

Visual Arts: Design “Tool Kit”

DESIGN “TOOL KIT”: a set of visual elements, based on emotions, which can be incorporated into design work

LINE (connects two points)

COLOR

SHAPE (a line that connects to itself; has an inside and an outside)

WHAT: In theatrical design, sometimes a tree is not just a tree! We can create design elements that reflect different emotions, and use them to visually express the moods of the story.

HOW: 1. Have your students consider the emotion of **ANGER**. Through experimentation (**have students show, not tell**), create a design “Tool Kit” for **ANGER** by using the *Design Tool Kit Worksheet*. Record this information on chart paper, and keep all papers for documentation.



TIP! The first time you try this exercise with your class, we strongly recommend using the emotion of **ANGER**, as it is one of the easiest emotions to grasp for this type of work.



2. Using the information from your Design Tool Kit Worksheet, draw/color/paint/ create a common object - for example, a tree - that reflects this particular emotion.

- Use only the main color and the accent color(s) as your palette.
- Find ways to use your line and shape for parts of the representation.



3. Using your **ANGER** Tool Kit design elements, create different objects (no people or animals!).

Sample **ANGRY** objects

angry shoe
angry car
angry table



4. Create Design Tool Kits for different emotions, and use them to create new objects.

Sample objects w/different emotions

joyful tree
shy shoe
lonely table

5. The job of theatrical design is to communicate the story's emotions to the audience. Reflect on how each object you have created could belong in a different story.

Because the Design Tool Kit is fairly abstract, you may wish to modify it to a level appropriate to your students. Please note possible modifications below.

Levels

CHALLENGING: Color(s), line, and shape

MODERATE: Color(s), line

EASIEST: Color(s) only

Visual Arts: Design Tool Kit Worksheet

1. Color

- If __(*emotion*)__ had a color, what color would it be and why? (Be specific with the shade.)
- Are there any other colors (**accent colors**) that help the main color express __(*emotion*)__ (maximum of 2)? Why?

2. Line

- A **line** connects two points.
- If __(*emotion*)__ had a line, what would it look like and why? (Draw)

3. Shape

- A **shape** is a line that connects to itself. It has an inside and an outside.
- If __(*emotion*)__ had a shape, what would it look like and why? (Draw)

NOTE: The **line** and the **shape** may be similar or dissimilar.

Visual Arts: Step 2

Set Design Sketches

SET: The scenery and furniture on the stage in a show

WHAT: We can create set design sketches by using a Design Tool Kit based on the mood of our story.

HOW: 1. Review your setting and your story. Brainstorm words that could describe the mood of your story. Choose the word you feel strongest about.

2. Create a Design Tool Kit for the **MOOD** of your story (see *Visual Arts: Step 1*).



DESIGN TOOL KIT (based on the MOOD)

1. COLOR(S) (1 main, 1-2 accent)
2. LINE
3. SHAPE

Sample set pieces:

Shrub	Park bench
Couch	Desk
Table	Trash can

3. Consider what you will need in order to show your setting, including what could be on the **backdrop** (large picture toward the back of the stage) and **set pieces** (any other items on stage).

NOTE: Every show should have a backdrop.

4. CREATE SET DESIGN SKETCHES!



Using your Design Tool Kit (based on the story's mood), create colored drawings and/or three-dimensional models of your set. This can be done collaboratively as a class, or each student can make his or her own.

TIP!

Remember: the first idea is not always the one you want to use! Create different ideas and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. Use the ones you like, and/or combine appealing aspects of different designs.

PITFALL

Do not start building your actual sets until the script is completed!

Right now, we are just creating sketches, or ideas. Remember that as the script develops, there may be changes to the setting.

Visual Arts: Step 3

Prop Design

PROP: an object that the actors need to use in the story

WHAT: We will design props that are appropriate to our story and setting.

HOW: In prop design, the script is your guide.

1. Read through the script and list all objects mentioned (or implied).
2. For each prop, describe it as specifically as possible. Make sure it fits into your setting's place, time, and mood. Consider its color and style.
3. After planning your props, draw pictures, in color, of the objects.

