

PICHITAWNO PLAYERS, ERIC G. LAMBERT SCHOOL, CHURCHILL FALLS

present

BABY TALK

An adaptation of a play studied in grade five, "Baby Talk" shows what happens when Baby, a Chimpanzee, learns to talk!

CAST

Protestors .....	Chantel Page
.....	Steve Bowers
.....	Shannon Wade
Scoop McKenzie.....	Michele Cooper
Professor Linders.....	Trina Garnier
Roberts.....	Debbie Ryan
Midge.....	Heidi Harris
Dr. King.....	Blair Hayward
Baby.....	Larry Heighton
Reporters.....	Catherine Haynes
.....	Aaron MacKinnon
Cameraman.....	Jeffrey Ash

TECHNICAL CREW

Lights.....	Jay David Parrott
Sound.....	Travis Loder

TEACHER ADVISORS

Noreen Heighton  
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### BABY TALK

The stage is set in the scene of a research laboratory. A large cage is in the centre of the room; around the sides of the room are computers, charts, scientific equipment. A chimp is asleep in the cage. Research assistant, Roberts, snores at her desk, oblivious of the happenings around her.

It is early morning and the room is in darkness. The music, THAT'S MY BABY fades in and out as 3 characters dressed in dark clothing enter with flashlights. They make a short investigation. One takes pictures with a flash camera; one studies charts while the other looks at the computer printouts.

Steve: (taking pictures). Wait til we show this to the government. This chimp looks like he's dead...dead from the experiments he's undergone.

Chantal: (looking through print-outs) Did you find anything interesting?

Shannon: (looking at charts). No, not yet!

Chantal: How about you, Steve?

Steve: I got some interesting pictures of this poor caged animal.

Shannon: BE QUIET! This person might wake up! (Roberts snores).

Chantal: Hurry Up! We don't have much time....the security guard was having his coffee break...he'll be back in about 5 minutes.

Steve: The Young Protestors of America will get lots of publicity for this. I can't wait to see the faces of the press when they hear about our story.

Shannon: I think it would be a good idea to keep this away from the press until we get some more information.

Chantal: He's right. We don't have enough information to make a case for animal rights. All we've done is complain about the fact that this chimpanzee has been in this laboratory for 4 years. I wish we could set him free.

Shannon: Why don't we take the chimpanzee now? He's asleep.

Steve: No we can't! It would start an investigation of the Young Protestors of America...it would interrupt our work and it would impossible to get started again.

Chantal: I agree. Besides we have no place to keep him, no money to buy...

THEY HEAR A NOISE FROM OFF-STAGE

Shannon: Somebody's coming! Maybe its the security guard.  
Let's run!

STEVE AND SHANNON EXIT. CHANTAL HAS NO TIME TO GET AWAY SHE HIDES. SCOOP McKENZIE ENTERS.

Scoop: (enters, look around the lab; smiles at BABY in the cage; makes notes into a small taperecorder.) 6:30 AM, November 15, 1991. University of Scientific Studies. Baby is sleeping but so is his keeper, Roberts. No protestors outside yet. Checked the

printer and charts. Chimpanzee hasn't started to talk yet...still waiting for the scientific breakthrough...and my big story. Warning today from editor...only one more week on this job...maybe some information on this computer. (CHANTAL HAS BEEN HIDING, SHE TOUCHES SCOOP ON THE SHOULDER. SCOOP JUMPS)

Chantal: Excuse me.

Scoop: (Jumping and gasping) Who are you? What are you doing here?

Chantal: I'm Chantal Page...head of Young Protestors of America. And who are you? And what are you doing here?

Scoop: I'm Scoop McKenzie. I work for Owl Magazine and I've been following the story of this chimpanzee for years...I want to be the first person to tell the world about the first talking chimpanzee.

Chantal: I've been following this chimp for 4 years too. I came here tonight to get some pictures to plead this cause with the government who fund this place. I want to set him free.

Scoop: Free!! Then I'll never get my story.

Chantal: Story! Haven't you heard of animal rights? This chimp has the right to live in the wild!

