

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL is one of the world's major dramatic licensing agencies, specializing in Broadway, Off-Broadway and West End musicals. Since its founding in 1952, MTI has been responsible for supplying scripts and musical materials to theatres worldwide and for protecting the rights and legacy of the authors whom it represents. It has been a driving force in cultivating new work and in extending the production life of some of the classics: *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Les Misérables*, *Annie*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Music Man*, *Evita*, and the complete musical theatre works of composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim, among others. Apart from the major Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, MTI is proud to represent youth shows, revues and musicals which began life in regional theatres and have since become worthy additions to the musical theatre canon. MTI shows have been performed by 30,000 amateur and professional theatrical organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, and in over 60 countries around the world. Whether it's at a high school in Kansas, by an all-female troupe in Japan or the first production of *West Side Story* ever staged in Estonia, productions of MTI musicals involve over 10 million people each year.

Although we value all our clients, the twelve thousand high schools who perform our shows are of particular importance, for it is at these schools that music and drama educators work to keep theatre alive in their community. MTI shares with these educators the goal of raising the next generation of theatre artists and audiences. To help these educators, it has taken a leading role in theatre education by creating MTI THEATRICAL RESOURCES, a "theatrical tool box" designed to help not only ensure the success of each musical production, but also to establish the study of musical theatre as a permanent part of the school curriculum. These resources include: STUDY GUIDES designed to bring the study of specific shows into the classroom; MTI REHEARSCORES® which provide unlimited rehearsal accompaniment via an easy-to-use, fully interactive computer program on disk; professional TV SPOTS allowing companies to affordably advertise on television in local markets; LOGO PACKS to aide in poster and program design; TRANSPOSITIONS-ON-DEMAND to allow flexibility in casting and musical key changes; and VIDEO CONVERSATIONPIECES™ featuring video seminars with artists such as Martin Charnin, Stephen Sondheim and Scott Ellis discussing the creation of their shows from inception to production.

MTI is also a leader in providing materials to meet the increasing demand for symphonic arrangements of popular theatre music. The MTI CONCERT LIBRARY offers arrangements of selected songs, as well as full scores from Broadway shows.

Musicals are America's premiere contribution to the theatre and MTI is firmly committed to supporting and nurturing a musical theatre that will continue to develop and flourish into the next century.



LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Book and Lyrics by **Howard Ashman**

Music by **Alan Menken**

Based on the film by **Roger Corman**

Screenplay by **Charles Griffith**

Originally Produced by the **WPA Theatre** (Kyle Renick, Producing Director)

Originally Produced at the Orpheum Theatre, New York City
by the **WPA Theatre**, **David Geffen**, **Cameron Mackintosh**
and the **Shubert Organization**

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Characters

SEYMOUR: Mid-twenties and balding. Our insecure, put-upon, florist's-clerk hero.

AUDREY: His co-worker and the bleached-blonde, Billie Dawn-like, secret love of his life.

MR. MUSHNIK: Their boss. A failure of a Lower East Side Florist.

ORIN: A tall, dark, handsome dentist with a black leather jacket and sadistic tendencies. (The actor who plays him also plays a BUM, CUSTOMER, BERNSTEIN, MRS. LUCE, AGENT, and PATRICK MARTIN.)

CRYSTAL, RONNETTE, CHIFFON: Three black female street urchins who function as participants in the action and a Greek chorus outside it.

THE PLANT (AUDREY TWO): An anthropomorphic cross between a Venus Flytrap and a warty avocado. It has a huge, nasty-looking pod which gains a shark-like aspect when open and snapping at food. The creature is played by a series of puppets that get bigger and bigger with each scene. (The first time we see THE PLANT it is one foot tall. The last time we see it, it fills the entire stage.) Its voice (from an offstage mike) sounds like Wolfman Jack and sings hot, funky blues.

Synopsis

Prologue

A VOICE, not unlike God's, can be heard. It describes a deadly threat to humanity's existence. This deadly threat surfaced (as most deadly threats do) in the seemingly most innocent and unlikely of places.

CRYSTAL, RONNETTE, and CHIFFON come on and introduce the musical with the title song ("Little Shop of Horrors"). Singing in the style of girl groups from the sixties, they warn the audience to beware of the dangers which will happen in the course of the story.

Act I, Scene 1

The clock slowly moves from nine to ten a.m. in Mushnik's Skid Row Florists as an earsplitting crash echoes from the back room. SEYMOUR, in the back room, assures MUSHNIK that nothing is broken.

As the clock hits two o'clock, AUDREY, Mushnik's dizzy blonde employee, comes in with a black-eye. Even though he has had no customers all day, Mushnik scolds her tardiness as another crash erupts from the back room. Noticing Audrey's black-eye, Mushnik suggests that her boyfriend is NOT a nice boy. Audrey reminds Mushnik that you don't meet nice boys on skid row.

Seymour comes on with trays of repotted plants and promptly sends them flying when he trips on his own feet in a dorky manner. Mushnik starts to yell at Seymour, but Audrey stops him. Seymour admires Audrey's eye makeup. Fed up with his existence, his lousy business, and his misfit employees, Mushnik clears Ronnette, Crystal, and Chiffon off his stoop and tells them to go to school.

