator 2: Everyone bows down before Haman—except for Mordecai.

Mordecai: I will not bow down before any person or thing, other than my God.

Haman (angry): You will regret this, Mordecai.

Mordecai: I know how powerful you are, Haman, and I know that you hate me because I am Jewish. But I will not bow down to you.

Narrator 1: Haman is so angry that Mordecai won't bow down to him that he decides to punish all the Jews. He thinks of a plan and goes to the king.

Haman: My King, I have found that some people in our kingdom that do not keep all your laws. If it pleases you, I will write a decree and have them all destroyed. If you will let me do this, I will pay a large amount of silver into the royal treasury.

King: Everyone must obey the laws, do what you think is best.

Narrator 2: Haman writes a decree that on a certain day all the Jews will be put to death. When Mordecai learns what has happened, he goes to Esther.

Mordecai: Esther, only you can help us. Haman is going to kill all of our people. You must go to the king and ask him to save us..

Esther: I want to help. But I do not dare present myself to the king without being called for. I am only allowed to see the king if he asks for me, and I haven't been called to see the king for over 30 days! If I go to see him without his asking for me, he could have me put to death.

Mordecai: But you must! Maybe this is why you were chosen as queen, to save our people. You are our only hope.

Esther: You are right, Mordecai. I will do as you ask; if I perish, I perish. But please have everyone fast and pray for me, and then after three days I will go to the king.

Mordecai: Yes, Esther. All the Jews will fast and pray for you.

Narrator 1: After 3 days of fasting and prayer, Esther puts on her finest clothes and enters the Kings court. If he is pleased to see her, he will raise his golden scepter; otherwise, she will be put to death for approaching him without permission. She stands in front of King Ahasuerus and waits. She hardly dares to breathe when the King looks up. He sees her and holds out his scepter to her, allowing her to come to him.

King: Esther, I am glad to see you. What is it you want? Whatever it is, I will give it to you—even if it is half of the kingdom.

Esther: Let the King and Haman come to a banquet that I have prepared. Then I will tell you what I desire.

Narrator 2: Haman was thrilled to be invited to eat with Esther and the King.

Haman: Servants! I have been invited to eat with the Queen and King. This is an honor and it shows how much the king values me. How dare that fellow Mordecai refuse to bow down to me. I will not have it! He must show me respect. I order you to build a gallows to hang Mordecai from.

Narrator 1: The servants get busy building the gallows, and the king goes to bed for the night, but he cannot sleep. He remembers that Mordecai saved his life, but cannot remember rewarding him for it.

King: Royal Messenger! I recall that a man named Mordecai saved my life. Was he ever rewarded for this?

Royal Messenger: No, Sire, nothing was done for him.

Narrator 2: At that moment, Haman enters the court hoping to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the newly built gallows.

King: Haman, what should be done for a man that has been of great service to the king?

Narrator 1: Haman thinks the King is talking about him.

Haman: I think that this person should be dressed in royal clothing, and a crown placed upon his head. The king's horse should carry him throughout the city, with someone shouting to the people how much the king wants to honor him.

King: Great idea! Quickly, Haman, go and get the Jew Mordecai, and do all this for him.

Narrator 2: Haman was shocked. There was nothing to do but obey. Instead of hanging Mordecai, Haman had to lead him around on the King's horse dressed in royal clothing, and to shout out wonderful things about him. After escorting Mordecai around, Haman was very upset, but he had to hurry and dress for the banquet with the king and queen.

King: Esther, this food is wonderful, but you still haven't told me what I can do for you.

Esther: If it pleases the King, please spare my life and that of my people, for I am a Jew and we are about to be slain.

King: I don't understand. Who wants to kill you or the Jews?

Esther: Your Majesty, Haman is the one who wants us killed. The decree he had you sign will allow me and all my people to be killed. I know that a king's decree cannot be changed, but would you please allow the Jews to defend themselves on day they are to be slaughtered?

King: What!? Haman! You tricked your King! Guards, take him away. Mordecai! I hereby allow the Jews to arm themselves and fight against any who try to harm them. But that won't be necessary; I *will* change the decree—after all I am the king.

Narrator 1: The king was very angry at Haman and had him hung on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai. The king also issued a new decree forbidding anyone to harm the Jews.

Narrator 2: The Jewish people rejoiced at being saved and every year since, Jewish people around the world have gathered together to re-tell the story of the brave young queen who saved her people from destruction