The Fable of the Rock

By Nick Sweet

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DEDICATION

For Caroline and M. J.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Four Warriors, each with superior abilities, are sent to the Highlands by their respective villages to seek a military vantage point. Each warrior discovers a large rock that will help destroy their enemy and each encounters an old man who helps them learn to live in peace. This allegory of urban street gangs examines "dying for one's colors."

CAST LIST

(3M, 2F, + extras, if desired.)

Old Man / Old Woman
Red Scout
Blue Scout
Green Scout
Yellow Scout

Each role may be played by a male or a female. Simply note appropriate changes in pronouns.

TIME

The setting can be 5,000 BC or a futuristic, post apocalyptic era.

PROP LIST

Club
Primitive blade (if desired.*)*
Other crude weapons
Small quartz rock

If there is any hesitancy about using a blade onstage, all four warriors could carry clubs or dispense with weapons entirely and use hand-to-hand combat.

COSTUME INFORMATION

The Scouts' costumes should have a tattered and primitive look. Each costume should display the individual color of the Scout, such as a sash, headband, armband, etc. They should also be lightweight, as the warriors move quickly.

The Old Man/Old Woman should wear a tattered robe and long-haired unkempt gray wig.

Suggested footwear for all characters would be moccasins, sandals or perhaps no shoes at all.

Four 4-color sashes - red, blue, green, and yellow.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The Fable of the Rock was originally presented at the Bartlesville *(OK.)* Community Center on October 12, 1992. The author directed it. The stage manager was Janice Woodward *(Queen of the Discernible Universe.)* The set designer was John L. Draper. The lighting designer was Jon Michael Warburton.

The cast was:
Old Man----------Morris McCorvey
Red Warrior---------Gary Amen
Blue Warrior--------Jayne Treat
Green Warrior------Terrance Seals
Yellow Warrior-----Jennifer Jones

Productions were followed by a discussion period and the students always took the discussion in the direction of inner city street gangs or even race relations.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Fable of the Rock can be simply or elaborately staged. It has been produced three times. In the simplest production, a 4' by 4' platform, painted black, represented the rock. Though not "rock-like" in appearance, it was referred to as "the rock."

The volcano was painted on two 2' by 8' flats, hinged in the middle to make them free-standing. The flats each had handles on the backside. A stage hand stood behind the flats (unseen by the audience*.)* and shook them when the volcano erupted. The stage lights flashed on and off and recorded sound effects, (booms*.)* signified the eruption. There were no special effects in this production. The costumes were post-apocalyptic, along the lines of the Mad Max movies of the 80's, i.e. tattered clothing, mirror sunglasses, etc. This production cost very little to produce.

In the most elaborate production, Indian costumes were custom made for each of the warriors and the show was played as an ancient Indian legend. The rock was a 4' by 4' platform covered with chicken wire and papier-mâché, and painted iridescent gray, black, and white. It was very realistic. The volcano was also 3 dimensional. It was a ten foot tall cone, constructed of chicken wire and papier-mâché, with an opening at the top.

Several flashpots and smoke bombs exploded inside the volcano and a strobe light was also utilized during the eruption.

Final thoughts: The rock, whether simple or elaborate, must be secure enough for 5 actors to be on it at the same time. It should have steps behind it or be multi-level.

The volcano, in a simple production, could be painted drop, or could be non-existent. It would be established through sound effects, and by the actors referring to it upstage.

The sound effects, when the volcano rumbles, then erupts, could also be made by a synthesizer. Many young musicians are proficient with synthesizers and could provide the necessary sound cues.

Your actors should have fun getting their costumes together. In the simple production, each actor was given $10.00 and turned loose in a local thrift shop. The result was the most tattered, rag-tag bunch of futuristic warriors imaginable. Another option would be costumes patterned after the popular TV show “Zena: Warrior Princess.”

THE FABLE OF THE ROCK

(A large rock is stage right. The OLD MAN stands beside rock.)

OLD MAN: It was an ordinary rock at the foot of Angry Mountain. It was large and heavy, and it sat on a hillside overlooking the Lowlands. The Lowlands was home to the four villages: The Reds, The Blues, The Yellows, and The Greens. They had been at war with each other for years. It was not until the discovery of this rock that they learned to live in peace and harmony. But it was not an easy lesson, nor was it one they learned quickly. It all began quite innocently. Each village lived in a different region of the Lowlands and they did not intermingle. If a member of one village accidentally wandered into the territory of another, it could very easily start a war. So each village obeyed the boundary lines of the others, and for a time, they were all able to live in peace. But it was an uneasy peace because each village always thought that its enemies were preparing to attack. The rock changed all that, with the help of four noble warriors.

(OLD MAN disappears. RED SCOUT appears, looks around, passes rock, does double-take, crosses to rock and with a look of triumph, climbs atop. Old Man reappears from shadow. Red Scout draws club.)

RED SCOUT: *(Harsh, guarded.)* Who are you? To what village do you belong?

OLD MAN: I belong to no village, Sir. I live alone in the Highlands here at the foot of Angry Mountain.

RED SCOUT: *(Relaxing.)* Then this is your land?

OLD MAN: No, it belongs to no one. Why do you ask?

RED SCOUT: I am a scout for the Red village. I have the keenest eyesight of all the Reds, and I have been sent here to Angry Mountain. We fear that the Blues, our enemies to the north, are plotting to attack us. But today, I have made a most magnificent discovery.

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