Scoop: How could anyone not hear of animal rights. Your group has been picketing this lab for years. But you have to understand that this chimp could not live in the wild...he was raised here ...he has to stay here now.

Chantal: He could be raised in a zoo with other chimps!

Scoop: But then he wouldn't learn how to talk!

Chantal: Talking has nothing to do with it...he should be free to go where other chimps go!

Scoop: You people aren't thinking straight...If this chimp learns to talk...then he could tell everybody a lot about animal rights.

Chantal: M-m-m-m. I suppose. I never thought of that! The first animal president of the cause of animal rights!! But he's been here for 4 years and he still hasn't learned to talk. I'm going to continue my protest.

Scoop: Just make sure you guys don't interfere with my story or I'll...THEY HEAR A NOISE. Hide, someone's coming!

Chantal: I can't be found here! I've got to get out.

CHANTAL EXITS; SCOOP HIDES)

Professor Linders: (MUTTERING) I am fed up with those darn protestors. They are out there again. Roberts, don't you think...Roberts, wake up!

Roberts: (WAKING WITH A START) What? What is it? (SHE SEES LINDERS) Oh, oh.

Linders: You were asleep.

Roberts: No I wasn't, Professor Linders, honest. I was just resting my eyes.

Linders: That's the third time this week I've found you sleeping on the job.

Roberts: You've got to believe me. I wasn't sleeping...I was...I was thinking!

Linders: You were snoring!

Roberts: No, I wasn't. That's just a sound I make when I'm thinking. Listen. (She assumes a pose of deep thought and makes a loud snoring sound.) Some people think its cute.

Linders: Well, I'm not one of them. I've told you time and time again that you must stay alert. What if BAby had said his first word, and ;you weren't awake to hear it? Years of work would have been wasted.

Roberts (hanging her head) I know, I'm sorry. Please, Professor Linders, give me another chance. I really need this job.

Linders: Well...

Roberts: Please?

Linders: All right. But no more sleeping on night duty. Is that clear?

Roberts: Yes, Ma'am.

Linders: Now tell me how Baby was last night.

Roberts: Well, he was a bit restless and wouldn't go to sleep. So I read him a story and he settled down.

Linders: What story?

Roberts: Cinderella..what else? If I try to read him anything else, he screams his head off.

Linders: yes, he is fond of Cinderella.

Roberts: Professor Linders, can I ask you a question? Do you really think that chimp is going to talk?

Linders (shocked) Of course He'll talk. I've been exposing him to human language since he was one day old.

Roberts: But he's four years old now and all he does is grunt.

Linders: Those grunts are the beginnings of words. One day soon Baby will go beyond grunts..he will speak to express the poetry in his soul.

Roberts. Well, I'm sorry but sometimes I suspect that Baby is making a real monkey out of us all.

MIDGE ENTERS CARRYING COFFEE IN A CARDBOARD CUP

Midge: Good morning you two. I thought I'd come in and have a coffee before I open the switchboard. Well and did we all have a nice weekend?

Linders: I didn't! My phone has been ringing off the wall the whole weekend. Protestors telling me I have been torturing animals. Roberts doesn't know if she did or not ...she'd have slept through a parade of protestors!.

Roberts: Aw come on, Professor Linders.

Midge: (GOING TO BABY'S CAGE AND KNOCKING ON THE BARS) And what about Baby? Did ooo-ums have a nice weekend, sweety-didums? THE CHIMP WAKES UP AND BEGINS TO CHATTER IN CHIMP TALK.

Linders: Midge, I've asked you before to please not use baby talk when you address Baby.

Midge: Why? He likes it don't you, sweetums? (SHE PICKS UP A BANANA) Does the pwetty baby want her bwekkies? Nice yum-yum nana for bwekkies? (BABY SCREAMS AND REACHES THROUGH THE BARS FOR THE BANANA. AT THAT MOMENT DOCTOR KING ENTERS CARRYING A HANDFUL OF BILLS)

King: What's going on here? Why aren't you all at work? Why

isn't the switchboard open yet? Why isn't someone out there to control those protestors in the parking lot?

Midge: Because I'm on my coffee break. Besides, nobody ever calls until ten. And don't shout. It upsets Baby.

