



Androcles and the Lion

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

AUTHORS: Elaine Lindy & Benjamin Knight, COUNTRY: Greece, GENRE: Adventure



CHARACTERS

ANDROCLES

LION

DIANA

QUINTUS (a centurion soldier)

CASSIUS (a centurion soldier)

DEXIUS (a centurion soldier)

MASTER / CROWD MEMBER #1

WARDEN / CROWD MEMBER #2

CROWD MEMBER #3

CROWD MEMBER #4

EMPEROR

If there are performance notes, they can be found on the pages following the script

Scene 1 – Forest

[**Stage Set:** A forest. There is a big rock that ANDROCLES can sit on. (**See Performance Notes** for how to create a forest look and how to make the rock.)]

[ANDROCLES enters the stage, rushing and panting. He stops at the middle and bends forward, as if trying to catch his breath. He is wearing a canteen or carrying a water jug. LION is lying down at the edge of the stage, blending in with the background.]

NARRATOR:

This play, “Androcles and the Lion,” is brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*.

The story was written many centuries ago by Aesop, a Greek slave. He wrote lots of famous fables. You’re about to meet our hero, the slave Androcles. (*gestures to Androcles*) Life as a slave in ancient Rome was very hard. And he lived under one of the cruelest master in all the city. Who can blame this poor soul for running away?

ANDROCLES:

(*pants, out of breath*) I think I’m deep enough in the woods now. No more of WASHING THE MASTER’S SMELLY TOGA FOR ME. This rock looks almost comfy (*takes a drink from his canteen or jug*). Ah, it’s good to be free. (*tries to get comfortable on the rock*)

[DIANA enters.]

DIANA:

(*to audience*) Behold! I am Diana – Goddess of the Hunt and Goddess of all the wild beasts! (*points to Androcles*) This man cannot see me.

LION:

(*stands and roars, not looking at Androcles*)

DIANA:

(*again to audience*) Ah, one of my wild beasts. As you cannot understand its language, I will translate for you.

[Note: DIANA will give words to LION’s sounds. If LION roars, DIANA will follow by talking in a threatening tone. If LION whimpers, DIANA will follow by talking meekly.]

DIANA:

This is what the lion said. (*in a loud, roaring voice*) Do I smell a human in my midst?

ANDROCLES:

(*to audience, exaggerating shock*) Omigosh!

LION:

(sees Androcles and roars louder and longer than before)

DIANA:

(also louder, similar to Lion) You! Human! You dare to enter my territory? I, the King of all Beasts?

ANDROCLES;

Omigosh, OMIGOSH! *(covering face)* I'm doomed!

LION:

(starts to roars, but then ends in a whimper)

DIANA:

(in a loud voice) I WOULD attack you, puny human. *(now sad)* But the thing of it is, my front paw hurts! *(whimpering and licking paw)* Ever since I ran through that thorn bush.

ANDROCLES:

(removes hands) Am I still alive?

LION:

(makes a pleading noise and nods at Androcles)

DIANA:

Human? Uh... could you help me?

ANDROCLES:

You're looking at me... like... almost like my Master's kitten. The only creature that was ever nice to me in my Master's house.

LION:

(thrusts out paw for Androcles to see)

ANDROCLES:

Oh, your paw looks really sore!

LION:

(whimpers)

DIANA

It IS! It hurts!

ANDROCLES:

(to audience) Dare I step closer? *(steps closer and leans over to get a better look)* My, my! That's one big thorn you have in your paw. That looks nasty!

LION:

(even louder whimpering sound, while rolling its head)

DIANA:

Big thorn! Nasty!

ANDROCLES:

No, wait a minute... You're not wanting me to take OUT that thorn, are you? *(to audience)* If I take out that thorn, it could hurt more than ever. I'm not crazy!

LION:

(flails about melodramatically, moaning and wailing)

DIANA:

(also flails about melodramatically) Woe is me! I will always have this big awful thorn in my paw! LIFE IS SO UNFAIR!

ANDROCLES:

All right, all right! No need to get carried away. Maybe I can help you after all. *(to audience)* I can't believe I'm actually considering doing this. *(to LION)* I'm going to need you to calm down first. Do you think you can do that?