PITFALL

It can be tempting to add unnecessary items to your prop list. Please avoid this! Only list what the story truly requires.

Too many props will create confusion!

Costume Design

COSTUME: what the actors wear on stage, appropriate to their characters.

WHAT: We will design costumes that are appropriate to our story, setting, and characters.

HOW: In costume design, the script is your guide.

*At this point, characters have still not been assigned genders.
Create costume design options for both genders.*

1. Using the script as a guide, answer the questions listed on the *Costume Design Worksheet*.
2. Choose a gender for your first design. Using the information from your *Costume Design Worksheet*, plan your costume.
Draw a picture, in color, of the character wearing the costume. Don't forget the shoes and possible accessories (glasses, earrings?).
3. Plan a costume for the same character using the opposite gender. Draw your design in color.



TIP! Under most circumstances, each character should wear only one costume in the show. Costume changes (particularly in a show this short) add unnecessary levels of logistical complication...

Costume Design Worksheet

CHARACTER _____

SETTING - where _____

SETTING - when _____

1. How old is the character? _____

2. What are they doing in the story (are they a student, or a tourist, for example)?

3. Where would they get their clothes? _____

4. Are they trying for a specific look or style? If so, what style? _____

5. Does the script say anything specific about the character's costume? _____

6. What color(s) would this character like to wear (up to three)? _____

7. Is there an item of clothing that would be really important to this character
(may be different for a male or a female character)?

Visual Arts: Step 5

Set Building

BACKDROP: a large picture at the back of the stage

*Before constructing sets, be sure to read the FINAL draft of the script.
Make sure the final set design accurately reflects the setting.*

WHAT: We will take our design ideas and create full-sized sets from them.

BACKDROP CONSTRUCTION OPTIONS:

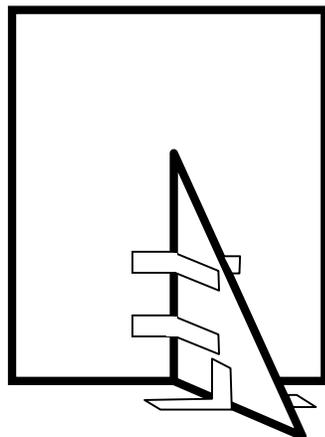
1. Large roll paper attached to the back wall of the stage
2. Large, movable, flat panels made from wood, or room dividers, that can be painted or covered with roll paper
3. Foam core
 - a) It works best to do the design and painting on paper, then to glue the paper to the foam core.

PITFALL

If you paint directly onto the foam core, it will bend. Also, it is harder to correct mistakes on the foam core than on paper. If you do decide to paint directly on the foam core (which we don't recommend), paint the other side as well, as this will minimize bending.

- b) You can cut out foam core triangles to use as jacks (like on the back of a picture frame). Attach the triangle to the back of the foam core, then tape it to the floor.

This method also works if you wish to make set pieces out of foam core.



ACTUALIZING YOUR DESIGN

1. Get your backdrop dimensions

Once you have planned your backdrop construction method, figure out the dimensions of your backdrop. Is it 8 feet high by 16 feet wide? Is it two 6 foot by 8 foot panels?

2. Complete your backdrop design

- a) Create a piece of paper with the same proportions as your backdrop, but **scaled down**.

For example, a 6 foot by 8 foot panel could be drawn on a 6 inch by 8 inch (or 9 inch by 12 inch, or 12 inch by 16 inch) paper.

- b) Using your set design sketches from *Visual Arts: Step 2*, draw and color your final backdrop design on the proportional paper.

3. Scale up your backdrop design

We want to take our scaled-down backdrop design and reproduce it, full-sized, on our actual backdrop materials.

- a) Project your scaled-down design onto the actual backdrop (full-sized). (See projection options below.)
- b) Trace your design onto the backdrop.
- c) Paint the design on the backdrop.

PROJECTION METHODS

1. Opaque Projector

If your school has one, this is the easiest method - just project the scaled-down set design directly onto the actual backdrop.

