Little Shop of Horrors

Book and Lyrics by Howard Ashman
Music by Alan Menken

Based on the film by Roger Corman, Screenplay by Charles Griffith

Teacher's Resource Guide

CAST
Andrew Anzel
Katie Braun
Josephine Cho
Andrew Coopman
Liana Costable
Kordell Draper
Zak Ferentz
Chelsea Flores
Christopher Gooley
Rachel Gubow
Alexis Lounsbury
Bethany Moore
Alexandra Richardson
Emma Vissicchio

DIRECTOR: David Montgomery
MUSIC DIRECTOR: Rachel Whorton
SCENIC & LIGHTING DESIGN: Daryl Embry
COSTUME DESIGN: Mira Veikley
CHOREOGRAPHY: Amy Cordileone
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER: Talia Krispel
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Drew Francis

Black Box Theatre
82 Washington Square East
Dear Teacher:

Welcome to Educational Theatre at NYU. Our award-winning program is dedicated to developing the next generation of theatre artists and educators for careers in schools, cultural institutions, and various community settings. We have a long and established track record of producing the most innovative theatre educators in New York State and beyond.

Our undergraduate, masters and doctoral students develop their artistic praxis in traditional and non-traditional performance spaces, and they learn how to apply their craft in educational and outreach sites. Students study with notable theatre educators from New York and the world. They learn about the transformative power of theatre, and how to implement and evaluate dynamic theatre arts programs.

At NYU Steinhardt's Educational Theatre program, you have access to:

- Greenwich Village and New York City, the cultural capital of the world
- Carefully supervised teaching placements and internships in New York's finest schools and cultural institutions
- study abroad programs with the world's greatest innovators
- numerous opportunities to develop your skills in such core areas as drama education, theatre for young audiences, play production, and applied theatre
- an internationally renowned and dedicated faculty
- a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in theatre art and pedagogy
- a richly diverse and multicultural community committed to social justice

All of these opportunities take full advantage of a warm and collegial Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions that promotes the development of a grounded aesthetic and permits program electives in numerous disciplines across the University, including drama therapy, musical theatre, and performance studies.

To speak to us personally, or to arrange a visit, please contact our office at ed.theatre@nyu.edu or 212 998 5868.

David Montgomery, PhD
Director
Program in Educational Theatre
Dear Teacher:

We have been working for many weeks to prepare this resource guide for you and we hope that you find it useful when helping your students learn from our production of *Little Shop of Horrors* either before or after seeing the show.

In the early 1980s when this musical was written and produced, clothes were colorful and tight, but wallets were tighter. The wealthy got wealthier and the poor and downtrodden got poorer. In an effort to escape their bleak existence, the lower classes had two options: revel in their life of squalor and disappear into drug addiction, or dream of a time when life was simpler and it wasn’t so difficult to get by. For some, this was a time of street fashion and punk music; for others, it was a time for a resurgence of music from times gone by. The creators of this musical (Howard Ashman and Alan Menken – composers of the music to several popular animated Disney films including *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast*) wanted to reflect this convergence of culture in a parody of a 1950s Roger Corman Sci-fi B-Movie (featuring a then-unknown Jack Nicholson). To illuminate the “horrors,” they included music that was heavily influenced by 1960s girl groups like The Chiffons, The Ronettes, and The Crystals (the main Doo-Wop girls are named for them). The result is a terrifyingly funny take on what could happen to those who step outside of their comfort zones and dare to dream.

The main concept behind this guide are a series of historical overviews and informational resources which are intended to provide basic and interesting information for the students — some of which they will already be aware of from their English language arts, drama, and/or history classes or life experiences. These documents are intended to serve as cursory overviews and if you feel it appropriate, we encourage students to do a follow-up research project on one of the related topics in our post-show activities.

In addition to the informational sheets are a series of pre- and post-show activities which utilize the themes and historical information presented in the play or in the documents included here. We hope that you will review these activities and consider using the pre-show activities in your classroom before you attend the performance. It is not necessary to complete these activities in order to understand the work, but the more information the students have before they see the show, the richer their experience will be at the performance.

Each individual activity concludes with a series of reflective discussion questions which will help the students to process their experiences as well as allow them to demonstrate achievement towards the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts (page 6).

Please pay particular attention to the Theatre Etiquette piece on page 7 and review this information with your students before attending the performance.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Jones, PhD
Program Administrator
NYU Steinhardt
Program in Educational Theatre
# Table of Contents

Director’s Notes 5

New York State Learning Standards for the Arts 6

*Little Shop of Horrors: A Summary* 7

Theatre Etiquette 7

*Little Shop of Horrors: Characters* 8

Pre-Show Activities:
- Character Clichés 9

*Little Shop of Horrors: A Vocabulary* 10

Pre-Show Activity:
- Crossword Puzzle 12
- Modern Equivalents 12

Context: B Movies 15

Pre-Show Activity:
- Superhero Improvisation Game 16
- Playwriting: Original B Movie Scene 16
- Movie to Musical 17

What Is a Puppet? 19

The Art of Puppetry 19

Types of Puppetry 20

Pre-Show Activity:
- Object Puppets 21

Design: Costume 22

Pre-Show Activity:
- Costume Design Concept 22
- Sample Costume Renderings 23
- Sample Costume Concept Collages 26

Design: Sets 28

Pre-Show Activity:
- Set Design Concept 29

Design: Lighting 30

Pre-Show Activity:
- Lighting Design Concept 31

Post-Show Activities 32

- Response Letters 32
- Alternate Ending 32
- Discussion Questions 33
Director’s Notes

Little Shop of Horrors (LSOH) started as a 1960 Roger Corman horror-comedy film that inspired an Off-Off-Broadway production in 1982 before moving to the Orpheum Theatre Off-Broadway for a five year run. It has received numerous productions in the U.S and abroad, in large regional theatres and school settings, as well as a subsequent Broadway production. So why produce a musical that has been done so often?