LION:

(settles down and makes a whimpering sound, then thrusts out paw to ANDROCLES)

DIANA:

(whimpers too) O...kay.

ANDROCLES:

Hold still. *(ANDROCLES edges towards LION and grabs the thorn with two hands)* I am going to pull it out now. *(to audience)* Exactly why am I talking to this lion? *(to LION)* Okay. One, two, three – here we GO!

[ANDROCLES pulls back and wrestles to pull the thorn out of LION. LION moans as a tug-of-war over the thorn unfolds, then gives one particularly loud roar.]

LION:

(howls in pain) OWW!

DIANA:

(to audience, gesturing to LION) Well, you probably understood THAT.

[When ANDROCLES pulls out thorn, he falls a little backward and so does LION. LION rubs its head to ANDROCLES hands, like an adoring puppy.]

LION:

(purrs or whimpers)

DIANA:

Thank you. It is out! All gone now.

ANDROCLES:

Settle down. I still have to clean your wound. I'll just cover it with some leaves for now and tie them to stop the bleeding. I'll get some water from the creek to wash it clean. There, you might as well rest.

[ANDROCLES takes a fake leaf and wraps paw of LION.]

LION:

(whimpers)

DIANA:

Feels better already. My paw will be all right again. I can tell! Ah!!

[LION closes its eyes and lies down. DIANA tilts her head onto the back of her two hands, touching, then exits.]

LION:

(snores loudly)

DIANE:

You got that, right?

ANDROCLES:

Yes, that's good. Get some sleep. I'll be back in a few minutes with the water.

[ANDROCLES exits.]

Scene 2 – Prison

[**Stage Set:** A Roman prison scene. A table is placed on one side. There is a set of prison bars in the middle. (**See Performance Notes** for suggestion how to construct the bars.)]

[ANDROCLES is behind the prison bars. Centurion soldiers DEXIUS, QUINTUS and CASSIUS stand guard. MASTER stands in front of the prison bars angrily, with his hands on his hips.]

NARRATOR:

The Lion's paw healed fine. That was the good news. Androcles lived in the forest for months with the lion. But here's the not-so-good news. One day, a troop of Roman centurions was passing through the woods. They discovered Androcles and knew they could get a fat reward for returning him to his Master. So now our hero is locked in a Roman prison. Soon he will be returned to his master. (*gestures to MASTER*)

MASTER:

(*to ANDROCLES, who is behind bars*) Hah! You thought you could run away from me? You ungrateful wretch! (*to guards*) How did you find him, anyway?

QUINTUS:

He was living in the forest.

CASSIUS:

We were hunting this huge lion. We saw it drop a branch of berries at the mouth of a cave. This man came out and ate the berries. After the lion left, we nabbed the guy.

MASTER:

Good work!

DEXIUS:

He tried to talk his way out of it, but we know an escaped slave when we see one!

QUINTUS:

No fooling us!

ANDROCLES:

Your powers of perception are amazing.

MASTER:

Insolent slave! So this is how you repaid my kindness? You ran away! And after I gave you food and a place to live. For free!

ANDROCLES:

What are you talking about? I was your SLAVE!

MASTER:

What did you expect?

ANDROCLES:

Not to be beaten to my bones and starved all day long! I'm a human being. I will NEVER be returned to your service!

[ANDROCLES reaches out through the bars to attack MASTER. CASSIUS pulls MASTER back before ANDROCLES can make contact.]

MASTER:

Disgusting slave! How dare you try and touch me?!

[MASTER draws his hand to strike ANDROCLES through the bars, but WARDEN enters.]

WARDEN:

What is going on here?

MASTER:

Warden, I have HAD it with this slave, Androcles. He just attacked me! Of all the nerve! You know what? I will not take him back in service at my house. Keep him. Do your worst.

WARDEN:

You mean...?

MASTER:

You got it.

NARRATOR:

Uh-oh. No doubt they are talking about the cruelest punishment of all. If you know anything about Roman history, you know what I am talking about. If you don't, well, you are about to find out.

WARDEN:

(to audience, gesturing at ANDROCLES) This must be a smart one. Only a few are able to actually escape from their masters. *(to ANDROCLES)* Well, if you're so smart, you know what's in store for you.

