



A Donkey to Market

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

AUTHORS: Elaine Lindy & Lindsay Parker, COUNTRY: Cambodia, GENRE: Animal Tales



CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

DONKEY *(no speaking lines)*

GRANDSON

GRANDFATHER

FIELD OWNER; also VILLAGER #1

GIRL AT THE WELL #1; also VILLAGER #2

GIRL AT THE WELL #2; also VILLAGER #3

GIRL AT THE WELL #3; also VILLAGER #4

FARMER #1; also VILLAGER #5

FARMER #2; also VILLAGER #6

FARMER #3; also VILLAGER #7

CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER; also VILLAGER #8

**Performance notes can be found on the pages following the script*

Scene 1 – Outside Grandfather’s Home

[**Stage Set:** The stage is divided into three sections. The opening scene takes place at the very front of the stage. The stage is divided into three sections - the first section is for Scene 2 and shows FIELD OWNER’S pastures and a well, the middle section is for Scene 3 and shows a Customhouse's counter, and the 3rd section for Scene 4 shows the village of Kompang, with market stands and stalls. (**See Performance Notes** for set ideas, and how to make the well, the Customhouse counter, the market stands and stalls.)]

[DONKEY is on all fours, milling around and pretending to graze.]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

Hello, everyone. Welcome to “A Donkey to Market,” a folk tale from Cambodia. That's the donkey. (*Donkey looks up, startled*) And there's the market (*gestures to the set of the village of Kompang*) The story is brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*. (*Donkey shrugs and returns to grazing*)

[NARRATOR steps forward.]

NARRATOR:

Long ago in Cambodia, an old man once lived with his grandson. Together they raised a baby donkey—that’s called a “foal” (pronounce: FOLE). When the foal grew up, it became a handsome animal with smooth, brown fur.

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON enter. They come to the front of the stage, in front of all of the set pieces. GRANDSON is carrying a feed bucket and stalks of hay.]

GRANDSON:

Grandfather, please hand me some feed for the donkey.

GRANDFATHER:

Here you go. (*pats Donkey*) Just look at him. Our donkey is so plump and healthy.

[DONKEY acts proud and swishes her or his tail.]

GRANDSON:

Definitely! I have never seen a better-looking donkey.

GRANDFATHER:

Certainly makes you think about–

GRANDSON:

What?

GRANDFATHER:

Well the truth is, he would fetch a good price at market.

[DONKEY gasps and looks alarmed.]

GRANDSON:

What? We're going to sell him?

GRANDFATHER:

(pats Donkey) Not to worry, now. You'll have fun with your new owner.

[DONKEY is skeptical.]

GRANDFATHER:

Maybe your new owner will have fields of spinach!

[DONKEY is VERY interested.]

GRANDSON:

Well, I'm going to miss this donkey—but if you're sure we can find him a good home ...

GRANDFATHER:

Yep. We'll be sure of it. But finding the right buyer won't be easy.

GRANDSON:

Why is that?

GRANDFATHER:

Everyone in our village already HAS a donkey. *(ponders in thought for a moment)* You know, the village of Kompang (pronounce: KOM-pang) is far away. I'm guessing many families out there don't have donkeys yet. But how do we get our donkey all the way to Kompang without tiring him out? If he looks tired, he won't fetch the best price.

GRANDSON:

(to Donkey) You're a handsome guy, and we want you to look your best!

[Donkey beams.]

GRANDSON:

Grandfather! What if we walk next to the donkey instead of riding him? Then he won't get too tired.

GRANDFATHER:

What a smart fellow! Just like your grandfather. Why not? We're strong and healthy. It's a beautiful day to get started on a nice long walk. Let's do it!

GRANDSON:

Great! I'll get him ready.

[GRANDSON picks up the rope and places it around DONKEY's neck.]

GRANDSON:

(to Donkey) Ready?

[DONKEY nods.]

GRANDFATHER:

Let's go!

[GRANDFATHER, GRANDSON and DONKEY walk in a big circle, staying in front of the set pieces, and head toward FIELD OWNER.]

[FIELD OWNER enters and stands out in front of the well pretending to do farm work.]

FIELD OWNER:

(calls to Grandson and Grandfather) Hey there! Be careful, you two! The field is full of thorns.