LSOH was chosen for the students who make up the cast and crew of this production. In the Program in Educational Theatre, we don’t routinely mount a well-known book musical, yet many students being trained to teach theatre will likely find themselves working in an educational setting, perhaps a high school, where they are charged to produce a well-known musical. How is it done? For me, it’s only possible through the collaboration of a lot of talented and dedicated people. I have been lucky to work with a cast and creative team in which each member is exceptionally creative and passionate about his or her individual position. Hopefully, such traits can be cultivated in educational settings where NYU students teach their own students, not only for the sake of theatre, but for the purpose of creating meaningful, collaborative learning environments.

When expanded to larger theatres, as has been the case for many prior productions, the intimacy of the play can be lost, and the size and closeness of this Blackbox Theatre played a part in choosing LSOH too. The space dictated a specific sort of interaction between the actors, the audience, the music and the play itself. In essence, this theatre gave us the opportunity to discover the heart of the piece. As the performers skillfully plunged into the script and score, they were able to explore the characters’ connections to one another and find the emotions of individual moments. Likewise, their talent for bringing authenticity to songs, interactions and choreography helped focus and conceptualize the story.

And what a creepy comedic story it is! As evil sneaks into the life of protagonist Seymour by way of a strange and interesting new plant, he grows increasingly corrupt. The story warns that bad things will happen if we don't get rid of the menacing weeds that damage our lives. With memorable Alan Menken and Howard Ashman pre-Disney music and satirical comments about our news-hungry world that still have relevance today, LSOH is a morality play. Everybody better beware!

LSOH is also a puppet show, a Greek Tragedy, a Roman Comedy, a science fiction and 1960s early Motown musical. This show has it all, and we hope you'll enjoy our production of LSOH.

David Montgomery, PhD

October 2014
New York State Learning Standards for the Arts

Excerpted from:
Learning Standards for the Arts
New York State Education Department, April 1996

Available online: www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/arts.html

STANDARD 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts
Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts.

STANDARD 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

STANDARD 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

STANDARD 4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts
Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

Theatre

Key Ideas

1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts
Students will create and perform theatre pieces as well as improvisational drama. They will understand and use the basic elements of theatre in their characterizations, improvisations, and play writing. Students will engage in individual and group theatrical and theatre-related tasks, and will describe the various roles and means of creating, performing, and producing theatre.

2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
Students will know the basic tools, media, and techniques involved in theatrical production. Students will locate and use school, community, and professional resources for theatre experiences. Students will understand the job opportunities available in all aspects of theatre.

3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate plays and theatrical performances, both live and recorded, using the language of dramatic criticism. Students will analyze the meaning and role of theatre in society. Students will identify ways in which drama/theatre connects to film.

4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts
Students will gain knowledge about past and present cultures as expressed through theatre. They will interpret how theatre reflects the beliefs, issues, and events of societies past and present.
**Little Shop of Horrors: A Summary**

A deviously delicious Broadway and Hollywood sci-fi smash musical, *Little Shop Of Horrors* has devoured the hearts of theatre goers for over 30 years. Howard Ashman and Alan Menken (Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty And The Beast*, and *Aladdin*) are the creative geniuses behind what has become one of the most popular shows in the world.

The meek floral assistant Seymour Krelborn stumbles across a new breed of plant he names "Audrey II" - after his coworker crush. This foul-mouthed, R&B-singing carnivore promises unending fame and fortune to the down and out Krelborn as long as he keeps feeding it, BLOOD. Over time, though, Seymour discovers Audrey II's out of this world origins and intent towards global domination!

---

**Theatre Etiquette**

It is essential that students understand that the experience of going to the theatre requires a certain kind of interaction between audience members and the cast of a show. In order to present a successful show, we ask that all audience members:

1) Be respectful to the performers by not talking to others during the show.

2) Stay seated during the performance.

3) Turn off all cell phones.

4) Refrain from eating and drinking in the theatre.

5) Remember that photography and video are not allowed in the theatre.

6) Feel free to laugh, cry, and applaud when appropriate.

7) Enjoy the show!
**Little Shop of Horrors: Characters**

**SEYMOUR** – Our insecure, naïve, put-upon, florist's clerk hero. Above all, he's a sweet and well-meaning little man. He is *not* a silly, prat-falling nerd, and therefore should not be compared to the hero of a Jerry Lewis film.

**AUDREY** – The bleached-blond, Billie-Dawn-like, secret love of Seymour’s life. If you took Judy Holiday, Carol Channing, Marilyn Monroe, and Goldie Hawn, removed their education and feelings of self-worth, dressed them in spiked heels and a black dress, and then shook them up in a test tube to extract what's sweetest and most vulnerable - that'd be Audrey.

