



Performance Notes for Ali Cogia and the Merchant of Baghdad

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— Simple, nice clothes.
- ALI COGIA— Black or tan pants, a white button-up shirt, a colourful red vest and a turban.
- CUSTOMERS— Simple plain colored clothes, such as pants and button up shirts, or dresses.
- SALMAN—Black or tan pants, a white button-up shirt, and a colourful blue vest.
- SALMAN'S WIFE— A simple colored dress and a bright blue headscarf.



- CALIPH— Black or tan pants, a white robe, and an orange turban (to suit most depictions of Harun ar-Rashid). However, in Scene 5, he wears a ragged hooded robe to disguise his appearance.
- HAMID, MALIK, and TAJ— Simple rags.



PROPS

Scene 1

- A colourful jar/jug for ALI COGIA to show audience. This can be a regular jar/jug painted with bright colors.
- “Wares” for ALI COGIA to sell. These can be various fabrics, cloths, and spices. Spices can be represented with small plastic containers, painted various colors. Note: One piece of fabric is for CUSTOMER #1 and one jar of cinnamon is for CUSTOMER #2.
- Olive jar. Jar can be plastic, to avoid breakage. You can paint the word “Olives” on the jar.
- Olives, to be put into jar. Olives can be small ovals cut from cardboard and painted green, or any small round object that is green.
- A handful of gold coins. These can be plastic coins or circles cut from cardboard and painted yellow or gold. Each CUSTOMER will have one of these coins, and the rest will be put into the olive jar.
- A bag for ALI COGIA.

Scene 2

- Two bowls and two spoons, one each for SALMAN and SALMAN’S wife.
- Olive jar, same as in Scene 1.
- Olives, that will be poured from Olive jar, same as Scene 1.
- Gold coins, that will be poured from Olive jar, same as Scene 1.

Scene 3

- Olive jar, same as in previous scenes.
- A rug or blanket (to act as a rug) for SALMAN to hold up.

Scene 4

- Olive jar, same as in previous scenes.



Scene 5

- A few rocks that HAMID, MALIK, and TAJ can toss, kick, and play with. These can be carved from Styrofoam and painted gray.

Scene 6

- Olive jar, same as previous scenes.
- Pouch of gold coins (can be filled with anything)



SETS

The stage is divided into two sections- One side of the stage is the Bazaar, a fixed location throughout the play. The other side of the stage acts as two locations- first, it will be SALMAN's house and warehouse, and then it will become Caliph's Court. If you want to make a backdrop, you can paint it to show the Bazaar on one side and an interior wall on the other.

Scene 5 will be a pop-up scene at the front of the stage, in front of all the set pieces.

Scene 1— The Bazaar. There is a table on stage, which hold ALI COGIA's wares. You can also place various boxes and baskets around to fill the stage. If you have a backdrop, this section can show market stands with various goods.

Optional: You can also make a sign for ALI COGIA's market stand and attach it to the front of the table.

Scene 2— Salman's house/Warehouse. Closer to the middle of the stage, there is a table with two chairs. The table should be small and easy to move, and could even be a rolling cart with a table cloth.

To the side of the furniture there are a handful boxes (can be empty), and stacked rugs or blankets. This acts as the warehouse. Boxes can be glued or taped to each other in stack(s), so they will be easier to move.

Note: Before Scene 2 starts, SALMAN or a STAGE HAND can place the Olive jar somewhere behind a box.

Scene 3— The Bazaar, same as in Scene 1.

Optional: You can make a sign for SALMAN's rugs to replace the sign for ALI COGIA's wares.

Scene 4— Caliph's court. At the end of Scene 2, STAGE HANDS remove the boxes, the rugs/blankets, the table and the chairs.



The Caliph's throne is brought on. The throne can be a simple chair covered in nice blanket/fabric which should be a bright color, such as red, purple, or gold. Another option is to leave one chair from the previous scene and have STAGE HANDS bring on the blanket/fabric to cover it.

Scene 5— Streets of Baghdad. The action in this scene happens at the front of the stage, in front of the other sets.

Optional: You can make a small wall from cardboard, for CALIPH to hide behind. The Boys can also throw their rocks at this wall.

Scene 6- Caliph's court, same as in Scene 4.