Crystal says there's no such thing as "bettering yourself" on skid row and she, Ronnette, and Chiffon describe their lives downtown ("Skid Row"). They can work uptown as clerks for jerks, but they always have to come downtown.

Audrey joins in the song and complains that all the downtown guys are jerks and longs for something better. Seymour joins in the song as he wonders why he was set on the earth. He remembers that as an orphan, Mushnik took him in and forced him to work in the shop. Seymour constantly prays to get out of skid row. That sentiment is shared by Audrey and everyone who lives on skid row.

At six o'clock, without having even one customer, Mushnik announces that he is closing the flower shop for good. Seymour suggests that the shop should move in a new direction. He has been working on a strange and interesting plant which they could display in the window to attract customers. Because Seymour could not identify the plant in any book, he decided to name it Audrey Two. Mushnik thinks displaying the plant is a ridiculous idea. At the same time, a CUSTOMER shows up asking about the strange and interesting plant in the window. As the urchins back him up, Seymour describes how he bought the plant from an old Chinese man during a total eclipse of the sun ("Da-Doo"). Fascinated by the story, the Customer decides to buy one hundred dollars worth of roses.

After the Customer leaves, Mushnik puts Audrey Two in the window and offers to take Seymour and Audrey out to dinner. Audrey declines because she has a date with her professional rebel. Seymour is still able to go to dinner, but Mushnik orders Seymour to stay with Audrey Two who is wilting and looks unhealthy.

Left alone with the plant, Seymour does not know what the plant needs. He sings about how he's given it everything a plant could need. What more could this plant want—blood? On the word, "blood", Audrey Two perks up, and Seymour realizes that a few drops of human blood will make Audrey Two grow... and grow... and grow ("Grow For Me").

Act 1, Scene 2

Seymour is interviewed on a radio show as a botanical genius because he has seemingly invented a new breed of plant life. Seymour reminds the listeners

that Audrey Two is on display at Mushnik's Skid Row Florists. Although he is unhappy that Seymour did not give the shop's address, Mushnik sings about his new-found success. When Seymour returns to Skid Row with Audrey Two (who by this time is snapping at the humans), he is greeted by Chiffon, Ronnette, and Crystal who celebrate Seymour's success ("Ya Never Know").

Audrey rushes on and apologizes to Seymour for missing the broadcast. She was handcuffed to her boyfriend. Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal suggest Audrey get a new man—preferably a little botanical genius. In the song, "Somewhere That's Green", Audrey dreams of the life that she and Seymour could have in the suburbs.

Act 1, Scene 3

A week later, the flower shop is undergoing a major renovation ("Closed for Renovation"). Because Audrey Two has been attracting a lot of customers, Mushnik, Seymour and Audrey are making much needed improvements to the store. Audrey Two is now five feet tall with spiked leaves.

After the song, Mushnik asks Seymour about a very important funeral account. When Seymour admits that he's forgotten about it, Mushnik yells at him and storms off. Audrey tells Seymour that she thinks Mushnik's too hard on him. Seymour feels he owes Mushnik for getting him out of the Skid Row Home for Boys. Audrey thinks Seymour should raise his expectations and offers to take him shopping for new clothes. Surprised that Audrey wants to be seen in public with him, Seymour asks if she's free that night. Unfortunately, Audrey has a date.

On the street, ORIN SCRIVELLO, in a black leather jacket, asks Crystal, Ronnette, and Chiffon where the flower shop is, so he can pick up his date. Realizing that Orin gave Audrey her black-eye, the girls descend on Orin and beat him up. Orin offers a truce and explains that he is not a monster. Actually, his work requires a fascination with pain and suffering. He is a dentist and describes his life's calling to cause pain and misery ("Dentist!").

Orin pops his head in Mushnik's Skid Row Florists Shop. Amazed by Audrey Two, Orin tells Seymour that he shouldn't stay on skid row because the plant is a ticket to something better. Audrey tries to explain that Seymour is loyal, but Orin stifles her conversation and tells Seymour he should think about quitting Mushnik's. Orin and Audrey leave quickly with handcuffs.

Mushnik, having eavesdropped on what Orin said, returns to the shop. While Seymour worries about Audrey, Mushnik worries about losing Audrey Two if Seymour leaves. Mushnik offers to adopt Seymour as his son ("Mushnik and Son").

Happy that his luck has changed but feeling dizzy from feeding Audrey Two, so much of his own blood, Seymour starts to go to get some dinner. The plant wilts, but Seymour assures it that he will feed it in a few days. Suddenly the plant speaks. "Feed me!" it says. Seymour says he has no more blood left, but the plant demands more. The plant tells Seymour that he will have fortune and success if he just feeds it. Seymour has strong reservations about killing people, but the plant reminds Seymour that a lot of people deserve to die. At this very opportune moment, Orin and Audrey return. Audrey has forgotten her sweater, and Orin slaps her around for it. Seymour and the plant reach the same conclusion—"the guy sure looks like plant food" ("Git It").

Act 1, Scene 4

Seymour finds Orin at his office and points a gun at him. Orin easily takes the gun from Seymour, wrestles him into the dentist's chair, and threatens him with the drill. Orin pulls out a container of laughing gas, complete with a gas mask and puts it on himself to get high. In a gassed-out blissful moment, Orin disappears behind the chair. Seymour realizes that he should kill Orin now while he has the opportunity, but he can not bring himself to pull the trigger. Meanwhile, Orin can not get his gas mask off and realizes that he could asphyxiate to death. After much internal ethical debate, Seymour decides not to remove Orin's gas mask. Consequently, Orin laughs himself to death ("Now (It's Just The Gas)").

Act 1, Coda

As Seymour feeds Orin's body parts to the plant, Crystal, Ronnette, and Chiffon sing about the creepy things happening in the flower shop.

Act 2, Scene 1

The sign in the flower shop window now reads "Mushnik and Son". Audrey and Mushnik busily take flower orders over the phone while Ronnette leads another customer into the store. Late for a meeting with his lawyer, Mushnik runs out as Seymour runs in after making another delivery. Audrey asks him to help her with the phone orders. Audrey and Seymour handle a deluge of phone calls from customers ("Call Back in the Morning"). When the clock hits six, Audrey and Seymour tell the callers to call back in the morning, and they sit down exhausted.

Seymour tells Audrey that he's been shopping for a new wardrobe and shows off his new black leather jacket to her. Speechless and overcome with emotion, Audrey runs out. Seymour, taking off the jacket, follows her outside and tells her that he just wanted to impress her. Audrey admits that she is relieved that Orin is missing, however, she feels guilty because she secretly wishes that he has met with a foul and terrible accident. Seymour tells her that she deserves a nice guy, but Audrey says she only meets creeps in the Gutter, a nightclub where she works in cheap and tasteless outfits. Seymour sees the girl underneath the makeup and he vows to be her friend ("Suddenly Seymour"). Joining in the song, Audrey hopes Seymour will help her find the girl inside her. After their duet, Seymour and Audrey embrace passionately, but Mushnik walks in on them.

Staring at Seymour, Mushnik ominously asks Audrey if she'd like to visit her dentist friend. Seymour reminds Mushnik that Orin disappeared, and sends Audrey home. When Audrey is gone, Mushnik notices little red dots on the floor. Seymour says he spilled punch. Mushnik says he was called to the

police station because a Mushnik's shopping bag was found in Orin's office. Then, going through the trash (which is only collected once a month), Mushnik finds a dentist's uniform. As the plant begins to sing, Mushnik accuses Seymour of killing the dentist in order to get his girl. Seymour maintains his innocence until Mushnik shows him a picture of his baseball cap that was found in Orin's office. Seymour agrees to go to the police station with Mushnik, but tells Mushnik that he forgot the combination to the safe and left the day's receipts in the plant. As Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal sing, Mushnik knocks on the plant. The plant opens wide, lets Mushnik in, traps him inside, and starts to chew ("Supertime").

Act 2, Scene 2

As Seymour leaves the flower shop, Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal accost him like squealing teenage fans. They tell Seymour that another Uptown big shot is looking for him. Offers are coming in fast and furious as BERNSTEIN from NBC offers Seymour his own show, MRS. LUCE offers Seymour a magazine cover and an AGENT offers him a lecturing tour. Realizing that his success will come with more killing, Seymour decides to kill the plant. However, he thinks of lovely Audrey who might not like him without his plant. Determined to keep Audrey, Seymour takes the offers as the girls remind us that the meek always get what's coming to them ("The Meek Shall Inherit").

Act 2, Scene 3

The plant, now taking up most of the stage, demands to be fed. Busy writing his lecture tour speech, Seymour promises that after they are photographed for Life Magazine, it will never be hungry again. The plant continues to demand food, and Seymour becomes hysterical.

Audrey comes in and worries that the stress of running the shop is getting to Seymour. She asks when Mr. Mushnik will return. Seymour reminds her that he is visiting his sister in Czechoslovakia and will be gone a long time. Seymour then asks Audrey if she would still like him without Audrey Two. Audrey admits that she'd still love him. Hearing this, Seymour decides to kill

the plant after Life Magazine takes their picture; then Seymour and Audrey would have the suburban life together they always dreamed of. Audrey can not understand what Seymour is talking about. Assuring her that he will explain everything, he sends her home.

The clock strikes midnight, and the plant continues to demand food. Seymour offers to get it a pound of rare roast beef. The plant, seeing Audrey return, agrees. Seymour leaves.

Unable to sleep, Audrey needs to talk to Seymour. In a reprise of "Suppertime", the plant calls to Audrey who is surprised that it can talk. The plant tells her that it needs to be watered. When Audrey comes close to it with the watering can, the plant grabs her. Starting to eat her, the plant tells her to relax because she'll soon be with Mushnik and Orin. Seymour charges in and pulls Audrey out of the plant.

Weak and dying, Audrey asks Seymour about Mushnik and Orin. Seymour admits that he had fed them to the plant. Audrey tells Seymour to feed her dead body to the plant, so that the plant will bring him all the wonderful things he deserves. Seymour refuses, but Audrey convinces him that if she's inside the plant, they will always be together. She sings a reprise of "Somewhere That's Green" and dies in Seymour's arms. As the music swells and the sunset goes nuts, Seymour feeds Audrey's body to Audrey Two.

PATRICK MARTIN from World Botanical Enterprises finds Seymour shattered by Audrey's demise. Martin wants to take leaf cutting from Audrey Two and sell them to every florist in America. Pretty soon, every household in America will have its own Audrey II. Martin goes back to his truck to get some flower pots.

Seymour realizes that the plant has been planning world conquest all along. The plant tells Seymour that it is too late to stop it. Seymour pulls out a gun and shoots the plant. The plant laughs. Seymour forces the plant to eat rat poison. The plant just spits it out. Seymour grabs a machete and climbs into the plant. The plant closes in on him and spits out the machete.

Martin returns with pruning shears and flower pots. Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal take clippings of the plant and describe how the plants ate Cleveland, Des Moines, Peoria, New York, and this theatre. Audrey Two grows larger as the faces of Seymour, Mushnik, Audrey, and Orin appear in the plant's flowers. The faces warn the audience not to feed the plants ("Don't Feed The Plants"). As the company continues to warn to the audience not to feed the plants, vines come down over the audience's head, and the theatre is engulfed with by the plant. Lights go to black as the audience is eaten.

The End

Themes and Topics to Explore

Questions and Assignments

Our study guide includes a wide-ranging list of themes and topics suggested by the style and content of *Little Shop Of Horrors*.

Avenues for exploring each theme and topic are suggested in the form of:

Questions and Discussion Prompts:

Designed to prompt in-class discussions before and after viewing or reading the show.

Assignments, Research, and Writing Prompts:

Designed to be researched and written out of class.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS AS DRAMA

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Tell the story of *Little Shop of Horrors* in one sentence.
- Tell the story in one paragraph, including all the characters.
- Tell the story as it develops, action by action, through the play.
- Tell the story as a series of causes and effects. List each action taken by a character (cause) and what happens in the story as a result (effect).
- When did the action of *Little Shop of Horrors* first start to grab your attention? Where did you start to be interested or excited?
- Turning points are key moments in our lives or in the lives of characters in dramas. A turning point changes the course of our lives forever. What are the key turning points in for the characters of *Little Shop of Horrors*?
- What is the theme of *Little Shop of Horrors*? How are theme and plot different?

ASSIGNMENT/WRITING PROMPTS

- Retell *Little Shop of Horrors*, setting it in a different geographical location and time period. What impact does this retelling have on the story?
- List elements of the themes in *Little Shop of Horrors* which you believe to be universal.

THE CHARACTERS IN LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is the difference between major and minor characters? Who are the major characters in *Little Shop of Horrors*? Who are the minor characters?

- Who was your favorite character? Why? Who is your least favorite? Why?
- With which character did you sympathize most? Why?
- Did you recognize anything that reminded you of yourself in any of the characters?
- Did any of the characters change or grow in the course of *Little Shop of Horrors*? Try to identify the specific moments of change.
- What does the title of the show tell you about the characters? If you had to think of a different title for this piece, what would it be?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Make a list of details about one character in *Little Shop of Horrors*. How did you learn this information—from dialogue, lyric, music, or design elements such as costumes?
- When playwrights create characters, they often invent “character maps” before they begin to write. Character maps list everything about a character from their favorite color to their political beliefs. A character map shows the history of the character before the play and tells us what is in their pockets and their hearts. Write a biographical character map for a character from *Little Shop of Horrors* based on details of your own invention. Tell their “back stories” (back stories are the histories of characters in a play or film before we meet them).
- Imagine someone is going to write a play about you. Create a character map about yourself. Write a short story about the character described in your map who wakes up one day to discover that they are now fifteen years older than they were when they went to sleep.

STORYTELLING IN LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is a story? What is the function of storytelling in a society? Between generations?
- What is the first story you ever remember hearing? Reading for yourself?
- Who are storytellers in modern life? List all the ways in which stories are transmitted from one person to another in contemporary culture.

ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Orally tell a story from your own life in a compelling and dramatic way. Write the same story down. How are the experiences of telling a story and writing it down different? Which is the more powerful means of expression?
- Tell a continuous story. One person begins a tale and tells it for two minutes. Then another person picks up the tale and adds their continuation of the story for two minutes. Then, another person in the group adds their two minutes. What happens to the story as it is passed from one person to another?

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS AS SATIRE

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is satire?
- In what ways does *Little Shop of Horrors* satirize science fiction?
- In what ways does *Little Shop of Horrors* satirize conventional musical comedies?

ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITING PROMPTS

- *Little Shop of Horrors* satirizes the Faust legend. Read the story of *Faust*. In what other musical styles has the story been told? Listen to the opera *Faust* and read and listen to *Damn Yankees*. In what ways does *Little Shop of Horrors* satirize *Faust*. Write your own contemporary satire of the *Faust* legend.
- *Little Shop of Horrors* satirizes the conventions of “B” movies. What are “B movies? What are some other “B” movies. What do they often seem to have in common? In what ways does *Little Shop of Horrors* satirize them?

RONNETTE, CHIFFON, AND CRYSTAL AS GREEK CHORUS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why do Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal sing “*Little Shop of Horrors*” at the beginning of the musical? What information do they give the audience?
- How would you define a Chorus? How do Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal fit into your definition of chorus?
- A Chorus in Greek tragedy comments on the story and makes things happen within the story. How do Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal do this?
- What are the different roles that Ronnette, Chiffon, and Crystal take on in the course of the musical? Why do they take on those different roles?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Read one of the following plays: *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles, *Antigone* by Sophocles, *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, *The Bacchae* by Euripides.
- Who are the Chorus in the play?
- How does the Chorus comment on the staging?

- How does the Chorus set up the world of the play?
- How does the Chorus move the story along?
- What are the Chorus doing at the end of the play? Have they changed in any way from the beginning?

SKID ROW (DOWNTOWN): DRAMA IN PLACE

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

- How does the Skid Row setting affect the story? How does Skid Row influence the actions of Seymour, Audrey, and Mushkin?
- Would the story work if the characters were rich?
- Is “uptown” better or worse?
- Where do the characters want to be?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Choose a place where you go everyday. Describe the place. What can one do in the place? What can one not do — what are the restrictions of the place?
- Into that place, put a character who wishes to leave. How does the place prevent the characters from leaving? Does the character leave?

DA-DOO: EXPOSITION

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why do the girls sing while Seymour tells the story of how he found Audrey II?

- How would the scene be different if Seymour told the story without back-up singers?
- How would the scene be different if Seymour sang a song about how he found Audrey II?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Tell a story. Then tell it again as you sing sections of it. Why did you choose to sing in certain places? How does the singing change the story?
- Exposition is discourse or dialogue designed to convey information usually about a character's past or an event that has already occurred. Through exposition, the audience learns about what happened before the play started. Look at two other dramatic works (plays, musicals, or movies). How is the exposition handled in those works?

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why is Audrey Two a plant?
- What do most plants need to survive?
- What are some other varieties of plants?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Do research on carnivorous plants. Where do they live? What do they eat? Why are they important to the environment?
- Design your own carnivorous plant. What would it eat? Where would it live? What is the name of the plant?
- Choose a place you visit everyday. Make up a situation where you find a killer plant there. Does the plant live or die? How will you feed the plant?

THE DENTIST

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why is Orin a dentist? Why did he become a dentist?
- Describe your own dentist experiences. Are they scary? How does your dentist make the experience less scary?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- How does one become a dentist? Where does one train to become a dentist?
- Choose a different profession for Orin. Rewrite the lyrics of "Dentist!" to fit this profession. How does his new profession reflect his character?

AUDREY

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What does Audrey want? What prevents her from getting it?
- Why does Audrey stay with Orin?
- How is Audrey changed by falling in love with Seymour?
- Why does Audrey want her dead body placed in the plant?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Write down a physical description of Audrey. What does she look like?
- Based on what you learn in the musical, write Audrey's life story. Then, write a scene from her life that happened before the musical begins.

MONSTERS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- In your own words, describe a monster. Who is the monster in *Little Shop of Horrors*? Why?
- Besides the Plant, are any of the other characters monsters?
- What is the difference between a good monster and a bad monster?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Take an everyday object (an object you see or touch everyday) and turn it into a monster. Make the monster your friend. What does the monster destroy? What does the monster give you? Will you let the monster live or die?
- Write a story where your best friend becomes a monster. Will you still be friends?
- Who are the “monsters” in your own life?

THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why does Seymour feed Mushnik to the plant?
- Why doesn't Seymour kill the plant after the plant eats Mushnik?
- What sacrifice does Seymour make by allowing the plant to live?
- What does the lyric line “The meek are gonna get what's coming to them by and by” mean to you?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- In the song, “The Meek Shall Inherit”, Seymour chooses to keep the plant alive. However, later in the musical, he must live with the consequences of his choice when Audrey dies. What other choices does Seymour make in the musical? Are there any situations where he had no choice?
- A Catch-22 is a situation with two equally undesirable alternatives. Any option one takes in that situation will have a bad result. For example, if Seymour lets the plant live, he will have to kill people to feed it. If Seymour kills the plant, he loses fame, fortune, and Audrey. Invent a situation for a character you create where there’s a Catch 22.

POP SONGS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- How are songs in musicals different from pop songs (songs you listen to on the radio or CD)? How are they the same?
- What other musicals use popular song form?

ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Take your favorite pop song and write a scene around it. Make the singer of the pop song into a character in a short musical. What happens to the character before he/she sings the song? How is he/she different after he/she sings the song? What impels the character to sing?
- Change the gender, age, or profession of the character in the pop song. How does that change the context of your short musical?
- Listen to the scores of *Rent*, *Hair*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Jekyll & Hyde* and/or *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Are the songs in these musicals pop songs?

MUSICAL INFLUENCES

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Does the music place *Little Shop of Horrors* in any specific time period?
- Are there any examples in *Little Shop of Horrors* where you felt that you had heard the music (or similar music) before?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Listen to music by The Supremes, James Brown, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, and Jim Morrison. Compare the music in the show with music by the show's influences. What qualities do the two share? How is the music in the show different?
- Make up your own song for a killer plant. Bring in an already existing song which is similar to the song you had in mind. Why did you choose that particular song?

PUPPETS

Audrey Two is a series of puppets used for dramatic effect in the production of *Little Shop of Horrors*.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is a puppet?
- Name some puppets used in movies and TV. How do they heighten reality?
- Is Audrey Two believable as a character?
- How do the Audrey Two puppets heighten the reality of the musical?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Take one of your favorite television shows or movies and turn one of the characters into a puppet. How does that change the story?
- Do research on the history of puppetry and international puppet theatre. How has puppetry changed throughout the years? How is puppetry different in different countries?
- Do research on: Roman Paska, Jim Henson, Julie Taymor, Bill Baird, or Ralph Lee. Who was his/her influences? How has he/she contributed to or changed the puppetry art form?
- Research Martin P. Robinson who created the original Audrey II puppets. What was his inspiration for designing them?
- Design your own Audrey Two puppets. How will the character grow? How will the puppets be maneuvered? What will the puppets look like? How will the character talk?

THE TRAGIC-COMIC ENDING

The musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*, uses conventions of tragic-comedy. Tragic-comedy is a modern form of drama. At its simplest, tragic-comedy can be a comedy with an unhappy ending (or in some cases, tragedy with a happy ending). In tragic-comedy, there is no beauty, no heroism, no higher truth, and no nobility. Beautiful things are destroyed, and a terrible beauty is born.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What happens at the end of *Little Shop of Horrors*?
- What is Audrey Two's goal? Does Audrey Two achieve it?
- Why does the musical have to end this way?

- Foreshadowing is when future events in a musical are set up by events which happen early on. How was the ending foreshadowed in the beginning of the musical?
- Why do the heads of the plant's victims tell us to not feed the plants?
- What are the beautiful things in *Little Shop of Horrors*? Do any of the beautiful things change? What happens to the beautiful things?
- What does the audience learn at the end of the musical? How can this be applied to everyday living?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Write the next scene after the musical ends. What happens in the scene? Where and when is the next scene set?
- Choose and write an ending from one of the following:
 - Audrey lives but Seymour dies
 - The Plant dies but Audrey and Seymour live
 - Orin and Seymour live but Audrey dies
 - Mushnik and Audrey live but Seymour dies
 - Orin and Audrey live but the Plant and Seymour die
 - Mushnik and Orin live but Audrey, Seymour and the Plant die
- How does your new ending change the overall story? Should the ending be happy? Should the ending be sad?

HORROR MOVIES VS. HORROR MUSICALS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Can horror be as effectively presented on stage as it can be presented on film? Why? What can each medium do to create fear and apprehension that the other cannot?

- Were you ever scared while watching the musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*?

ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Learn about the making of the original *Little Shop of Horrors* (1960). Do you think the filmmakers could or would make that film today?
- Learn about the development of the musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*. Why do you think the authors of the musical chose to adapt a classic horror film?
- Take a scene from your favorite scary movie. Turn it into a scene from a musical. How would the scene be different? Where would the song be? What would the music sound like?
- Write a synopsis and scene from your own horror film. What makes the story and the scene scary?
- Why do we enjoy being scared while viewing films and theatre?

ADAPTATION AND MUSICAL THEATRE

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- *Little Shop of Horrors* is based on the film, *Little Shop of Horrors*, by Roger Corman. Musical theatre works are frequently adapted from sources such as films, plays, novels, folk tales, short stories, and television shows. How many examples of musical theatre works that were adapted from other sources can you name?
- Name five musical theatre works that are original and not based on other sources.
- What does a team of musical theatre collaborators add to a work from another medium in the process of adapting it for the musical stage?

ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITING/RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Watch Roger Corman's film, *Little Shop of Horrors*. Think about the important ways in which the show differs from the original film. What are the qualities of the film that make it good source material for a musical?
- What are the source works on which the following musicals were based:
 - Fiddler on the Roof*
 - Hello, Dolly*
 - Sweet Charity*
 - The King and I*
 - Cabaret*
 - Guys and Dolls*
 - A Little Night Music*
 - South Pacific*
 - Les Misérables*
 - Cats*
- Select a "B" movie that you think would make a strong musical theatre work. Why do you think this piece sings? What about it is inherently musical? What can music add to its existing form?
- What elements of the source will be hard to transfer to musical theatre form?
- Write a two page description of the musical theatre work based on your source.
- What role will music play? Will the work be all sung? Will it include dialogue? What role will dance play in your work? What will the musical style of your adaptation be?
- Write a scene from your musical and indicate where the song will be.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS AS MUSICAL THEATRE

QUESTION AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Would *Little Shop of Horrors* have been as successful as a straight play without music? Why or why not? How does the score heighten the basic storyline? How does it move the action forward? What do we know because of the music that we might not know otherwise?
- How does music contribute to our understanding of the larger themes in the show?
- How did music and lyrics evoke time and place for you?
- Discuss the ways the music is indispensable to the characters?
- Discuss the ways in which music and lyrics can compress and elevate the importance of information.
- What role does music play in your life? If you were to choose moments in your life worthy of being set to music, what would they be?

ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITING/RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Why do some theatre song lyrics rhyme? Write a few verses in prose about something you are wishing would happen and then write it in rhyme. How is the experience of writing in the two forms different?
- Select two songs from *Little Shop of Horrors* from the following:
 - “Little Shop of Horrors”
 - “Downtown (Skid Row)”
 - “Grow For Me”
 - “Ya Never Know”
 - “Somewhere that’s Green”
 - “Closed For Renovation”

“Dentist!”
“Mushnik and Son”
“Git It”
“Now (It’s Just The Gas)”
“Call Back In The Morning”
“Suddenly Seymour”
“Suppertime”
“The Meek Shall Inherit”
“Finale (Don’t Feed The Plants)”

Summarize the contents of these songs. Discuss:

What do we learn about the character or characters who sing the songs?

What do we learn about their philosophies?

What do we learn about the larger themes of the show from the songs?

What makes the character or characters sing at these moments? Why do they sing instead of talk? What pushes them into song?

What do the songs accomplish in terms of action? Where does the song begin and where does the song end?

Every dramatic scene has a main beat or a central moment of importance. Do the songs you chose become the main beat of the scenes in which they appear?

Do the songs exist in real time, suspended time, or compressed time? In otherwords, do they represent the amount of time they use on the stage? Do they speed up time or slow down time?

What is the physical action of the character or characters during the songs?

- Imagine you have been asked to create a new song for the show. Who would sing it? Where in the show would it take place? What would it be about? What kind of music would it involve?

CREATORS OF MUSICAL THEATRE

- The musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*, was written by Howard Ashman (book and lyrics) and Alan Menken (music).
- Read a biography or autobiography of another famous musical theatre collaborator or collaborative team. Report on their creative and/or collaborative process.
- See, read, and listen to other works by the authors to obtain a broader view of their approach to their craft and a deeper understanding of their artistic sensibilities.

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

- Design your own sets and costumes for *Little Shop of Horrors*. Explain the reasons for your choices.
- Read about set designers and lighting designers to learn more about their role in creating musical theatre.

CREATE YOUR OWN MUSICAL

- How do ideas begin? Have you ever begun a project with a simple idea?
- Give examples of great ideas or inventions that have begun with simple thoughts or images.
- Write a story based on a scene from *Little Shop of Horrors*. Use this story as a basis for a musical.
- Outline your musical scene by scene.

- Make a list of the characters.
- Make a list of the musical segments you might include.
- Will your work include dance? When will the characters dance?
- Try to write the first scene, a turning point scene, and the final scene of the musical.
- Try to write a lyric or melody for one of the musical segments.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- Write a review of a performance of *Little Shop of Horrors*. You may wish to include any combination of the following elements in your review:
- Did the show hold your interest and why?
- Describe the manner in which the themes and characters were presented to the audience. What was the dialogue like?
- What was the structure? How did the musical begin? How did the musical end?
- Describe the way music and lyrics worked in the show.
- Describe the sets, costumes, lighting, and musical accompaniment. How did these elements add meaning to the show?
- Discuss the effectiveness of the performers.
- Discuss the ideas presented in the show. Analyze their importance to your reader.
- Explain why your reader should make an effort to see the show.

APPENDIX

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

ALAN MENKEN (Composer). Stage credits include *Beauty and the Beast*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Christmas Carol*, *King David*, *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater*, *Kicks*, *Real Life Funnies*, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Weird Romance*. Stage awards include Best Score - Tony nomination, Outer Critics Circle Award; Best Musical - New York Drama Critics Award, Drama Desk Award, London Evening Standard Award, Olivier Award, Dora Award, Outer Critics Circle Award and L.A. Drama Critics Award. Film credits include *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Newsies*, *Pocahontas*, *Life With Mikey*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Hercules*. Film awards include four Academy Awards and three Golden Globe Awards for Best Score, four Academy Awards and four Golden Globe Awards for Best Song ("Under the Sea," "Beauty and the Beast," "A Whole New World," "Colors of the Wind"). Other notable achievements include 10 Grammy Awards, including Best Song of the Year ("A Whole New World"), a Billboard number one album (*Pocahontas*) and number one single ("A Whole New World") and BMI's Richard Kirk Award. Other credits include the score for "*Lincoln*" (ABC mini-series), the songs "My Christmas Tree" from *Home Alone 2* and "The Measure of a Man" from *Rocky V*.

HOWARD ASHMAN (Lyricist) wrote the lyrics for Disney animated films: *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin* (three songs). He was a Producer on *The Little Mermaid* and Executive Producer on *Beauty and the Beast*. With composer Alan Menken, he received two Oscars and two Golden Globes for Best Song ("Beauty and the Beast" and "Under the Sea") and four Grammys. He received an Oscar nomination with Mr. Menken for "Friend Like Me" from *Aladdin*. As Author, Lyricist and Director for the record-breaking stage musical *Little Shop of Horrors*, Mr. Ashman received two Outer Critics' Circle Awards, a New York Drama Critics Circle Award, a London Evening Standard Award and a Drama Desk Award. For the film

version of *Little Shop Of Horrors*, he received Best Screenplay nomination from the Writers Guild and, with Mr. Menken, an Oscar nomination for Best Song. He was Author, Lyricist and Director of *Smile* for which he received a Tony nomination for Best Book. His other credits include *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*; *The Confirmation*; Artistic Director, WPA Theatre (1976-1982). Born in Baltimore, Mr. Ashman died at age 40 of complications due to AIDS.