**MR. MUSHNIK** – Seymour and Audrey’s boss. A failure of an East Side florist. He seldom smiles but often sweats.

**ORIN** – A tall, dark, handsome dentist with a black leather jacket and sadistic tendencies. He is not, however, a leftover from the movie version of *Grease*. Think instead of an egotistical pretty-boy – all got up like a greaser but thinking like an insurance salesman and talking like a radio announcer.

**THE PLANT (AUDREY TWO)** – An anthropomorphic cross between a Venus flytrap and an avocado. It has a huge, nasty looking pod which gains a shark-like aspect when open and snapping at food. The creature is played by a series of four increasing large puppets, manipulated by up to 3 Puppeteers. The first time we see The Plant, it is less than one foot tall. The last time we see it, it fills the entire stage. The plan sounds like a cross between Otis Redding, Barry White, and Wolfman Jack. Think of The Voice as that of a street-smart, funky, conniving villain – Rhythm and Blues' answer to Richard the Third.

**CRYSTAL, RONNETTE, and CHIFFON** - Three female street urchins who function as participants in the action and Greek Chorus outside it. They're young, hip, smart, and the only characters who really know what's going on. In their "Greek Chorus" capacity, they occasionally sing to the audience directly. And when they do, it's often with a "secret-smile" that says: "we know something you don't know."
Pre-Show Activity: *Character Clichés*

1. Students stand in a circle with their backs toward the center.

2. One at a time, the instructor reads out the words from the box below which are culled from the character descriptions.

3. After reading each word, the teacher will count down from 3 to 1 and the students will use their body to create a still image (tableau) to represent that word.

4. After 3 seconds, instruct the students to turn around. Let them observe the many ways the word manifests throughout the class.

5. Students mill about the room on the instructor’s direction. They are asked to attempt to fill in the open spaces. The goal for the whole ensemble is to try to occupy all the free space in the room.

6. The instructor explains that the class will now examine cliché and realism on a sliding scale. 10 will serve as the cliché side of the spectrum, and 1 will serve as the truthful side.

7. One at a time, the instructor will read aloud the character descriptions from Page 8 of this guide. The students will embody these descriptions along various levels of this scale, based on the instructor’s directions. For example, the instructor may consider beginning at varying points along this scale - once with as a 10, once as a 5, once as a 1, etc. and then move up and down from these starting points as appropriate. Additionally, the instructor can allow students to break out of their individual movements and interact, both as clichés and as more realistic representations of the character, and then switch back into individual movements. Move through all of the descriptions.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we relate to the characters we portrayed?
2. What are the differences between the realistic and cliché versions of the characters?
3. What are examples of other forms of art that use clichés? What songs, books, etc. can you specifically name?

Journal

Each student will receive a description from the character list and should imagine a modernized version of that character. The students will write a brief profile of a person who might embody these characteristics today.
Little Shop of Horrors: A Vocabulary

Our show features a man-eating plant, a nerdy young botanist, a sadistic dentist and his abused girlfriend, and a greedy, unfortunate flower shop owner. They all live on Skid Row, a poor and rundown section of the city and all our characters are vulnerable to an alien invasion that has sent a gruesome plant to Earth to wreak havoc on all of us.

We find it valuable, therefore, to provide our audience with a review of some of the terms and characters mentioned in our musical.

Three of the characters, Ronette, Crystal and Chiffon are named after three of the most famous girl groups of the 1960s, The Ronettes, The Crystals, and The Chiffons. The Ronettes are most well-known for the hits “Be My Baby” and “Walking in the Rain.” The Crystals are most well-known for the hits “Da Doo Ron Ron,” “Then He Kissed Me,” and “Uptown,” the latter of which heavily influence the opening number in Little Shop, “Downtown.” The Chiffons are most well-known for the hits “He’s So Fine” and “One Fine Day.”

Other Vocabulary:

**Hop heads** – drug addicts

**The Wolfman** – a famous and popular radio disc jockey in the 1960s

**George Washington Carver** – a great African American botanist with many diverse talents; dubbed by *Time Magazine* as a “Black Leonardo (DaVinci)”

In Audrey’s song “Somewhere That’s Green,” she references a number of 1950s and 1960s icons:

- **Betty Crocker** – an icon in the baking world; though Betty never existed, the brand of backing supplies and ubiquitous cookbook inspired a generation of homemakers

- **Donna Reed** – an American film and television actress; most well-known for her roles in *It’s a Wonderful Life* and starring in her own television show from 1958 to 1966 where she portrayed a stereotypical subservient housewife

- **Lucy** – referring to the pioneering sitcom *I Love Lucy* which originally aired from 1951 to 1957 starring Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz

- **December Bride** and **Father Knows Best** – 1950s sitcoms featuring ‘All-American’ families who seemed to have ideal lives

- **The Howdy Doody Show** – famous 1950s children show featuring a marionette named Howdy Doody
A Vocabulary continued...

Howard Johnson’s – a popular restaurant chain that was similar to Denny’s

Nitrous Oxide – known as laughing gas; used by dentists to ease the pain of dental surgery

When Audrey Two (the plant) sings “Git It,” he refers to Jack Paar, a television legend, and Hedy Lamarr, one of the movie industry’s most beautiful stars of the 1940s.

