BROADWAY 101

A Comprehensive Study Guide
covering everything that is Broadway.

Designing

Designing Activity #1
On your own or with a partner

Take the one-minute play you've written (or any other play of your choice.)
Now it's time to think like a designer.

Set

AutoCAD stands for Computer-Aided Design and/or Computer-Aided Drafting. In theater, designers use the AutoCAD software program to create floor plans that provide a 'blue print' for the actual set seen on stage.

When creating the set design for a production, a designer will gather from a variety of sources. Discussions with the director and the production team – designers for costumes, lights, sound and music - are vital to help create the world of the play. Together they build a vision, drawing inspiration from each other and the play.

It helps to know a few things about stage blocking and movement when thinking about building a set and creating acting areas for the performers. Actors like to be seen and heard.

Blocking

The action of moving an actor around the set. Stage positions are defined for a performer as if they are standing on the stage, looking out at the audience: *Stage Left, Stage Right, Upstage, Downstage,* or *Centre stage.*

Stage left (SL) - the left hand side of the stage, facing the audience. (From the audience, this side of the stage is considered '*audience* or *house right*)

Downstage centre' (DC)- front of the stage, in the centre.

Upstage centre (UC)- near the back, in the middle.

If you enter from *stage right* (SR) you appear to the audience on their left, (or 'A*udience* or *House Left'*).

Imagine that you've been hired to design the set for your play. The budget is very limited, and the producer informs you that you can choose three pieces of furniture to represent the location of the play. Read the play over, and decide what you'll need. Do the characters need to sit? Will they need a door to enter or exit through? Is there a window? Decide which things need to be represented on stage, and which can be imagined.

Draw a ground plan – a blueprint of where you will place the pieces of scenery you've chosen on the stage. This gives the director and actors a map, to see how the stage will look when the set is built.

Designing Activity #2

Costumes
What costumes will the characters need? Make a list of what they might wear. In your imaginary small-budget production, you are allowed to give each actor one costume piece to help define their character. What would that one piece be?

Make a costume sketch – either draw the characters, or find pictures from newspapers or magazines that fit your idea of how they might look.

Designing Activity #3

Lights
What sort of lighting will the play need? Does it take place during the day? At night? Indoors or outside? What is the mood of the play? Should the lighting be soft and gentle, or harsh and bright? Write a short description of the lighting design.

Once again, your imaginary producer has limited the budget severely. All you are given are three lights. To create your design, take three flashlights (or other small, movable lights) plus five volunteers for your "crew." Three of the crew hold the lights, while the other two act as stand-ins for your actors. See how changing the angle and direction of lights on the actors' faces can change their appearance: try lighting them from below, from above, from one side only, from both sides, and so on.