ANDROCLES:

No, not that! The lions?! Have pity on me! Do not throw me to the lions!

WARDEN:

Too late for that. *(to CENTURION SOLDIERS)* Yep, this fiesty slave will last longer than most.

(smiles wickedly and opens the prison bars) Take him to the Colloseum (pronounce: kahl-ah-SEE-uhm)!

[DEXIUS, QUINTUS and CASSIUS take ANDROCLES out of the prison bars.]

Scene 3 - Colosseum

[**Stage Set:** Colosseum background. CROWD MEMBERS are dressed in simple white togas. CROWD MEMBERS #1-#4 whisper to one another, excitedly. To the side of the stage is a cage door. (**See Performance Notes** for how to create cage door). LION is behind the cage door.]

EMPEROR:

(*to audience*) Gentlemen!

[CROWD MEMBERS are instantly silent.]

EMPEROR:

From lowly plebeians (pronounce: PLEE-bee-inz) to high-born patricians (pronounce: pah-TRISH-inz)! Welcome all, to my glorious Colloseum, where the doomed meet their fate! What a show we have for you tonight! An escaped slave will face justice at the ferocious jaws of a hungry lion. How long will the poor fellow last? (*to off-stage*) Bring out the slave!

[ANDROCLES is brought into the arena by QUINTUS, DEXIUS and QUINTUS. ANDROCLES stands waiting at the rightmost part of the stage, shaking and afraid, holding only a small spear in his right hand.]

QUINTUS:

(*jeers and pushes ANDROCLES on the back*) Good luck! (*to audience*) As if luck would help him! (*stands by the cage door, guarding LION*)

ANDROCLES:

(*clenching his eyes shut*) Oh Jupiter! Oh Saturn! Please have mercy on me!

DEXIUS:

(*to CASSIUS*) I heard this beast is the most ferocious one in the stable.

CASSIUS:

Have you seen it pacing in its cage? The moment that cage door is open, it will pounce!

DEXIUS:

Quick, let's not miss it.

[CASSIUS AND DEXIUS join the CROWD MEMBERS.]

EMPEROR:

(*to audience*) Friends! Romans! Countrymen! An escaped slave will now find justice in the ring of the Colloseum! Are you ready? Let me hear you! (*CROWD MEMBERS are slightly enthusiastic*) What? Not getting into the spirit of things? Let me hear you! (*CROWD MEMBERS cheer loudly*)

EMPEROR:

All right, all right, enough! (*quickly stretches both hands outward in an umpire's expression to "stop"; CROWD MEMBERS instantly stop*)

[EMPEROR raises his right hand to signal for QUINTUS to open the cage door.]

EMPEROR:

(*shouts*) Release the beast!

[QUINTUS opens the cage door. LION comes out (*and DIANA follows from offstage*). LION stretches its legs slowly and bounces towards the direction of ANDROCLES.]

LION:

(*roars ferociously*)

DIANA:

Dinner-TIME!

ANDROCLES:

(*terrified*) That lion is huge! I'm dead. (*looks at spear*) What can this teeny-weeny spear do to a lion? That's it. My last moment on earth.

[LION circles ANDROCLES, snarling.]

ANDROCLES:

(*clenches eyes shut*) Okay, okay, I give up! Just eat me already!

[LION charges up to ANDROCLES but stops when it gets close. Sniffs to the right and left. LION stares at ANDROCLES with a puzzled look on his face.]

LION:

(*purrs gently, pretends to lick Androcles*)

DIANA:

My friend! How have you been?

ANDROCLES:

I said, you can eat me now. Don't draw it out. (*opens eyes*) Wait, it's YOU? My lion friend from the woods? With the thorn?

LION:

(*thrusts out paw for Androcles to see*)

ANDROCLES:

Well, say! Aren't we all healed up now? (*long pause, as Lion continues to hold out its paw*) You want a kiss? (*kisses the paw*) How does that feel?

LION:

(*purrs*)

DIANA:

I missed you. human...

QUINTUS:

What's going on?

CASSIUS:

I don't know.

DESIUS:

Why did everything stop?

QUINTUS:

I can't say.

MASTER:

I've never seen anything like this before.