ROGER CORMAN (Director of the film, *Little Shop Of Horrors*). Born in Detroit on April 5, 1927, Corman received a bachelor's degree in engineering from Stanford University in 1947. After a stint in the navy, he took a job at 20th Century Fox and by 1949 was a story analyst at the studio. After leaving Fox, he did post-graduate work in modern English literature at Oxford's Balliol College. When he returned to Hollywood, he worked briefly as a literary agent. In 1953, Roger Corman sold his first screenplay, *HIGHWAY DRAGNET*, to Allied Artists and served as associate producer on the film. With the proceeds of the sale he made *THE MONSTER FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR* the following year on the budget of \$18,000. Corman began producing a wide array of low-budget features for American International Pictures in a variety of genres—westerns, sci-fi, hot rod, and rock and roll movies. In 1957, Corman turned out nine films—some of which were completed in two or three days. In 1960, he made *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* which was shot in two and a half days on standing studio sets about to be torn down. After the success of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* and other films, Corman procured larger budgets. Throughout the sixties, Corman's cycle of Vincent Price/Edgar Allan Poe films earned him international acclaim. In 1964, he became the youngest producer/director to receive a retrospective from the French Film Institute. Other films from the sixties include "biker" movie, *WILD ANGELS* (1966) starring Peter Fonda and Nancy Sinatra, and *THE TRIP* (1967) written by and starring Jack Nicholson. In 1970, he founded his own production and distribution company, New World Pictures. During New World's first year, all eleven pictures distributed showed substantial profits. In addition to distributing such cult classics as *ROCK AND ROLL HIGH SCHOOL*, New World also released films in the United States by prominent directors like

Ingmar Bergman, Francois Truffaut, Federico Fellini, Akira Kurosawa, and Werner Herzog. In 1983, he sold New World pictures and formed a new production company, Concorde-New Horizons, whose films include: *SPACE RAIDERS*, *DEATHSTALKER*, *LOVE LETTERS*, *SUBURBIA*, *REFLECTIONS IN THE DARK*, and *SHOPPING*. In 1990, Corman wrote his autobiography (with Jim Jerome), *HOW I MADE A HUNDRED MOVIES IN HOLLYWOOD AND NEVER LOST A DIME*.

ABOUT LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Little Shop of Horrors started as a low-budget horror film (released in 1960) written by Charles Griffith and directed by Roger Corman. There were some standing sets about to be torn down at a small rental studio, and Corman asked if he could shoot on it for a few days. He and Griffith wrote the script in ten days in various coffee houses around Hollywood. Working fast with very little money, they shot the film in two days and a night. After it was released, *Little Shop of Horrors* became a cult classic and a popular midnight movie.

Little Shop of Horrors (the musical) was originally produced by the WPA Theatre, an off-off Broadway theatre founded in 1968. The show ran from May 6 to June 6, 1982 and quickly sold out because of word of mouth.

The musical then transferred to the Orpheum Theatre on Second Avenue where it was produced by the WPA Theatre, The Shubert Organization, David Geffen, and Cameron Mackintosh. In 1983, it won the New York Drama Critics Best Musical Award (winning over the recent Broadway hit, *Cats*). At the Orpheum, it ran for more than five years and played 2,209 performances. It is the third longest running off-Broadway musical. *Little Shop of Horrors* closed on November 1, 1987.

After *Little Shop of Horrors* closed, Audrey II was displayed in the Smithsonian Institution for six months as part of a "Search for Life" exhibition.

In December 1986, a movie version of the musical based on a movie was released. It starred Rich Moranis, Steve Martin, and Ellen Greene (as Audrey, the role she originated off-Broadway). It was directed by Frank Oz and produced by David Geffen. Although many critics disliked its "happy" ending, the film has gained a cult following in the tradition of the original 1960 Roger Corman classic.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**HORROR FILM & ROGER CORMAN**

The B-Movie Survival Guide; Horror, Sci-Fi, Action, Erotic Thrillers by Gary Cook, Debbie Rochon, Peter Schmeideg, and Dave Gatzmer (Illustrator) 1998

How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime by Roger Corman & Jim Jerome 1998

Cult Horror Films: Offbeat Thrillers from "Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman" to "Zombies of Mora Tau" by Welch D. Everman 1993

The Films of Roger Corman: "Shooting My Way Out of Trouble" by Alan Frank 1998

PUPPETS

Introduction to Puppets and Puppet-Making by David Currell 1996

The Most Excellent Book of How to Be a Puppeteer by Roger Lade and Rob Shone 1996

Puppets and Masks : Stagecraft and Storytelling by Nan Rump 1995

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

Meat-Eating Plants (Weird and Wacky Science) by Nathan Aaseng 1996

Carnivorous Plants by Tony Camilleri 1999

Plants of Prey (Nature Close-Ups) by Densy Clyne 1998

The Savage Garden : Cultivating Carnivorous Plants by Peter D'Amato 1998

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