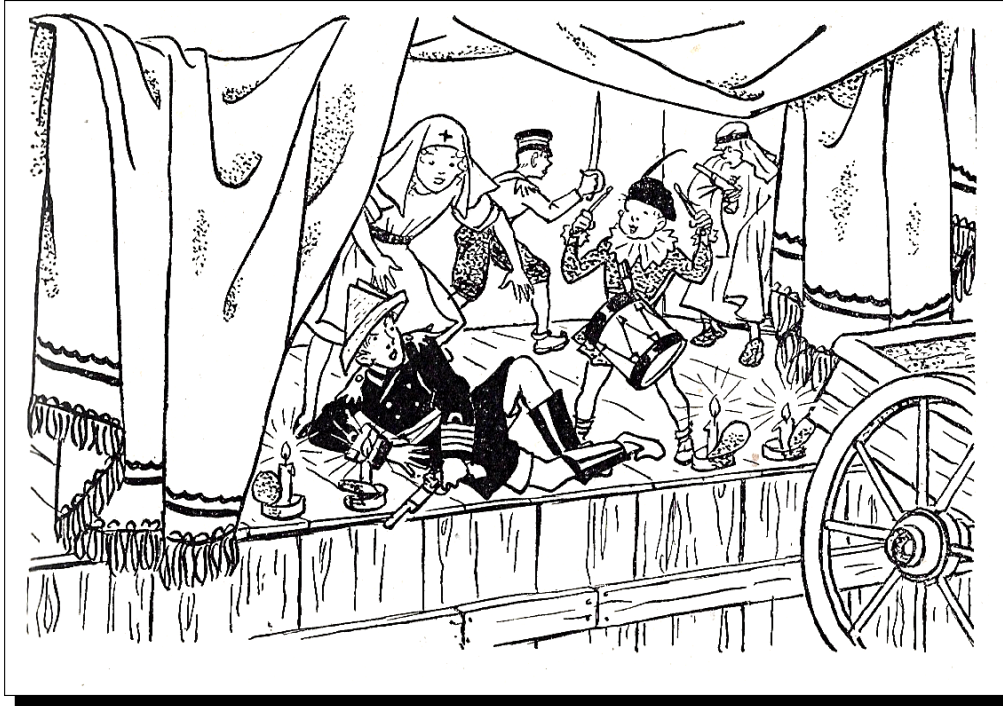


CHILDREN INVENTING PLAYS



The coach-house, which was a long low building, occupied now only by the old carriage, and a cart, had been a stable. It was built into the hill, and the old hay-house, at the upper end, was raised about five foot. This had struck us as a ready-made stage. We nailed our wings, made of brown paper, to the beams; hung our curtain, which was the schoolroom tablecloth, on a washing rope, and put down a row of candles, in guards cut out of tin, for footlights. Our play was a drama in which Harry was a king, a prime minister and a general, myself an admiral, and Kathy, first of all a nurse, and finally the general's wife. Anketel was the king's page and afterwards Kathy's son. All of us, of course, were also messengers, soldiers and sailors; each of us had three or four changes of costume in every act. The plot was so complicated that I can't remember anything about it except that Harry as the king was waging wars against three or four enemies, including the Germans, and Arab slave raiders, and that he was frequently wounded and several times nearly killed. I was also wounded, but only once, and not badly. **Kathy**, as nurse, tended us both; as the queen she begged us to protect the mothers and children from the slave raiders, and she also shifted scenery, fired off cap! pistols, beat drums and sometimes waved a sword with one bare arm projected from the wings, as part of the army or navy.

Most of this plot was carried on by messengers who came in and announced to the king, general or admiral that a battle had been lost or that one of his dearest friends had died a hero's death. Then he or I would make a long speech about the glory of dying for freedom.

Joyce Cary *A House of Children.*

Exercises

A) - 1. Use "wings" with different meanings in two or three sentences. — 2, What is a washing rope? (linen; to hang out; to dry). — 3. What is a barn? — 4. What were slave-raiders? (to capture). — 5. What used Katy to do in the plays? (both).

B) - *Mettre au présent de Kathy à la fin (Kathy... etc.).*

C) - *Traduire* : 1. Nous avons coutume de jouer dans une grange ou une remise. — 2, Les décors étaient changés par les acteurs eux-mêmes. — 3. Les machinistes sont des gens qui changent les décors. — 3, On allumait la rampe — 5. Les costumes des enfants avaient été faits avec de vieilles nappes et des couvertures qui leur avaient été données par une vieille amie de leur tante.

Vocabulary

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1. The actors and actresses (the **company**) have **memorized** ['meməraɪzd] their **parts** (the words they will have to speak on the stage). They are now getting ready for the **first night** (Fr. première), putting on their costumes ['kɒstjʊ:mz].

A bell rings, and the curtain rises (the curtain is rung up), **disclosing** [dis'klouziŋ] a **set scene** representing the palace of a king. You notice that there is no **prompt box** in England. The **prompter** ['prɒmtə] stands in the **wings**, on the right side of the stage (prompt side), ready to prompt the **players** ['pleɪəz: — 'pleəz].

During the interval between two acts the **scenery** ['si:nəri] is shifted (the **scene-shifters** change the scenes).

2. Yesterday we gave a play in an old barn. The **plot** (plan of the play) is so complicated ['kɒmplikeɪtɪd] that I can hardly **sum it up** (give a summary of it). It is about a king **waging** (making) war on another king because the latter keeps **raiding** his territory ['terɪtəri]. The first scene [si:n] shows several of the king's **generals** ['dʒenərəlz] and **admirals** ['ædmərəlz], **conspiring** [kən'spaɪəriŋ] against the king in an old **coach-house** (outhouse for carriages) of the palace. The **conspirators** [kən'spɪrətəz] are waving their **swords** [sɔ:dz], swearing to die for **freedom** ['fri:dəm].

When the play is **resumed** [ri'zju:md] (taken up again) in the next scene messengers ['mesɪndʒəz] keep coming to the king and his **Prime Minister** ['praɪm'mɪnɪstə] to give them news of the fight. Next you see the king, who has been wounded, being **tended** (looked after) by a nurse and his page. I am afraid our performance is very **crude** (not well finished). A few lights hang from the **beams** (the thick pieces of wood holding up the roof) although we do have **foot-lights** made of candles with **guards** (garde-feu) cut out of tin (Fr. fer blanc).