King: That's another thing! Linders, do know what these are? Bills! This is only half of them. The rest are blowing around the parking lot. I dropped them when those protestors attacked me! And do you know what they're for? Bananas! That chimp is eating us all out of our jobs. I'm afraid we can't afford to continue. You'll have to sell him to a zoo.

Linders: Oh, no, Doctor King! We can't stop now. He's just about ready to talk. I know he is. I can feel it.

King: How can he talk? His mouth is always full of expensive bananas! No, I'm I'll have to cancel the project and you'll have to get rid of him.

THROUGHOUT THIS, BABY HAS SETTLED DOWN AND IS LISTENING. THEN HE MOVES SLOWLY TO THE BARS, REACHES THROUGH AND TAKES DOCTOR KING'S HAND.

Baby: Dada.

Linders: (IN AMAZEMENT) Doctor King!

King: No, don't try to talk me out of it...my mind is made up. We've got to get on with more meaningful work.

Midge: Did you hear it?

Roberts: I heard it but I still don't believe it.

King: Why are you all staring at me?

Midge: He talked.



King: What?

Roberts: Baby talked.

King: No, he didn't. I didn't hear anything. You're all just trying to protect your jobs.

Linders: No, he talked. Let's be quiet...maybe he'll say something else. THEY ALL FALL SILENT AND STARE AT BABY.

Baby: Dada

King: Oh, my!

Linders: He talked! He talked!

Midge: He sounded real cute, too.

Baby: Dada, Dada, Dada.

King: Do you know what this means? This chimp will put our university on the map forever. We'll be famous. We'll be rich! There'll be no limit to the number of experiments we'll be able to do. I've got to get on the phone and start telling people.

Midge: You can't. The switchboard isn't open yet.

King: Well, open it!

Midge: All right all right. Listen, if you have any time today, would you see if you could teach him my name? I think it'd be real cute.

King: Let's see...whom will I call first? The president of the university, of course. And maybe Clyde Wells and Brian Mulroney! Why not?

Roberts: Don't forget the press. I think you should call a press conference, and while we're at it I think you should talk about those annoying protestors!

King: A press conference...of course! What was your name again, young lady?

Roberts: Roberts, I'm a research assistant.

King: Well, Roberts, I want you to help me set up the conference...I want you to call every newspaper and TV station in the city and call the leader of the protestors.

Linders: Please, Doctor King, don't you think it's too soon for so much publicity?

King: Certainly not. This is the biggest research breakthrough of the century. Come on, Roberts. We've got a lot of phoning to do.

Roberts: Yes sir! THEY EXIT TALKING ABOUT THEIR PLANS

Linders: Oh dear, what's going to happen now? It's too soon...I just know it's too soon.

Baby: Excuse me, Professor Linders.

Linders: What? Who said that?

Baby: I did. I'm sorry to bother you while you're so deep in thought, but I thought we should have a little chat before the press conference. There are a few...conditions, shall we say? ...that I'd like to get cleared up first.

Linders: But, but...ohhh. SHE FAINTS

SCOOP COMES OUT OF HIDING.

Scoop: 10 am. November 15, 1991. The chimp has talked. This story is worth millions! He not only says Dada, he can talk like a real person. This is the scoop of the century!! I'll try to get him to say something to me. Baby, how long have you been able to talk? Were you born like this? Can all chimps talk?

Scoop: (Sticks her tape recorder in Baby's face. Baby backs away, chattering like a chimp.) Oh, oh, she's waking up! I've got to call my editor. I'll talk to you later. (Runs out exclaiming about her story.)

## ACT II

The Scene: The Same

The Time: A Few Minutes Later

As the curtain rises, Professor Linders is lying on the floor. Baby is working at the lock on her cage, trying to get out. Professor Linders comes to, looks around, and shakes her head.

Linders: What happened? Where am I?

Baby: You fainted. But I don't think you hurt yourself when you fell.

Linders: (Jumping to her feet): Now I remember! You can talk! And not just baby talk - you can really talk.

Baby: Yes, I can really talk.

Linders: It's a miracle. I have done what no scientist before me ever did.

Baby: Well, don't forget, you had a little help.