Mrs. Luce refers to Claire Boothe Luce, the famous and wealthy wife of the editor of Time and Life magazines. She was also the author of the play The Women which was has been made into three films, the most recent of which was in 2008.
Pre-Show Activity: *Crossword Puzzle*

The teacher should review the list of vocabulary terms (pages 10 - 11) with the students.

After completing this review, the students should work pairs to complete the crossword puzzle that appears on pages 13-14 of this guide.

**Modern Day Equivalents**

1. Ask the students to form groups of 2 - 4, then assign each group one of the following terms: Hedy Lamarr, The Wolfman, Betty Crocker, George Washington Carver, Father Knows Best, Lucy, Howdy Doody, Donna Reed.

2. Using their assigned term, each group should brainstorm about celebrities, well-known fictional characters, etc. that they see as a modern equivalent for their term (public figures, celebrities, characters in other plays or novels, people from real life, etc.) and prepare a short scene/skit/charade about their chosen modern connection.

3. Each group performs their modern day equivalent, and the other students guess what they are doing AND what their original vocabulary term was.

4. After every group has shared, reflect on the comparisons they chose to make. Were some terms harder to find an equivalent for than others? What are some of the comparisons/connections people made? Will future generations recognize any of our cultural references?

**Discussion Questions**

1. Imagine that any of the people in the vocabulary list were characters in modern life. Who among them would you choose to be friends with?

2. Who among them would be most successful in modern society? Why?

3. What problems might the unsuccessful characters face in modern society?
Little Shop of Horrors: Crossword Puzzle
Directions: Use the definitions and word bank to fill out the crossword puzzle on the previous page

Across

6. drug addicts
8. 1950s sitcom featuring a nuclear, ‘All-American’ family in the Midwest
10. referring to the pioneering sitcom “I Love Lucy,” a sitcom starring comedienne Lucille Ball which aired from 1951-1957
11. a popular restaurant chain featuring diner-style meals and fried foods
12. 1950s sitcom about the adventures of a vivacious widow as she tried to find a new husband
13. the famous and wealthy wife of the editor of Time and Life magazines. She was also the author of the play The Women, which has been made into three films.
14. a famous and popular radio DJ in the 1960s

Down

1. a great African-American scientist, botanist, educator, and inventor who invented many useful peanut products
2. one of the movie industry’s most beautiful stars of the 1940s
3. A television icon who hosted the tonight show from 1957 to 1962
4. an icon in the baking world; though she never existed, the brand of baking supplies and ubiquitous cookbook inspired a generation of homemakers
5. an American film and television actress; most well-known for her role in It’s A Wonderful Life and for starring in her own television show from 1958-1966, where she portrayed a stereotypical subservient housewife
7. known as laughing gas, used by dentists to ease the pain of dental surgery
9. famous 1950s children’s show featuring a marionette

Word Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hop heads</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Nitrous Oxide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wolfman</td>
<td>December Bride</td>
<td>Jack Paar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington Carver</td>
<td>Father Knows Best</td>
<td>Hedy Lamarr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty Crocker</td>
<td>Howdy Doody Show</td>
<td>Mrs. Luce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Reed</td>
<td>Howard Johnson’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Context: B-Movies

B-movies are low-budget commercial motion pictures that were popular during the Golden Age of Hollywood. The B movie is usually intended for distribution as the less-publicized second half of a double feature.

In the 1950s, low-budget science fiction and horror films became very popular. They were usually shorter in length than the larger budget films they were paired with in double features. The traditional B-movie era ended in the 1950s because of a court ruling that brought an end to the double feature. B-movies found a new home in the expanding drive-in theater market, as well as in the late night slot on many local television stations. This popularized the “Midnight Movie” which continued for years to come.

The general setup of a B-movie is simple and formulaic. Character A wants something from Character B, often a damsel-in-distress type of character, but Character C is getting in the way. Character C is usually something otherworldly, often an alien or monster of some kind. In the end, Character A overcomes Character C in order to get Character B. There are also a few popular themes including sex, violence, and youth.

Some classic B-movies that may be recognizable are: The Wolfman, Bride of Frankenstein, Creature from the Black Lagoon, Evil Dead, Night of the Living Dead, and Little Shop of Horrors.

Some modern B-movies that may be recognizable are: Sharknado, Piranha 3D, War of the Worlds, Mortal Kombat: Annihilation, and The Blob.

To view an example, watch the first minute of the following clip: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qObNvmizazo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qObNvmizazo) (Sharknando)
**Pre-Show Activity: Superhero Improvisation Game**

1. The teacher will review the Context for B-Movies provided on page 15 of this guide with the class.

2. The class will collectively think of a small problem that people face in their everyday lives.

3. One student will volunteer to begin a scene and try to solve this problem as a superhero. The teacher will give him/her a superhero name and the scene will begin. Remind the students that the objective is to try to solve the problem and not to actually solve it.

4. When another student feels the impulse to volunteer, they will join the first superhero to help solve the problem. The teacher will give him/her a superhero name as well.

5. Repeat step 3 until about 4-5 superheroes are in the scene. They have still not solved the problem.

6. Then, each superhero (in the reverse order in which they entered) will find a reason to leave the scene. When the first superhero is the only one left, they will finally solve the problem and the scene will end.