[As GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON cross the field, they say "Ouch!" and "Oh, my!" as they pretend to come upon thorns.]

FIELD OWNER:

(to Grandfather and Grandson) Didn't you hear me tell you about the thorns? Yo! Shouldn't at least ONE of you ride that donkey? Why suffer the thorns?

GRANDFATHER:

Maybe the fellow has a point. (gets stuck by a thorn) Ouch! All right, then. Grandson, why don't you get up on the donkey? He's not strong enough to hold us both, and you're lighter. Go ahead, have a ride.

[GRANDSON pretends to get on DONKEY by straddling one leg over DONKEY, who remains on all fours, and then the other leg. Depending on the ability and inclinations of the actors, GRANDSON and DONKEY could move forward in a way such that when DONKEY walks ahead, GRANDSON also walks at the same pace. This way, it looks like GRANDSON is "riding" DONKEY. Alternatively, GRANDSON could straddle DONKEY but then stand behind DONKEY. This also gives the appearance that GRANDSON is "riding" DONKEY as GRANDSON and DONKEY move forward together. GRANDFATHER holds the rope.]

GRANDSON:

Ahhh, this this sure beats walking! Are you sure you're okay, Grandfather?

GRANDFATHER:

I'm fine, just fine. *(gets stuck again by a thorn and shakes his hand in pain, but mutters under his breath so Grandson doesn't hear)*

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON exit.]

[FIELD OWNER exits.]

Scene 2 – Field

[**Stage set:** This scene takes place on one side of the stage, an area that portrays a field. If you have a painted backdrop, it shows trees in the background and fields in the foreground. A well for hauling water is also onstage. (See **Performance Notes** for suggestion on how to create a well.)]

[FARMER #1, FARMER #2, and FARMER #3 enter.]

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON enter on the side of FARMERS, who are all standing in the field. FARMERS are talking to each other in low voices.]

FARMER #1:

(voice heard above the others) It's an outrage! You tell them.

FARMER #2:

Why should I? YOU tell them.

FARMER #3:

I can't bear this another minute. I'll tell them.

FARMER #2:

Good. You do that.

FARMER #3:

(approaches Grandson and Grandfather) Say, there. Where are you two headed?

GRANDSON:

To Kompang.

FARMER #1:

(steps up) That's a distance. And who is that older gentleman beside you?

GRANDSON:

My grandfather.

FARMER #1:

(voice laced with anger) Did you say your GRANDFATHER?

GRANDSON:

I... just said that?

[Gasps and more mumbling from FARMERS.]

FARMER #2:

(displeased) You see nothing wrong with your actions, young man?

GRANDSON:

What do you mean?

FARMER #3:

You're making your own grandfather walk behind! *(to audience)* WHAT is this world coming to? *(to Grandson)* Don't you have any respect for your elders?

GRANDSON:

But my Grandfather said—

FARMER #2:

And now you're blaming your own grandfather! This is too much!

GRANDSON:

Well, no, I mean... Well... Grandfather, I think they're right. I'll get down. Please, get up on the donkey.

[GRANDSON pretends to climb down by stepping over DONKEY to be in front of it; now GRANDSON is facing the audience. GRANDFATHER steps over DONKEY until he is completely behind DONKEY.]

FARMER #2:

Well, YOU told HIM.

FARMER #3:

Why should I even have to TELL him? *(arms upward)* Kids today!

[FARMERS exit, slapping each other on the back.]

[GRANDFATHER, GRANDSON and DONKEY gather themselves and pretend to talk among themselves for a few moments while GIRL AT THE WELL #1, GIRL AT THE WELL #2, GIRL AT THE WELL #3 enter and gather around the well. GIRLS pretend to talk happily among themselves.]

[GRANDFATHER, GRANDSON and DONKEY walk toward the well. As they do, GIRLS AT THE WELL. GIRLS AT THE WELL speak the following lines quickly.]

GIRL AT THE WELL #1:

Who's he?

GIRL AT THE WELL #2:

Who do you mean?

GIRL AT THE WELL #1:

That young man. Do you know him?

GIRL AT THE WELL #2:

(looking) Wish I did – cute!

GIRL AT THE WELL #4:

Wait a minute!

GIRL AT THE WELL #1:

What?