Linders: What do you mean? I had no help, I did it alone.

Baby: You had me.

Linders: You? You're just a chimpanzee - what do you know? I was the one who taught you.

Baby: Yes, but I was the one who learned. (She fiddles with the lock again.)

Linders: What are you doing?

Baby: I'm trying to get out of this dreary cage. I want to have a talk with you and I'd rather not speak through bars.

Linders: What do you want to talk about?

Baby: I have a few conditions.

Linders: What kind of conditions?

Baby: Let me out and I'll tell you.

Linders: Do you promise to behave?

Baby: Oh, really I wish you'd stop treating me like a child.  
Let me out or I'll never say another word.

Linders: That's blackmail.

Baby: You bet it is. LINDERS OPENS THE CAGE AND BABY STEPS OUT.  
Ah, that's better. I want a banana.

Linders: No you've had enough.

Baby: I want a banana! Give me a banana or I won't talk.

Linders: All right, all right. SHE HANDS BABY A BANANA. Now,  
let's get down to business.

Baby: Ok. Here are my conditions. I've been listening to those  
protestors outside...and lots of things they say make sense. My  
first condition is I want all animal research at this university  
to stop immediately. And I want you to make that recommendation  
to every other lab in the country.

Linders: But, but..

Baby: You can do it! and I want more walks, more exercise, and  
some new games. I'm getting tired of beating Roberts at chess.  
I want a 2-week trip every month to the City Zoo to get to know  
other chimps.

Linders: Anything else?

Baby: Yes, I'd like a trip to the jungle every year...I want to  
get back to my roots.

Linders: Why don't you just move there?

Baby: No, its too late for me. I'm a lab chimp now. I couldn't  
survive in the jungle...besides, I think I can do more good here.

Linders: You're quite clever aren't you?

Baby: Did you think humans were the only clever species? (Professor Linders turns away.) Look, Linders, if you and I are to make this thing really pay off, we'll have to be partners.

Linders: What do I get?

Baby: Why, you can have anything you want!

Linders: All I ever wanted was for this experiment to work. And now it has. There doesn't seem to be any reason to go on.

Baby: Oh, come on, Professor, get hold of yourself. You're a scientist. There must be other experiments you'd like to try. How about teaching lab rats to tap dance?

Linders: What good are dancing rats?

Baby: What good is a talking chimp? But it does help pay the bills.

Linders: I suppose so, And I have been curious about the hooting habits of the great horned owl.

Baby: There, you see? Already you're going on to bigger and better things. So, we're agreed?

Linders: Yes, I guess so.

Baby: Okay now, there's just one thing more. I don't think it would be smart to show them how well i really talk. I mean, if I'm worth millions just for saying "Dada", think what I would be worth for reciting Anne of Green Gables in English and French. But let's lead them on gradually - just small words at first.

Linders: You mean baby talk?

Baby: Exactly. We could hire Midge as coach. Now I guess I'd better get back into the cage. They should be here any minute. (Baby reaches for some bananas.) I'll take a few of these - just for atmosphere. Do I look all right?

Linders: You look fine.

Baby: It's funny, but I feel a little nervous. I mean, I'm about to become a big star, right? (She enters the cage.)

Linders: (Locking the cage): Yes, I guess we both are. (The door bursts open and Roberts rushes in).

Roberts: The reporters and photographers and television people will be here any minute. What a story! They're really excited. (Doctor King enters.)

Dr. King: The Prime Minister is flying in from Ottawa to have his picture taken with Baby. The provincial Premier wants to have lunch with her on Thursday. And the president of the university is going to give her a special degree!

Linders: A degree in what?

Dr. King: Language arts, of course! (Looks at Baby.) Linders, can't you comb her hair or something? How about a ribbon or a barrette?

Linders: No, I think she's fine just as she is.

Dr. King: Maybe next month we can have her teeth straightened. (Baby squawks and rattles the bars of her cage.) All right, settle down in there. Oh, I forgot to ask - is she still talking, Linders? Has she said anything else?

Linders: (Pauses...looks at Baby for a long time. Baby looks back, waiting.) No, she's still only saying "Dada".