Here are some examples of superhero names:

- The Blob
- Killer Clown
- Frankenstein
- Godzilla
- Zombie (Wo)man
- King Kong
- Dracula
- Ninja (Wo)man
- Sharktopus
- Crab Monster
- Evil Doll Lady
- Robot Man

**Discussion Questions**

1. How did you feel during this activity?
2. What have we learned about B-Movies?
3. Do you think the scenes and situations we have seen in class today will be similar to what we will see in the production? Why or why not?

**B Movie Scene Criteria**

1. The student must come up with a new problem for the superhero to solve
2. The roles and relationships must be clear
3. The scene must follow the setup described in the context on page 15 of this guide.

**Playwriting: Original B-Movie Scene**

Ask students to write an original scene in the style of B-Movies using the characters from the improvisation game.
Pre-Show Activity: *Movie to Musical*

Objective: Students will understand and explore differences between artistic mediums.

Materials:
- Excerpt from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (see page 18)
- *The Wizard of Oz: The Musical* clip [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35YwBb9dVyA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35YwBb9dVyA)

1. Students discuss with a partner, and then the larger group, the advantages of written artistic expression.

2. Students read the excerpt from L. Fran Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and discuss how their discussion informs their reading and understanding of the excerpt.

3. Students will then watch a clip from *The Wizard of Oz* film and discuss the difference between the two artistic mediums.

4. Students will then watch a clip from *The Wizard of Oz: The Musical*.

5. Teacher then leads a discussion about the differences between the three selections. This discussion may include:
   a. Which one they liked the most and why?
   b. What each medium brings that the others don’t?
   c. How do the different mediums tell stories in different ways?
   d. What do they all have in common?

6. Students break up into groups of four.

7. Students discuss how they would adapt a book or movie into a musical. These may include:
   - A book you have read in class
   - *Toy Story* or *The Avengers*
   - Any other book or movie all group members have exposure to

8. Within their discussion, students must include two popular songs not in the original movie which would help to move the plot of their book or movie adaptation forward.

9. Students will then share out their idea to the full class.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the discussion around *The Wizard of Oz* inform the adaptations the groups came up with?

2. How does the change in medium affect people's perception or interest in the similar stories?

3. *Little Shop of Horrors* started its life as a movie. How do you think it changed when it was adapted to a musical?
All this time Dorothy and her companions had been walking through the thick woods. The road was still paved with yellow brick, but these were much covered by dried branches and dead leaves from the trees, and the walking was not at all good.

There were few birds in this part of the forest, for birds love the open country where there is plenty of sunshine. But now and then there came a deep growl from some wild animal hidden among the trees. These sounds made the little girl's heart beat fast, for she did not know what made them; but Toto knew, and he walked close to Dorothy's side, and did not even bark in return.

"How long will it be," the child asked of the Tin Woodman, "before we are out of the forest?"

"I cannot tell," was the answer, "for I have never been to the Emerald City. But my father went there once, when I was a boy, and he said it was a long journey through a dangerous country, although nearer to the city where Oz dwells the country is beautiful. But I am not afraid so long as I have my oil-can, and nothing can hurt the Scarecrow, while you bear upon your forehead the mark of the Good Witch's kiss, and that will protect you from harm."

"But Toto!" said the girl anxiously. "What will protect him?"

"We must protect him ourselves if he is in danger," replied the Tin Woodman.

Just as he spoke there came from the forest a terrible roar, and the next moment a great Lion bounded into the road. With one blow of his paw he sent the Scarecrow spinning over and over to the edge of the road, and then he struck at the Tin Woodman with his sharp claws. But, to the Lion's surprise, he could make no impression on the tin, although the Woodman fell over in the road and lay still.

Little Toto, now that he had an enemy to face, ran barking toward the Lion, and the great beast had opened his mouth to bite the dog, when Dorothy, fearing Toto would be killed, and heedless of danger, rushed forward and slapped the Lion upon his nose as hard as she could, while she cried out:

"Don't you dare to bite Toto! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a big beast like you, to bite a poor little dog!"

"I didn't bite him," said the Lion, as he rubbed his nose with his paw where Dorothy had hit it.

"No, but you tried to," she retorted. "You are nothing but a big coward."

"I know it," said the Lion, hanging his head in shame. "I've always known it. But how can I help it?"
What Is a Puppet?

Audrey II, the main antagonist in the show Little Shop of Horrors is a Venus flytrap-type plant depicted by a large puppet. A puppet is an inanimate object or a representational figure that can be manipulated by a person, or puppeteer, in order to make the puppet ‘come-to-life.’ A puppet can be made from a wide variety of materials and can vary in size and structure depending on its use. Some examples of different types of puppets are sock-puppet, finger-puppet, hand or glove puppet, marionette, arm-puppet, rod-puppet, shadow-puppet, and countless others!

