

Performance Notes for The Empty Pot

THREE WAYS THAT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS CAN UTILIZE THIS PLAY

1. Students can read the play aloud while sitting in the classroom. Ask the readers to skip all bracketed stage directions. You may prefer to rotate your actors to give all students a chance to read the speaking parts.
2. Students can perform the play in the classroom. Clear an area that can be used as the stage. Have the audience sit on the floor in front of the stage. Students in the play can make simple costumes and/or sets as described below. When the scene change, the characters "on stage" simply walk to the back of the room where they wait until their next appearance "on stage."
3. Students can perform the play on stage. Refer to the production notes that follow. Ask the actors to enter from the back of the room and move through the audience as they approach the stage.



COSTUMES

- ROYAL GUARD #1, ROYAL GUARD #2, and ROYAL GUARD # 3 — Mandarin collar shirts with long sleeves along with pairs of trousers. The colors of the shirts should be lighter than the colors of the trousers. Also, red conical Chinese hats (see below). Optional: Black beards can be drawn on their faces using black eyeliner pencil.

To make the Royal Guards' hats: Start with cardboard or cardstock. To determine the size of the cardboard/cardstock, measure the head of the actor who will wear the hat and cut a circle about twice that size. Cut a slit

in the circle from the outer edge the paper into the center. Bring the edges together so that the base is larger than the top. Glue edges in place. Use hairpins to ensure that the hat will not fall off the actors' heads.

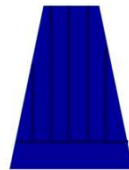
See image below:



- **ROYAL ADVISOR** — A blue robe tied with a purple belt at the waist and a blue special cylinder hat on his head (see below).

To make the Royal Advisor's hat: Start with a rectangular piece of blue cardboard or cardstock. To determine the size of the cardboard/cardstock, measure the head of the actor who will wear the hat and use a rectangle about twice as long. Bring the edges together so that the base is larger than the top. Glue edges in place. Draw some vertical lines at the front. Use hairpins to ensure that the hat will not fall off the actors' heads.

See image below:



- **YANG, MANCHU, RONG, and VILLAGE BOYS** — round-necked t-shirts and shorts, similar to SHEN's. In Scene 4, the boys wear Mandarin collar shirts and trousers.
- **SHEN'S MOTHER, SHEN'S FATHER, YANG'S MOTHER, YANG'S, FATHER, HOPEYANGL MOTHER, HOPEYANGL FATHER, and VILLAGE PEOPLE** — plain, dull-colored shirts. Males wear neutral-colored trousers, and females wear dark skirts.
- **SHEN** — a round-necked t-shirt and a pair of black shorts in SCENE 1, SCENE 2, and SCENE 3. In SCENE 4, he wears a Mandarin collar shirt and a pair of trousers.



- VILLAGE GIRLS — wear light-colored shirts and dark skirts.
- EMPEROR — wears a yellow satin robe tied with a red belt at the waist and a special hat on his head (see below). He has a long white moustache and beard that can be made out of white paper. Optional: Baby powder or cornstarch can be placed in his hair to make him look older.

To make the Emperor's hat: Start with a rectangular piece of yellow cardboard or cardstock. To determine the length of the cardboard, measure the head of the actor who will wear the hat and cut a rectangle about twice as long. Bring the edges together to form a lopsided cylinder with a base that is larger in circumference than the top. Glue the edges in place. Draw some vertical lines at the front.

Take a black rectangular piece of cardboard that is big enough to cover the top part of the cylinder that you just made. Give an extra two inches so that some part of it will protrude. Glue this piece to the top of the yellow cardboard cylinder.

Around the base, glue a small strip of red paper. Cut a small piece of blue foil in an oval shape, to represent a jewel. Glue this to the center of the red strip. Use hairpins to ensure that the hat will not fall off the actors' heads.

See image below:





PROPS

Scene 1

- Large potted plants, columns, statues, or other decorative embellishments to indicate the royal garden.
- A chair to represent the throne. The chair can be covered in shiny fabric.

Scene 2

- Colored marbles to be used as seeds. If marbles are not available, any round objects covered with colored construction paper can also be used. The total number will depend on the number of actors who will get seeds from ROYAL ADVISOR.
- The same large potted plants, columns, statues, or other decorative embellishments to indicate the royal garden.

Scene 4

- Several potted plants (flowering and non-flowering). The plants can be real or made from paper.
- A small table.
- Three chairs.
- An empty pot covered with silver foil.
- Various pots and pans.

Scene 5

- Bread (can be real or cut out of cardboard or paper).
- Fake fruits and vegetables (can be cut out of cardboard or paper).
- Fake fish and fake meat (can be cut out of cardboard or paper).
- A variety of pots with plants sprouting out for YANG, MANCHU, RONG, and other VILLAGE BOYS. The plants can be constructed of green cardboard, should be leafy, and can be stiffened by taping long wooden dowels or rods to their backs. The total number will depend on the number of actors who will use them.

Scene 6

- A red satin cape.
- An empty pot.
- Pots with plants (the flowers held by YANG, MANCHU, RONG, and other VILLAGE BOYS should be YANG-sized. You can make the flowers quite big to stand in visual contrast to SHEN's empty pot.)

**SETS**

- **Scene 1**— The façade of a palace is seen on the right side in scene 1. This can be done by drawing two pillars and a door on a large piece of Manila paper. On the left side is a garden. A backdrop can be painted showing trees, flowers, and nice landscaping. If a backdrop is not possible, simple cutouts of trees and flowers can be used.
- **Scene 2** — SHEN's house has a garden that can be seen on the left side. A table and three chairs are set up in front of it. Pots of plants, both flowering and non-flowering, are lined up near the edge of the stage. One pot is empty. On the right side are the trees and flowers used in scene 1.
- **Scene 3** — Several tables are spread out across the stage to depict a village market.
- **Scene 4** — Place a chair in the center of the stage for the Emperor's throne room. The chair is covered with satin fabric. Behind it is a backdrop showing a golden arc painted with nice designs.