2. Overhead Projector

To use this method, you first need to replicate your set design on a transparency sheet. You can do so by:

- tracing your design onto a transparency sheet, using Sharpies
- photocopying your design onto a transparency sheet
- putting your design into the computer by digitally photographing or scanning it, then printing it onto a transparency sheet

3. LCD Projector Connected to Computer

Digitally photograph or scan your scaled-down set design, then project it, using a LCD projector, directly from the computer onto the actual backdrop.

Visual Arts: Step 6

Prop and Costume Building

WHAT: We will take our design ideas and create costumes and props from them.

PROPS

1. **Review** your prop designs from *Visual Arts: Step 3*. These designs can now be **finalized**. Review the final draft of the script to make sure you have all the details.

2. **Build and/or assemble** the props you have designed.

Remember, this is theater, not television - there is no need for props to be completely realistic (remember our “angry trees”); constructing your own props is a fine option!

- a) Construct props from any materials you have or can find or can buy.
- b) Borrow items from students or others. **KEEP A LIST OF WHICH ITEMS WERE BORROWED FROM WHOM**, and add their names to the Thank-You List.

COSTUMES

1. **Review** your costume designs from *Visual Arts: Step 4*. These designs can now be **finalized**, including the characters’ genders. Review the final draft of the script to make sure you have all the details.

2. Make a list of each actor’s clothing **sizes** (shirt, pants, shoes, etc.).

3. **Assemble** the costumes you have designed.

Remember, you may not be able to find *exactly* the items you wanted, but make sure any substitutions still fit the character’s personality! Options include the following:

- a) Borrow clothing from students or others. **KEEP A LIST OF WHICH ITEMS WERE BORROWED FROM WHOM**, and add their names to the Thank-You List.
 - b) Shop in a thrift store or clothing store.
 - c) Construct costumes from any materials you have or can find.
4. Each actor must **try on** the costume. If it doesn’t fit, make alterations or replacements.

Set, Prop, and Costume Protocol

WHAT: It is important to establish protocols for sets, props and costumes, so that they are used appropriately and do not get lost or damaged.



TIP! Begin using your actual sets, props and costumes as soon as possible, and as often as possible. This allows the actors to get comfortable with them, and also allows everyone the opportunity to practice the following protocols.

SET PROTOCOL

1. **NO ONE TOUCHES OR MOVES ANY BACKDROPS OR SET PIECES UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.**
2. **Storage** -- Make sure you have a safe place to store your set pieces and backdrops, especially if they cannot stay in the performance space.
3. **Assign** one person to be in charge of making sure set pieces and backdrops get to and from the performance space safely.

PROP PROTOCOL

1. **NO ONE TOUCHES OR MOVES ANY PROPS UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.**
2. **Storage** -- Make sure you have a safe place to store your props, especially if they cannot stay in the performance space.
3. **Prop Table** -- Make and rehearse with a prop table, that is set up backstage:
 - Cover a table with paper and tape it down securely.
 - Place each prop on the table.
 - Trace around each prop, drawing its shape on the paper. Write the name of each prop in or near its shape (eg. "umbrella," "newspaper," etc).
4. **Assign** one person to be in charge all the props. This person is called the prop master. The prop master must do the following:
 - Make sure ALL props get to and from the performance space safely.
 - Put props on prop table.
 - Keep track of whether props need to be repaired or replaced.

COSTUME PROTOCOL

1. NO ONE TOUCHES OR MOVES ANY COSTUME ITEMS UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.

2. Storage

- Make sure you have a safe place to store your costumes.
- Each character's costume should be in its own bag with the character's name clearly labeled on it.

3. Changing

- Make sure you have a safe place for actors to change in and out of their costumes.
- When actors are in costume, they should put all their "street clothes" into their character's costume bag.

4. Assign one person to be in charge of all the costumes. This person must do the following:

- Make sure ALL costume items get to and from the changing space safely.
- Keep actors' "street clothes" safe during rehearsal.
- Keep track of whether costumes need to be repaired or replaced.