The Art of Puppetry

Puppetry is an ancient art form that is thought to have originated about 3000 years ago. Puppets have been used since this time to animate and communicate the ideas and needs to other individuals. There is evidence that they were used in Egypt as early as 2000 BC when string-operated figures of wood were manipulated to perform the action of kneading bread. Wire controlled, articulated puppets made of clay and ivory have also been found in Egyptian tombs. Hieroglyphs also describe “walking statues” being used in Ancient Egyptian religious dramas. Puppetry was practiced in Ancient Greece and the oldest written records of puppetry can be found in the works of Herodotus and Xenophon, dating from the 5th century BC.
Types of Puppetry

1. Hand Puppet: through any of a variety of finger configurations, the puppeteer’s hand inside of the puppet is the only thing which is making it move. This is frequently the simplest type of puppet, and can have very few moving parts – the fingers and thumb may be in different pockets to create a moving mouth, or there may be separate divisions for fingers that can help move arms, legs, etc.

2. Marionette: a puppet controlled from above by the puppeteer, who uses strings connected to assorted mobile features of the puppet in order to make it walk, speak, etc. The amount of strings that are attached determine how complex the movements of the marionette puppets are.

3. Shadow Figures: created in different ways: the first option includes figures placed directly to the shadow screen so their physical figures are displayed on the screen. These are called “Direct Shadows.” “Projected Shadows” feature figures cut from glass and projected onto the screen via an overhead. Shadow figures can create simple or complex silhouettes on these translucent shadow screens depending on the cutouts in the shapes.

4. Rod Puppet: puppets primarily controlled by a rod connected to the head, which functions as a way for the puppeteer to control the movements and turning of the head. The other limbs of the puppet are frequently also attached to rods which are simply moved about in order to direct the movement.

5. Marotte: a simplified puppet which is often just a head on a stick. While it works similarly to an undisguised rod puppet, this head can be controlled by a handle at the bottom of the stick which opens and closes the mouth when squeezed.
Pre-Show Activity: Object Puppets

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it’s important to choose an inanimate object to build from? What did you choose?

2. How can you breathe new life into old characters by examining all the steps you completed with these puppets?

3. How would you play with this kind of object-character on a stage, like Audrey II?

The puppet in Little Shop of Horrors is a plant. Plants are inanimate objects, meaning that they are incapable of moving on their own. In this activity, students will create puppets out of inanimate objects from around the classroom. Use the image on page 19 as a sample if needed.

Step 1: Selection. Encourage students to choose an inanimate object from around the classroom (ex: books, paper, water bottles, jackets, etc).

Step 2: Breathing. Have students move a part of the puppet in a rhythmic fashion to suggest breath. Explain that they can choose to move any part of the puppet they wish to represent this breath. (ex: for a book, a student might lift and lower the cover at regular intervals)

Step 3: Walking. Students will select two pieces of their object puppet to be the feet. Next they will place the object puppet on the floor, and place one “foot” in front of the other along the floor. Once students have mastered walking, allow them to experiment with their own individual walks or other means of getting from place to place. (ex: for the book, it could walk forward on its two lower corners, or slither around on its spine)

Step 4: Gesture. Allow students to experiment with moving the object puppet’s “arms,” “head, or any other body parts that they wish their puppet to have. (ex: for the book, the two corners can be the arms)

Step 5: Voice. Encourage your students to create a voice for their object puppet, based on the style of movement they have already given it. Have the students walk their object puppets around the classroom and interact with each other in their new found voices. Students can also introduce their puppets to the whole class (in role as their puppet) if they so choose.

Step 6: Backstory. Students will write a short paragraph about who their object puppet is: their interests, objectives, desires, and obstacles. Students will then volunteer to share these backstories with the rest of the class. They have the option to read their backstories in the voice of their character.

Step 7: Attitude! In Little Shop of Horrors, the Plant - Audrey II, is infamous for its fierce attitude! Present your class with several scenarios, and invite your students to have their puppets react based on the movements and backstory they have created.
Design: Costume

All stage costumes must meet certain requirements. First, they must readily reveal to the audience a character’s personality, taste, age, wealth, and social position. In addition, a costume must enable the audience to differentiate between the characters.

Costumes should reflect the mood and style of the production. In comedies, actors usually dress in bright colors and light weight fabrics. In tragedies, colors are subdued to denote gloom, and fabrics are often heavy. Costumes for fantasies are generally stylized with the setting. In period plays, they must conform to the fashion, line, and material used in that particular time.

Accessories for period costumes need careful selection to be appropriate for the time and to be in harmony with the outfit. There must be an acceptable reason for using each costume piece and only necessary accessories should be utilized. Since costumes are important in adding period atmosphere, the costume designer should provide something that looks authentic.

(Introduction adapted from Basic Drama Projects by F. A. Tanner, 1982)

Pre-Show Activity: Costume Design Concept

Utilizing the play summary provided on page (7) and the character descriptions on page (8), each student will create a costume design concept for two characters.

The costume design concept should include the following:

1. A collage of images reflecting the character’s personality, taste, age, wealth, and social position. These may be of the period of the play (1960s) or modern, as determined by the student.

2. The student should create a rendering (sketch utilizing color) to demonstrate an idealized version of what the costume should look like including clothing pieces, shoes, and other accessories. Sample costume renderings by production costume designer Mira Veikley appear throughout this guide and full page renderings appear on pages 23 – 25 followed by sample collages on pages 26 – 27.

3. The student must include a brief informal presentation which indicates the aspects they used from the plot summary and character description to create the collage and rendering. If they chose to utilize images from a different time period, they should indicate why they made this choice.

