

Construction of Props and Backdrops

Remember creative construction basics:

FUSS

F - function – what function will it serve? Do you need it?

U - how useful/necessary is this item? Is it easy to use?

S - What is the shape? Is it interesting

S - Is it secure? Will it stand up or do what it is intended to do? If not, why not?

What is the item's purpose?

Do you need a backdrop/set? What is it's purpose?

What is it supposed to look like in it's final form?

Is it necessary to the final production?

Will it serve double duty?

If so, can a single material serve both functions?

Can materials be combined?

Design

Single piece?

How will it stand up?

Does it have multiple use?

Multiple pieces?

How will they align?

How will you join them together?

All the same size?

Any attached items? Or items that attach to the backdrop/prop?

How will it stay up?

How will it fit into transportation?

How many scene changes does your script require?

Elements of interest/dimension - real life is 3D - not just 2D

Does your backdrop/set/prop design incorporate cut-outs? Drop downs? Add ons?

Moveable/moving parts?

How many people are required to carry the backdrop/set?

Can it be carried by one person? Does it need 2 or more?

If it can't be carried, how can you get it to the performance site without harming the floor? - wheels, felt on the bottom,

any other means of transporting without harming floor?

How long will it take to set up the backdrop/set for the first scene? How many props need to be set up along with the backdrop?

How long will it take to change scenes? How many are in the script? How many scene changes will work in the time allotted?

How can you design the set/backdrop to be easier to set up?

Construction of Props and Backdrops (con't)

Made of what?

newspaper/paper mache

wood – solid, plywood, particle board, dowels, other

cardboard - which way is corrugated cardboard stronger?

plastic

carpet

pvc

fabric/canvas/sheets/shower curtains

glass

foam boards

ceramic/clay

metal/wire

recycled materials (remnants) such as shoe boxes, milk jugs, pillow stuffing, paper towel rolls, wallpaper, cardboard boxes, yarn, used clothes, milk cartons, etc.

Will materials chosen support the final weight of the backdrop/prop?

Bonding Materials -- Put together with what?

Hot glue/Glue sticks/Elmer's glue/Epoxy/spray adhesive

Duct tape

Nails

Screws & Bolts

velcro

tacks

Hinges

Rope

Iron-on

Contact Paper

tape

wallpaper glue

Soldering

welding

What unique ways can you put items together?

How to decide which materials and “put-together” stuff will work best for your project?

Which is most permanent? Will handle multiple use/prolonged use?

Easily moved? Easily stored? Versatile?

What type of adhesive/bonding materials work best for:

paper to paper

metal to metal

wood to wood

cardboard to cardboard

foam to foam

plastic to plastic

glass to glass

fabric to fabric

and all the combinations between these items?

Tools

What tools do you need? Where can you get them?

Your house

Ask your team members if they have them

Ask your coaches if they have them

Ask friends if they have them

Are you trained in the safe use of the tools?

Who can instruct you on the safe use?

What are your team rules for use of power tools?

Does a TM or adult needs to be in attendance?

If you don't know how to do a skill you need to make something or do something

- Ask parents, teachers or coaches how to do a specific skill

-Get a book on the matter and figure it out

-ask a professional in the field to show you how to do it – but not on the material you will use for the finished project.

Decorating Props and Backdrops

How will you decorate your backdrops/props?

Where will you get these items?

How much do you need?

Possible decorating materials:

paint, newspaper, wallpaper, magazines, posterboard, photographs, carpet, construction paper, nail polish, markers, wrapping paper, tissue paper, colored glue, glitter, feathers, cellophane, aluminum foil, crayons, etc.

Does the finished product look like:

– like something that you would be willing to pick up from a store shelf and buy.

– you would see in a professional theater production.

– like something a kindergartner put together in 15 minutes.

How does it look from 10 feet away? (The distance most judges will see it originally from)

What details can be added to make it appear better?

Are you proud of how it looks?

How can it be improved?

Do you have time/materials to make it better?