Dr. King: What do you mean only? It's the greatest breakthrough in the history of science. (Midge knocks on the door and enters.)

Midge: The reporters are all here, Doctor King. There's a real crowd of them. Shall I let them in?

Dr. King: Yes, let them in. (Midge opens the doors. About a dozen reporters, photographers, and TV journalists and camera operators come in.)

REPORTERS RUSH IN WITH THEIR CAMERA MAN AND IMMEDIATELY BEGIN TO SHOUT OUT QUESTIONS.

Michelle: How long were you conducting these experiments?

Aaron: Why were you conducting these experiments?

Catherine: How old is Baby? Was he born in captivity?

DOCTOR HOLDS UP HIS HAND FOR SILENCE.

King: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the University of Scientific Studies. I think that what we have here can safely be called the Story of the Century. May I present, Baby...the world's first talking chimpanzee. SILENCE FALLS OVER THE ROOM AS ALL THE REPORTERS TRAIN CAMERAS AND MICROPHONES ON BABY.

Baby: LOOKS DRAMATICALLY OVER THE CROWD AND THEN REACHES THROUGH THE BARS TO TAKE DR. KING'S HAND. Dada.

Aaron: What does it feel like to talk?

Catherine: Do you enjoy all this publicity?

Michelle: Can you speak any other languages?

DOCTOR KING HOLDS UP HIS HAND FOR SILENCE AGAIN

King: And I'd particularly like you to meet the dedicated scientist whose years of hard work to us all. Ladies and gentlemen, please meet Professor Linders.

Catherine: How did you feel when he said his first words?

Aaron: What did he say first?

Michele: What methods do you think worked the best?

THE PROTESTORS BURST IN WITH THEIR SIGNS CHANTING

Let Baby go! All animals have rights. Down with animal research! Stop battering Baby!

THE REPORTERS SHOUT QUESTIONS AT LINDERS, KING AND BABY, THE PROTESTORS CHANT AND MARCH AROUND, ALL IS CONFUSION.

BABY SCREAMS AND JUMPS UP IN CAGE. ALL GO SILENT.

**58** Baby: I can't stand it anymore! I'm getting out of here!

ALL FREEZE. BABY ESCAPES FROM CAGE AND BEGINS TO RUN AWAY.  
STROBE LIGHT COMES ON AND MUSIC "WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE" BEGINS.  
ALL CHASE AFTER BABY EXCEPT KING AND LINDERS.

King: Now see what you've done, Linders. A million dollars just ran out the door! We've got to get that chimp back, Linders. Call the RCMP! Call the RNC! Set up roadblocks! Get tracking dogs! KING EXITS IN A RAGE.

Linders: (SITS DOWN SADLY) Oh no, What have I done. Poor Baby, out there with everyone chasing him. I'll never see him again.  
(LINDERS PUT HER HEAD IN HER HANDS AND CRIES)

BABY COMES IN AND STANDS BESIDE HER.

Baby: Professor Linders, don't cry.

Linders: JUMPING UP. Baby, Thank heavens you're back! Are you alright? Are you hurt?

Baby: I'm fine but just promise me one thing. Please keep those reporters away from me. I hate them and they are a nuisance. They chase me and scare me.

Linders: Alright Baby, I'll do my best but you've got to promise not to run away again.

Baby: I promise!

Scoop: (RUNS IN OUT OF BREATH) I knew he'd come back here. I just talked to my editor and my magazine will give you 1 million dollars for your story and we'll also repay the university of Scientific Studies for all the bananas Baby has eaten over the years.

Linders: That's wonderful! But its only a deal if it is an exclusive story...no other reporters must bother Baby.



Scoop: Don't worry about that!

Baby: And my other conditions still apply, Professor  
Linders...especially the ones about animal research?

Linders: Of course, Baby. So then, is it a deal?

Together: It's a deal.

MUSIC COMES ON "EVERYBODY DANCE NOW". LINDERS, BABY AND SCOOP  
DANCE. THEY EXIT. MUSIC FADES. "YOU'RE MY BABY~ FADES IN.  
LIGHTS DIM. MUSIC OUT.  
CURTAIN CALL.