**Optional Design Challenge – Think about any limitations you can make for yourself (color, budget, material cost, comfortability for the actor). How might color help to tell the story?

Discussion Questions:

1. What aspects of the characters were included in the collages and renderings? Which were neglected? Why?

2. If students opted to include modern images in the collage or rendering, why did they choose to do so?

3. Based on their experience creating these collages and renderings, what do the students anticipate they will see in the actual production? Why?

4. What do you notice about today’s fashion (or your clothes) that is similar to fashion from a different time period?
Costume Rendering for Seymour
By Mira Veikley
Costume Rendering for Audrey
By Mira Veikley
Costume Rendering for the Urchins
By Mira Veikley
Costume Concept Collage
By Mira Veikley

“Little Shop of Horrors”
Skid Row Ensemble
Little Shop of Horrors Teacher’s Resource Guide

Costume Concept Collage
By Mira Veikley
Design: Sets

The types of scenery used for a play depend upon the stage facilities, the available technicians and crews, the play’s budget, and the time available for making scenery. Regardless of the setting a set designer chooses, it must meet the following requirements.

First, the setting should provide a suitable background for the play’s action. There must be adequate space for movement, including several areas or levels to provide variety and interest and to motivate the actors into using the whole stage in the course of the play. There must be adequate doors, windows, and stars. Furthermore, the color of the setting should contrast with the actors faces so that the actors will be readily seen.

Second, the setting must communicate adequate information about the play. The locale, the time and the period, the cultural, social, and economical status of the characters must all be revealed in the set.

Third, the play’s style and mood must be suggested. From observing the scenery with its particular color and line design, the audience should immediately be able to tell at the rise of the curtain whether the play is comic, tragic, fantastic, realistic, etc.

Fourth, the setting must be technically practical or useable. Doors and windows must open if they are to be used. Stairs, platforms, and ramps must be built firmly if they are to bear the actor’s weight. If there are set changes, scenery must be planned for quick shifts.

Fifth, all elements must be unified. In tragedy, the setting may be heavy and massive with dark and somber colors. In comedy, the scenery may be frivolous with curved lines and light colors. The set designer must recognize the “world of the play” and make sure that everything in the set fits into that world.

Little Shop of Horrors is traditionally done on a proscenium stage. A Proscenium theatre is a more traditional style of stage, with one large audience space all facing the stage, which is framed by the proscenium arch and a large red curtain. This allows for a large scale set and very large puppets because there is a lot of wing space.

This production, however, will be set in a blackbox theatre, which is one rectangular room with black walls and seating loosely arranged throughout the space. Unlike the proscenium, where the audience and stage are separated, NYU’s blackbox theatre has the audience seated on two sides of the stage, with no curtain to separate the stage. A blackbox theatre is a rather small and intimate space, not usually used for big blockbuster musicals. NYU’s set designer, therefore, had many challenges fitting such a big show in a small space, where audiences are observing from many different angles.
Pre-Show Activity: *Set Design Concept*

1. Teacher divides class into four groups and assigns each group one of the four following settings to design:
   a. Dentist’s office (includes 1 dentist’s chair)
   b. Flower shop
   c. City street (Skid Row)
   d. Audrey’s “Dream House”

2. Teacher instructs students to discuss design aspects for their assigned settings.

3. After students have a general set design concept, teacher will give each group a challenge/obstacle:
   a. Dentist’s office → There is no wing space, but there is a large prop (dentist’s chair) that cannot be present/visible in most other scenes.
   b. Flower shop → Many scenes take place here, but it must be able to transform completely, quickly, and easily into other settings.
   c. Skid Row → Must be large enough to fit an ensemble of eleven while leaving enough room onstage for the other settings, as Skid Row does not “move” offstage. (Skid Row and “Flower Shop” exist onstage simultaneously.
   d. Dream House → Dirty, run-down space (Skid Row/Flower Shop) must become Audrey’s clean, perfect dream home AND return to its original state over the course of one song (“Somewhere That’s Green”).

4. Have students share their set designs and discuss how they creatively overcame each obstacle.

Discussion Questions:
1. Did you feel like the obstacles limited or expanded your creative ability in designing these sets? Did they force you to think out of the box?

2. How did the “world of the play” affect your design concepts? Did your design choices reflect the themes of *Little Shop*?

3. Did you consider budget limitations when designing your sets? If not, do you think your set design would be possible with budget constraints?
Design: Lighting

Audience enjoyment of a production depends a great deal on the show’s lighting. It is important, therefore, that stage lighting meet four basic requirements:

1. Provide Visibility
2. Establish Emphasis
3. Create Mood
4. Suggest Light Source

Visibility and Emphasis: Comfortable visibility in the theatre is the prime requisite for stage lighting as too much light glares and too much darkness strains. Light intensity must be carefully balanced to allow the audience to see what they are supposed to see without their being unduly aware of the lights. Emphasis is created by utilizing bright light for dominant stage areas and dim lights for subordinate areas. The light intensity draws the viewer’s eyes toward what is important.

Mood: To achieve mood, the lighting designer must blend together a variety of light sources using color. If the play is a comedy, the designer might choose a mix of bright lights in predominantly warm colors. If the play is a tragedy or serious drama, blending should create a medium to low tone, throwing shadows and casting cool colors.