GIRL AT THE WELL #4:

That cute young man is forced to walk behind his elder like a SERVANT.

GIRL AT THE WELL #3:

Is there no end to what grown-ups will make us do these days? *(calls to Grandfather and Grandson)* Good sirs, where are you headed?

[GIRLS swoon.]

[GRANDFATHER, GRANDSON and DONKEY reach the GIRLS AT THE WELL.]

GRANDFATHER:

We're headed to Kompang to sell this donkey. *(Donkey looks alarmed, then Grandfather says assuringly to Donkey)* We're finding you a good home, remember? *(Donkey looks relieved, then Grandfather turns to Girls)* But we still have a long way to go.

GIRL AT WELL #1:

(pointing at Grandson) Is that young man your servant?

GRANDFATHER:

Why no! This is my grandson.

GIRL AT WELL #2:

Well, then, I don't mind saying that you should be ashamed of yourself!

GRANDFATHER:

What? Have I offended you?

GIRL AT THE WELL #3:

HE *(points to Grandson)* doesn't deserve to trudge behind you. You're treating him like a servant!!

GRANDFATHER:

Oh, I didn't think of it that way! (*to Grandson*) Here. Why don't we BOTH ride the donkey? Climb on up.

[GRANDSON straddles DONKEY. Now both GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON are behind DONKEY. DONKEY groans under the "weight."]

GRANDFATHER:

(*to Donkey*) You all right?

[DONKEY makes a noise as if trying to be obliging. DONKEY moves offstage. As DONKEY exits, walking on all fours, GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON likewise walk behind DONKEY as if they are both "riding."]

SCENE 3 – Customhouse

[**Stage set:** This scene takes place in the middle of the stage. If you have a backdrop, you can paint it to resemble the inside of a nice building. Paint brown vertical lines to give the illusion of wood paneling.]

[CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER enters and stands behind a counter. (See **Performance Notes** on how to simulate a counter.)]

[Note: Later in this scene, DONKEY will be replaced by a cardboard donkey. Until the cardboard donkey is brought onstage, it should lean against the side of the stage. If the cardboard cutout is painted on one side, lean it against the stage with the unpainted side facing the audience. The cardboard donkey will be “tied up” with rope. (See **Performance Notes** on how the cardboard donkey can be made to stand.)]

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON enter. They are still “riding” the DONKEY.]

CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER:

Good afternoon. Where are you two going?

GRANDFATHER:

To Kompong.

CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER:

And why are you taking this fine beast to Kompong, may I ask?

GRANDFATHER:

To sell- I mean, to find him a good home (*pats Donkey*).

CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER:

(*to audience*) Some people have no sense at all. (*wags finger at Grandfather*) You really think you will get a good price for this donkey if you work him so hard? Can't you hear him panting? (*Donkey pants*) The poor beast cannot carry you both!

GRANDFATHER:

I suppose you're right.

CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER:

Of course I'm right!

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON look at each other. They both pretend to climb off of DONKEY.]

CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER:

(crossing arms) That's better.

GRANDFATHER:

Give us a minute, will you?

[GRANDFATHER ushers GRANDSON a few steps away from CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER, and then they stop.]

GRANDFATHER:

This is a puzzle.

GRANDSON:

That's for sure! If the donkey walks next to us, that's not right. If I ride the donkey, that's not right. If you ride the donkey, that's not right either. And if we're BOTH on the donkey, we're REALLY in trouble. No matter what we do, we're always wrong!

GRANDFATHER:

There must be a good way to get this donkey to market. We just have to think about it.

[Holding their chin in their hands, GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON pass each other and each one walks a few steps in the opposite direction. They stop and turn around, facing each other (but not looking at each other). Once again, they approach each other, crossing and taking a few more steps in opposite direction. They stop and turn around, facing and this time looking at each other.]

GRANDFATHER:

Anything?

GRANDSON:

Well, the only thing I can think of is tying the donkey to a pole and carrying him. You carry him at the front and I'll carry from behind. Then the donkey won't get tired, and no one will scold us.

GRANDFATHER:

Brilliant idea! Just what I was thinking myself! Look, here's a pole.

[GRANDSON takes the pole.]

GRANDFATHER:

We just need to get this donkey roped up to the pole. Then we'll hoist him up.

GRANDSON:

Okay. *(to Donkey)* Come here, boy.

[DONKEY looks at the pole and begins to gallop around the stage.]

GRANDFATHER:

Now come on. You'll be upside down, , won't that be fun?

[DONKEY runs around even faster.]

GRANDSON:

Hang on. I'll get him!

[GRANDSON runs around after DONKEY. DONKEY stays ahead of GRANDSON.]

GRANDFATHER:

Whoa, boy, slow down. It's okay. Come here. I've got some spinach for you.

[GRANDFATHER pulls some spinach out of his pocket. DONKEY stops and cautiously walks over to GRANDFATHER. GRANDFATHER feeds the spinach to DONKEY.]

[GRANDSON walks over to GRANDFATHER and DONKEY.]

GRANDSON:

That did it, Grandfather.

GRANDFATHER:

Now this donkey will get the ride of his life!

[DONKEY walks offstage. They tie the rope to the feet of the cardboard donkey and then to the pole with the picture side facing the audience. The cardboard donkey is then flipped upside-down. GRANDSON and GRANDFATHER hoist the donkey up, acting as if the donkey is a great weight, and rest the pole on their shoulders, GRANDFATHER in front and GRANDSON in back.]

GRANDFATHER:

It took some time, but we finally got this right!

[VILLAGER #1, VILLAGER #2, and VILLAGER #3 enter. GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON walk towards VILLAGERS, carrying the cardboard donkey on the pole.]

[VILLAGERS point and laugh. They snicker to each other and gently tap each other on the shoulder.]

VILLAGER #1:

Hey, look at that!

VILLAGER #2:

Two men carrying a donkey! As I live and breathe.

VILLAGER #1:

Ha, ha. Have you ever seen anything like that in your life? (*calls to Grandfather and Grandson*)
Seems like you fellows have missed the whole point of having a donkey!

VILLAGER #2:

The part about how how PEOPLE—NOT the donkey—are supposed to be riding!

VILLAGER #3:

Wait till I tell my wife about this!

GRANDFATHER:

We happen to be following a well-thought through plan.

VILLAGER #1:

Is that right? (*laughs*)

GRANDSON:

We're going to Kompang to sell the donkey. And this way he won't get tired.

VILLAGER #2:

Well, you're right. HE definitely isn't the one who's going to get tired!

[VILLAGERS laugh and move offstage.]

GRANDSON:

(*calling to Villagers as they exit*) You'll see. We know what we're doing. (*to Grandfather*) Right?

GRANDFATHER:

Uh ... sure.

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON exit, holding the pole with the cardboard donkey.]

Scene 4 – Town of Kompang

[**Stage set:** This scene takes place at the other end of the stage. If you have a backdrop, you can paint a street with a few building and houses to represent the town. Use cardboard cut-outs that signify village shops and stalls. (See **Performance Notes** for a description on how to create this effect).]

[VILLAGER #4, VILLAGER #5, VILLAGER #6, and VILLAGER #7 of Kompang enter. They mimic doing business, trading things and talking to each other. Then VILLAGERS #4-#7 freeze.]

[GRANDFATHER, GRANDSON and cardboard donkey enter from the opposite side of the stage as the villagers. GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON carry in the cardboard donkey.]

GRANDSON:

I give up! There's no right way to bring this donkey to market.

GRANDFATHER:

People are so difficult.

GRANDSON:

We tried EVERYTHING!

GRANDFATHER:

Here's a thought. Let's do what WE think is best, and go back to our original plan. We'll let the donkey walk to town. What do we care what other people say!?

GRANDSON:

Yeah! Let them say it! Good idea, Grandfather!

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON high-five. Then they set down the cardboard donkey and untie him. They stand in front of the cardboard donkey as they do this. Stagehands move the cardboard donkey offstage. DONKEY re-enters the scene.]

GRANDSON:

It can't be far to Kompang now. Is it?

GRANDFATHER:

We're almost there.

[VILLAGERS #4-#7 unfreeze.]

[GRANDFATHER, GRANDSON, with the cardboard donkey, walk toward the area portraying the Village of Kompang, formerly the section of the stage used for area outside of GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON's home in Scene 1, and redecorated as indicated prior.]

[VILLAGERS #4-#7 appear interested in DONKEY as GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON walk toward them. GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON set down the cardboard donkey and untie him. They stand in front of the cardboard donkey as they do this. Stagehands move the cardboard donkey offstage. DONKEY re-enters the scene.]

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON pet DONKEY.]

[VILLAGER #5 steps forward.]

VILLAGER #5:

What a great looking donkey!

GRANDFATHER:

Thank you. You, sir, have excellent taste in donkeys.

VILLAGER #5:

(to Villager #6) Come take a look at this donkey.

VILLAGER #6:

Such a handsome fellow. May I pet it?

GRANDFATHER:

Sure, why not?

[VILLAGER #6 pets DONKEY. DONKEY is happy.]

VILLAGER #7:

(calls from the group of Villagers) Hey, can I check out your donkey, too?

GRANDFATHER:

If Donkey doesn't mind, we don't.

[VILLAGER #7 and VILLAGER-#8 gather around to pet and admire DONKEY. DONKEY preens.]

VILLAGER #5:

I don't suppose you'd be willing to discuss selling this donkey.

[GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON look at each other.]

GRANDFATHER:

We might consider it.

VILLAGER #5:

Great! We don't see many donkeys of this caliber around these parts. How about coming back with us to our spinach farm and talking it over?

GRANDFATHER:

You have a spinach farm?! (*to audience*) I have a feeling this is going to work out.

[VILLAGER #5, VILLAGER #6, GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON start to walk offstage. They stop when VILLAGER #6 speaks the next line.]

VILLAGER #6:

I've never seen you around here before. Say, are you from one of the larger villages? The two of us are thinking about moving away from Kompang.

GRANDFATHER:

Why is that?

VILLAGER #6:

It just seems that in a small town, everyone has something to say about what you're doing. Don't you sometimes just want to do things your own way?

GRANDFATHER:

(*smiles, to Grandson*) Oh, from time to time.

[GRANDFATHER puts his arm around GRANDSON. GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON exit, along with VILLAGER #6 and VILLAGER #6.]

[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 A Donkey to Market

THREE WAYS THAT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS CAN UTILIZE THIS PLAY:

1. Students can read the play out loud from their seats. In this case, the students read their lines and do not read the stage directions that are in italics and brackets.
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. Student in the play can make simple costumes and/or sets from paper. When the scenes change, the characters could walk to the side of the room, behind the audience and then come back on stage.
3. Students can perform the play onstage. This will take much more prep work by both the teacher and students. In this case, costumes can be created, and students can design sets.



COSTUMES

- GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON – Plain, bland colors and baggy pants rolled or cuffed. They wear triangle shaped Cambodian hats. No shoes if possible.
 - DONKEY – Gray clothes. Make ears from fabric and attach to a headband. Make a tail from gray fabric or from cardboard and pin or Velcro to the waist band of pants. Optional: A piece of circular white fabric attached to the front of the gray shirt, as the stomach fur.
 - FARMERS/MALE VILLAGERS – Plain cloths, dull colors, old shoes and same hats as GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON.
 - WELL WOMEN/FEMALE VILLAGERS – Long, flowing skirts, handkerchiefs covering their hair and no shoes if possible.
 - CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER – Wears clothing that looks like a uniform including a button-down shirt and overcoat. Pants and coat should be the same color.
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PROPS

Scene 1

- Feed bucket.
- Stalks of hay. You can make these flat, by painting rectangular pieces of cardboard to look like hay, or you can use small cardboard boxes- tape them up and paint them to look like hay. Another option is to use a hay bundle. You can cut long strips of cardboard and yellow paper, bundle them altogether, and tie it up with a string.
- Feed for GRANDFATHER to give to GRANDSON. You can get a sack or a brown paper bag and write “FEED” on it in black marker. GRANDFATHER can reach into the bag and pretend to pull out a handful of food.
- Bag for GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON to take on their journey.

Scene 2

- Buckets at the well.
- Farming tools (safe and age appropriate). You can use plastic tools or make some from cardboard.

Scene 3

- Clipboard and papers for the CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER.
- A pole (5' long)
- Rope to tie up the donkey
- Carrots for GRANDFATHER to put in his pocket. These can be real or made from cardboard.
- Fake Donkey. This can be made out of cardboard so that the GRANDFATHER and GRANDSON can tie it up. Use a large piece of cardboard from an old refrigerator box. Cut out and paint to look like a donkey. Cut another piece of cardboard about 1 ft by 1 ft, fold it in half, and attach the fold to the back of the cardboard donkey using duct tape. This forms a hinge and helps it stand up. Paint the cardboard donkey to match the costume of the real DONKEY. Make another set of ears from fabric to match DONKEY'S ear headband and attach to cardboard donkey.

Scene 4

- Food and goods for the VILLAGERS to carry and sell. Bags of grain, etc, for VILLAGERS to sell. You can get sacks and/or paper bags and write
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“GRAIN”, “RICE”, etc. on them. You can also make fake fruit and vegetables and other items from cardboard.

- Cardboard Donkey (same as Scene 3).



SETS

If you want to, paint a backdrop to show a basic countryside, with a forest, a field, some streams, etc. This will stay up throughout the play. The items on stage will signify the locations:

- 1) On one side of the stage, place the well.
- 2) In the middle of the stage, place the CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER’S counter (See below for details on how to make).
- 3) On the other side of the stage, place the stalls and signs for the town (Made the same way as CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER’S counter).

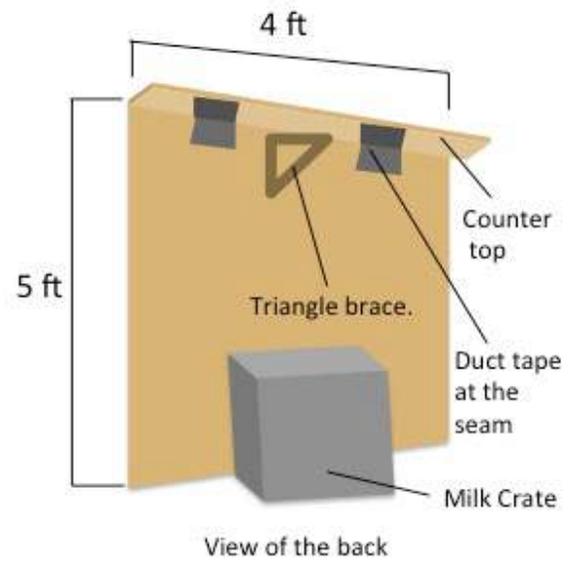
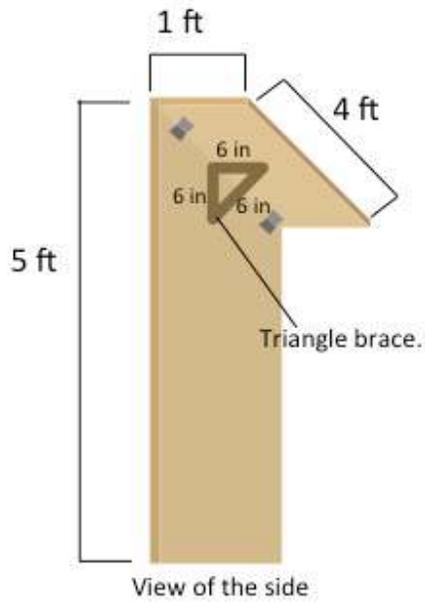
Scene 1: This scene can happen at the front of the stage. GRANDFATHER, GRANDSON, and DONKEY can stand in front of all the set pieces.

Scene 2: This scene takes place on the side with the well. The well can be made from a plastic outdoor trashcan. Paint the trashcan with gray round circles with white outlines to make it look like stone.

Scene 3: This scene takes place in the middle of the stage. The counter for the CUSTOMHOUSE OFFICER can be made from cardboard. Paint a large piece of cardboard (4’x5’) to look like wood paneling (brown vertical streaks). Attach a milk crate to the back of it using wire. This will help it to stand upright and keep it secure.

Paint another long piece (4’x6”) and attach it to the top- the 4’ side- using duct tape at the seam underneath. This will be the counter top. Make a 6” triangular out of cardboard and attach it under the counter top, in the middle. This will help hold it up. This provides a surface on which you can set papers and a clipboard.

See images:



Scene 4: This scene takes place on the other side of the stage. You can use tables for the stalls, or make them out of cardboard, much the same way as the CUSTOMHOUSE COUNTER.