CASSIUS:

Look, the Emperor is about to speak!

DESIUS:

What's he going to do?

CASSIUS:

Hush. Let's find out.

EMPEROR:

What is happening? (*points to Androcles*) You! What have you done? You have bewitched the beast!

[ANDROCLES approaches EMPEROR. As NARRATOR speaks the next few lines, ANDROCLES mimes whispering in EMPEROR'S ear as EMPEROR leans over to hear. No sound can be heard but they can both be seen making motions, as if in deep conversation.]

NARRATOR:

Androcles explained to the Emperor how he had pulled the thorn out of the lion's paw in the

forest. And how he and the lion had taken care of each other while they lived together in the cave.

[While NARRATOR speaks, ANDROCLES and LION mime out each various parts of the story, including ANDROCLES removing the thorn.]

ANDROCLES:

And that, Your Majesty, is what happened. This lion has treated me better than anyone I have ever known. (*looks to Master*). BY A LONG SHOT.

EMPEROR:

Quite a story. (*in a loud, deep voice*) Subjects, we have witnessed an extraordinary turn of events this day. (*to Androcles*) Because you, Androcles, among all others, managed to tame a wild beast, I grant you your freedom. You are no longer a slave. You are free to go!

MASTER:

(*double-taking*) Say, WHAT?

ANDROCLES:

(*to audience*) I'm free! (*bows to Emperor*) Your Majesty, I am deeply grateful. But before I go, may I make one request, if you please?

EMPEROR:

What is it, Androcles?

ANDROCLES:

To allow me to take the lion with me. Don't worry, he'll stay close to me. He won't bother anyone.

EMPEROR:

Why not? It's a day for surprises. (*to Centurion Soldiers*) Free the lion!

[ANDROCLES exits with LION and DIANA following behind.]

NARRATOR:

So Androcles and the lion went back to the forest to live. The lion always stayed by Androcles's side. Because of that, no one ever dared to bother him. Would you? (pause for two full seconds) I didn't think so. Androcles also had food every day supplied by his loyal and trusted friend. And so – and I must say, it is not every day you hear this expression in reference to a lion – they all lived happily ever after.

[If you have a curtain, close it now. If you do not, fade the lights. If you have no stage lights, all actors come on stage and bow to the audience.]

Performance Notes for Androcles and the Lion

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

- NARRATOR – plain modern-day clothing.
- ANDROCLES – Raggedy clothing that is dirty, torn, etc. Though his clothes are dishevelled, they can be a bright color, in order to make him stand out as an important character.
- LION wears yellow clothing and a fur mane and/or paper lion mask.
To make the paper lion mask: There are several ways this can be done. The easiest way is to use a paper plate. Color the inside of the plate yellow, and the outer ring orange. Optional: On the outer ring, you can cut along the plate ridges to create a fringe look and give the mane more texture.

Cut eye holes, making sure they will line up with the actor's eyes. Draw the rest of the face on, or cut out pieces of construction paper for the nose and whiskers and glue on. You can also use pipe cleaners for the whiskers.

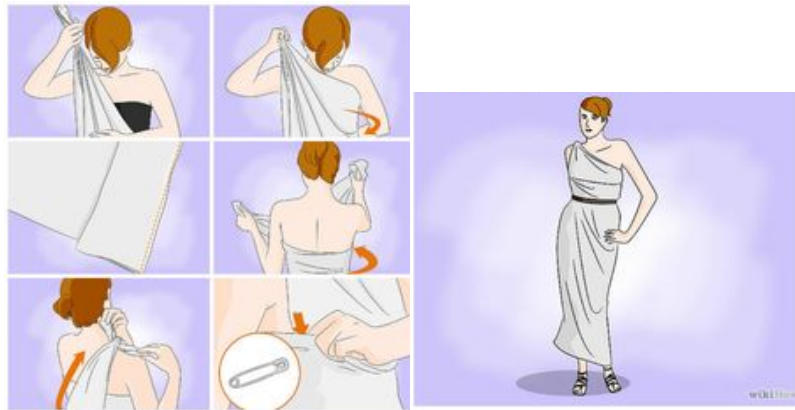
Punch holes on both sides, in the middle of the mask near the edge of the yellow face. Use string or yarn to tie the mask onto the actor's head.

Knot yarn in holes, and tie yarn together in back of head.



- DIANA wears a white toga (easily made from sheets) and an olive leaf crown/headband.

To make the toga: Start with a sheet, and wrap and pin like so:



To make the headband: Use green construction paper.

Cut a strip of paper about 1 1/2 inches wide. Measure it around the actor's head and cut to size, leaving a little bit of extra room.

Cut out lots of **leaf** shapes and glue them along the length of the strip, parallel to the strip. Leave a couple of inches at either end so that you can overlap ends and tape or staple together.



- CASSIUS, DEXIUS, QUINTUS and SENIOR OFFICER – Togas with armour- chest plate and soldier skirt (this could be made from cardboard, or taken from available Greek/Roman soldier costumes). They all have prop swords (made from cardboard) at their sides tucked into their skirts. They all wear sandals.

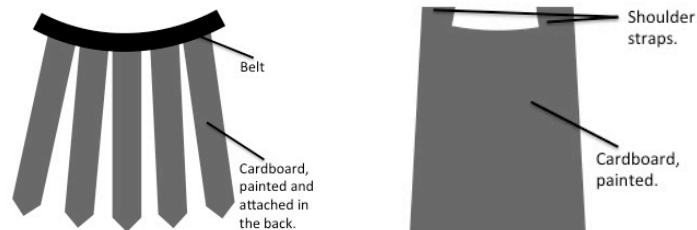
To make the armour: Use thin cardboard. Cut two equal-sized rectangles from the cardboard. (Measure the actor's torso and use those measurements to draw the rectangles on the cardboard, then cut them out.) These will be the chest plate and back plate.

Cut out two strips of cardboard, about three inches wide and a foot long. These will be the shoulder straps. Use these strips to attach the chest plate to the back plate, attaching them at the two corresponding top outer corners. You can use glue, tape, or brads, if the cardboard is thin enough. There should be enough room between the straps that the actor's head can fit. You can paint it or spray paint silver or gold.

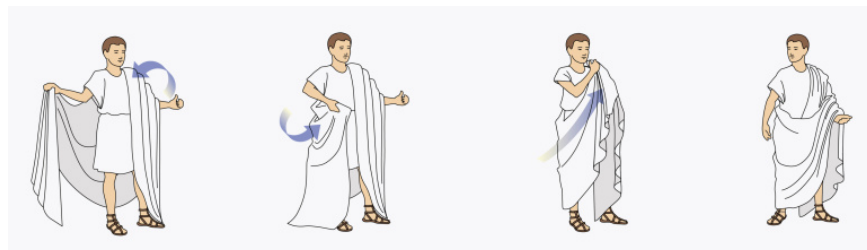
To make the soldier skirt: Use thin cardboard. Cut a long strip about 4 inches wide that will fit around the actor's waist, leaving a few extra inches. This will be the "belt" part of the skirt.

Cut several strips about 3 inches wide and 6 inches long. Cut one side of each strip into a triangular head. Attach these to the belt, leaving an inch or two between each one.

You can paint the same color as the plate, or paint black or brown. They can wear red clothes underneath, or red and white clothes.



- MASTER wears a bright blue toga.
To make the MASTER's toga: Start with a bright blue sheet, and wrap like so:



Optional: A brown belt or rope at the waist.

- EMPEROR wears white toga with a red shoulder sash and a gold olive leaf crown (Same as DIANA'S but use yellow paper or use white paper and paint it gold).

To make the EMPEROR'S toga: Start with a white sheet and wrap the same way as MASTER'S robe. Add a red sash that hangs on one shoulder and wraps around opposite hip.

Optional: A gold belt or sash around the waist.



PROPS

Scene 1

- Thorn (a piece of cardboard cut into a point on one end. LION can hold between fingers to give the appearance it is stuck in his hand.)

Scene 2

- Prison cell bars- this can be cut out of cardboard and held up by two stage hands.

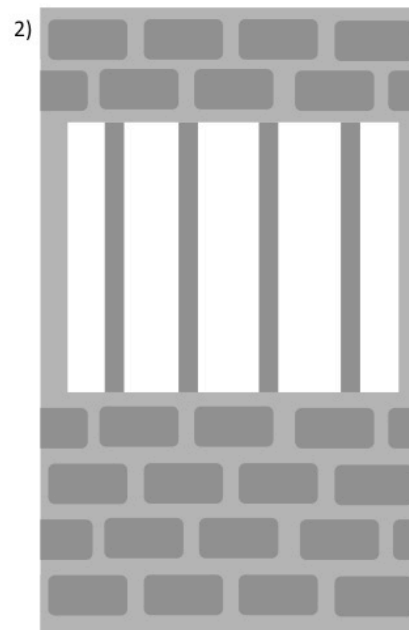
To make the cell door/bars: Start with a piece of cardboard about 5ft tall and 4ft wide. Cut out a window, about 2.5 ft tall and 3 ft wide. (Note: Make sure the window is situated so that when the actor playing ANDROCLES stands behind it, his upper torso and head will show.)

Cut strips of cardboard, about 1.5-2 inches wide and long enough so they can be laid length-wise across the window with some extra at each end. These will be the bars. Duct tape the bars to the frame. (Pic 1)

Paint the bars a dark silver/gray.

Paint the frame a lighter gray, and use a sponge to make bricks/stones in a darker gray or black. (Pic 2)

See pictures:



Scene 3

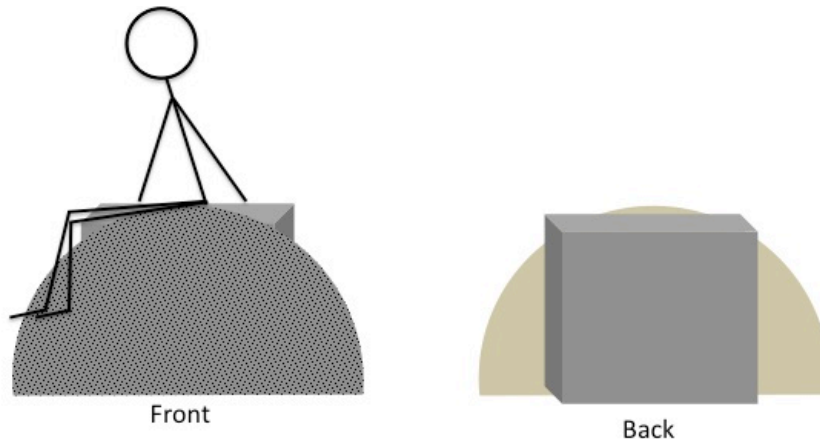
- A small spear- can be cut completely out of cardboard, or made by attaching a triangular piece of cardboard or poster board to the end of a stick.
- A cage door- You can use the same piece you made for the prison cell. If you want to create a different look for the cage door, you can paint the other side a different color, or you can make another separate piece.



SETS

If you have a backdrop, you can paint it to show a forest with many trees, flowers and bushes. This can stay up the whole time.

- **Scene 1** – You can cut out trees and leaves. You can cut a tree or two out of cardboard and stand against a chair or other object, or against the wall, if there is one. You can cut leaves out of construction paper and attach them to the trees.
If no trees, you can just cut leaves out of construction paper, and place them around the stage to give the essence of a forest.
Note: It may be good to make at least one leaf out of fabric, so that ANDROCLES can easily tie it around LION'S paw.
- A single flat rock sits on one side of the set, used as a seat by ANDROCLES. You can cut out of cardboard and paint. You can lean it against a stool, chair, or milk crate, and this way ANDROCLES can sit here, giving he appearance that he is sitting on the rock.
See picture:



- **Scene 2** – There is a table and single and chair on one side of the stage. A set of prison “bars” (see PROPS).
- **Scene 3** – A large throne for EMPEROR sits in the middle of the stage. You can use a regular chair and drape a piece of nice fabric over it, tying it in the back if needed. You can place a pillow or cushion on top of the fabric on the seat. A cage door (see PROPS.)
Optional: You can make a low “wall” by painting a long piece of cardboard, not too high, to place in front of the EMPEROR and other spectators. Have stage hands hold either end, so that it stands upright. The “audience” is behind the wall and the “fights” happen in front of it.