Light Source: The lighting designer in a realistic play will work to suggest to the audience obvious sources of light such as the sun, moon, table lamps, candles, fireplaces, etc. By suggesting the source, they can convey the time of day and the weather conditions. A cool daylight blue of low intensity apparently coming through a window may suggest early morning. A bright warm amber light streaming through French doors may indicate late afternoon on a warm, sunny day.

(Introduction adapted from Basic Drama Projects by F. A. Tanner, 1982)
Pre-Show Activity: *Lighting Design Concept*

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What aspects of the song were included in the collages and renderings? Which were neglected? Why?

2. Why did you choose the colors for the lighting? What were they trying to convey?

3. Based on your experience creating these collages and renderings, what do the students anticipate when they see a musical theater production that has many songs? Why?

The students should listen to a popular, emotive song such as *Beautiful* by Christina Aguilera or *Chandelier* by Sia. While listening, they should write down tone, mood, images and colors evoked. Repeat the song.

After listening to the song twice, the students should create a lighting design concept.

The lighting design concept should include the following:

1. A collage of images reflecting the mood and source of light for scene. These images may be literal or metaphorical, emphasizing light and color.

2. The student should create a rendering (sketch utilizing color) to demonstrate an idealized version of the lighting set against a black and white sketch of the set. Color should be used only to indicate mood and direction the light is coming from.

3. The student must include a brief written statement for each of the following questions:
   - How would you change the lights during the height of the action?
   - What special effects would you add?
   - Why did you choose certain colors?
   - How did the colors affect the mood/tone?
Post-Show Activity: **Response Letters**

When watching this or any play, there is certain to be some disagreement among audience members about the events of the play and the reasons certain characters behaved the way they did. The purpose of this activity is to try to illuminate the spectrum of understanding that exists within the class.

At the end of *Little Shop of Horrors*, Audrey II (the plant) has eaten all of the main characters, yet in the curtain call, these characters return to warn the audience not to, “Look out, here comes Audrey III!” Imagine that these characters could speak to one another. What would they say and to whom would they say it? Write a letter from one character to another predicting what they would say if they could still speak.

Once the students have written their letters, ask them to get into small groups and read their letters to each other. Once they have all shared, use the first set of discussion questions at right to debrief the activity.

Post-Show Activity: **Alternate Ending**

The students should reflect on their understanding of *Little Shop of Horrors* and contemplate alternative outcomes.

Option A: Narrative or Dramatic Writing

Each student is asked to think about a possible alternative ending or extension to the play, and is given some time to write a narrative or short scene of their new ending.

Option B: Improvisational Acting

The class is broken into groups and each group is responsible for improvising (that is, making up a scene without a script) that resolves the play in a new and interesting way.

The students should share their work. For the narrative activity, small group sharing is best. For the improvisational options, they can show their scenes to the class. Use the second set of discussion questions at right to reflect on the activity.
Post-Show Activity: Discussion Questions

Various elements of the plot of Little Shop of Horrors pose powerful questions for the audience to consider. As such, the students may have a number of questions about the production (beyond those they addressed to the cast after seeing the show) and it may be worthwhile to allow them a space to talk about these lingering questions.

Some questions you might consider exploring are:

- Identify the conflicts in the musical. This will reveal the themes which bind the story together.
- Identify the themes within the story and for each theme find a scene or song from the musical which most illustrates it.
- Little Shop of Horrors is a dark comedy, satirizing the social values, virtues, and vices of its time. Is there an equivalent in today’s world?
- In the musical, Audrey dreams of “somewhere that’s green” – how do you think social values have changed since the 1960s?
- Consider the domestic abuse in the musical. What are the relationships between abuser and victim? What point do you think is being made about domestic abuse?
- If you were writing a dark comedy, what aspects of today’s values would you choose to satirize? Where would the play or musical take place? What would the characters be named?
- If the characters looked back on their actions in the play, what or who might they blame for their behavior?
- Discuss the use of music and lyrics throughout the musical. How are music and lyrics used for comic effect?
- If you took the place of one of the characters in the play, would you behave the same way that he or she did or might you act differently? Why?
- What do you think we can learn from a play or musical like Little Shop of Horrors?
- What do you think Little Shop of Horrors says about gender roles? Why?
- What do you think Little Shop of Horrors says about love? Why?
References

Pre-Show Activities in this Resource Guide were created by the following undergraduate Educational Theatre students:

1. Character Clichés – Shayna Blecherman, Jason Boxer, Jessie Delgado, Jamie Lerner, and Arielle Sosland
2. Crossword Puzzle and Modern Equivalents – William Carlson, Cameron Gillespie, Evangeline Han Lee, and Dana Shapiro
4. Movie to Musical – Andrew Anzel, Oriana Miles, Samantha Rosenblatt, and Kathleen Turner
6. Design: Costumes – Kordell Draper, Chelsea Flores, Katrina Ritzdorf, and Emma Vissicchio
7. Design: Sets – Amber Collins-Ives, Alexis Lounsbury, Charles Wright, and Emma Vissicchio
8. Design: Lighting – Madison Coe, Liana Costable, Courtney Smith, and Marc Lussier

All Costume Renderings throughout the guide are the original work of Mira Veikley and should not be duplicated except where indicated.

Additional References:


