

## PROP BAG

by Janine Moyer-Buesgen

The idea of using a prop bag in a theatre classroom was first introduced to me by Dr. Jack Carr in his Teaching Theatre class at Catholic University. A prop bag is a bag or a box or some sort of container holding really useful items - ones that come in handy during a theatre class. These items serve many purposes. I have reproduced in full my assignment from Dr. Carr to justify the use of a prop bag in the classroom and to list which items I would make sure were in it.

### Justification of a Prop Bag (Why is there one in my classroom?)

A prop bag serves as teaching tool for me during class- getting the attention of anyone distracted is faster if they have something new in their environment. Pulling an item out of the prop bag can be that something new to grab the students' attention, or it can be used to make a point form class easily remembered. The student will be able to make use of the prop bag during their activities, helping them to increase their skills. If a character is holding a telephone in a scene. having an actual telephone or representation of it is better than the student pantomiming it. That way, the exercise can retain its focus on the action in a scene rather than becoming a scene about someone holding a telephone. The props are used as objects for concentration, inspiration of creativity, and even as hand props. Because each item has innumerable uses, they are worth keeping close at hand in a classroom throughout the school year.

### Prop Bag Items --

1. A large square of white fabric- This can be used as a tablecloth, a surrendering flag, or any manner of garment.
2. A Slinky- This item could be inspiration for a movement, used as an instrument, worn as a bangle, or be a unique hand prop for a character.
3. A Rose (Artificial)- It could be a sense memory trigger, or the unavoidable "declaration of love" prop.
4. A jar of bubbles- Besides creating great atmosphere, bubbles can be used in warm up and concentration exercises. For example, blow several and everyone follows one until it pops, with their eyes or their bodies.
5. A roll of Aluminum Foil- Apart from its mundane functions, which might come up in an improvisation, foil can be molded into pieces of jewelry, armor, or can turn someone into a robot.
6. Several pairs of Sunglasses and Eyeglasses- A pair of glasses will help an actor get into character more easily, and will also cause one to gesture more meaningfully if he is holding it.
7. A Mirror- It could be used for practicing facial expressions, monologues, and concentration exercises.
8. A Flashlight- Used for instant special effects, such as a spotlight. It is also good as a starting point for an improvisation.
9. A Towel- Like the white fabric, it can be used for many different situations, but its thickness will change the ways in which it is used.
10. Puppets- The puppets' mouths should be moveable, because then it can imitate facial expressions more easily. It can be used as a teaching companion, an extra character in a scene, or a way to get someone shy to talk. Puppets work especially well with younger children, although even high school students can find amusement in them a la Sesame Street.
11. Hats- Ideally, I would have a bowler, a beret, a beanie with a spinner on top, a big floppy lady's hat, and a fedora. The urge to dress up and become someone else stay throughout a person's life, and a hat is the simplest way to signal a change of character.