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Producing High School Plays

Gladys Branson
Iowa State College

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A NEW teacher is always finding surprises. How many new teachers have longed to begin all over again when she unexpectedly learns that she must supervise the school plays. Perhaps the superintendent has consolingly remarked that there are usually only two plays given each year. The junior play is given just after Christmas and the senior play late in the spring.

This does give time for a little research but it does not alter the fact that the teacher has not had any experience and may not even have taken part in a play herself. Any college girl knows that any amount of theoretical information without any practical knowledge or experience is a poor basis to work from.

However the situation is unaltered. The new teacher must give the plays. The word play seems very general and covers "much" territory but to analyze the situation we make it appear less complicated. The play must be one not too heavy for high school students to produce. Since it will be a class play the number of characters will be limited.

Consider the audience. What type of play would take best in this community? Perhaps it is a very progressive community and would be interested in an educational play. Comedies usually are favored in rural districts and smaller towns. The play might be one connected with the school work to emphasize scenery and costumes of some period in history or literature.

Of course there is the question of how much time and money can be spent for the play. Scenery is one of the important items. If there happens to be none left from previous plays, it can be made quite economically either by painting scenes, wings or by using drapes. The stage setting must harmonize and it should be quite dull to better set off the characters.

Costumes and stage properties are other obstacles. Study magazines, advertisements often give good ideas for furniture or costumes of both modern and ancient times. Suppose the play chosen was to take place in Egypt. The costumes should of course all be of rich velvets and silks with heavy gold adornments. A few stage secrets will produce these in a few minutes.

Cambric with the glossy side out becomes lovely satin under stage lights. Cheese cloth plus a little gilt is as good as silk. Cotton flannel makes a velvet robe for the king. Some of the children's Fourth of July powder burns beautifully for a torch, fireplace or in an ancient type of lamp.

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