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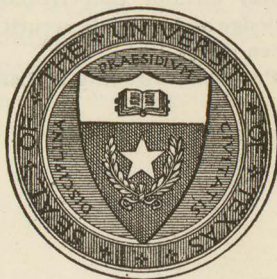
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A Play for San Jacinto Night

BY
MARJORIE WILLSON CROOKS



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The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston.

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy. . . . It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire.

President Mirabeau B. Lamar.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By E. D. SHURTER
Acting Director

The University Department of Extension is especially indebted to the author, Marjorie Willson Crooks, who kindly consented, upon the solicitation of Dr. A. Caswell Ellis, formerly Acting Director of the Department, to prepare the schoolhouse meeting program contained in this bulletin. It is hoped that the author may be rewarded by a wide use of this program among Texas schools in the celebration of San Jacinto Day, and that the pupils' study of history may be vitalized and their patriotism quickened as they re-enact in pageant form the stirring scenes and heroic deeds that made Texas a free and independent commonwealth.

The schoolhouses dotted here and there and everywhere over the great expanse of this nation will some day prove to be the roots of that great tree of liberty which will spread for the sustenance and protection of all mankind.

Woodrow Wilson.

INTRODUCTION

By RAYMOND G. BRESSLER

Acting Head of Division of School Interests

In preparing this masque for the school children of Texas the author's problem was to create a program peculiarly appropriate for the commemoration of a day especially sacred to the memory of loyal Texans,—San Jacinto Day, or the dawn of Texas liberty. And the program had to be prepared with forty cents as the maximum cost of the costume of any character that appeared in the pageant, and with no possibility of using elaborate scenic or lighting effects to conceal defects of workmanship.

To appreciate how well the author accomplished her work one has but to read her production to revivify the trying experiences of the pioneer men and women who suffered and died that their beloved Texas might be free to the children of a liberty-loving people. From the time you hear the hoofbeats of galloping horses, after the sad and plaintive notes of "Texas, Fair Texas" have died away, until you again hear the hoofbeats of the horse that bore the messenger announcing to the stricken women and children, "The Texas Army has whipped," is one tense moment in our lives during which time you feel as your pioneer fathers and mothers felt and you thank God that they left you such a glorious history.

This little play is not without its humorous touches, also. To watch Uncle Ned act so bravely in the presence of imaginary enemies and see him crouch in fear when danger threatens and to hear Aunt Dilcy browbeat him into submission, is indeed, laughable. There are many little incidents throughout the masque which show intimate knowledge of Texas' struggle for independence and I am sure will make it a most satisfactory program for San Jacinto night.

FOREWORD

THE OUT-DOOR STAGE

In writing a play for out-door production it is impossible to give the same detailed stage directions that are given with manuscripts intended for indoor plays. In the little play which follows, the mystic shadows of the night which surround you help in various ways. Darkness, which is always impressive, appeals to the imagination, and covers up the lack of elaborate costumes and expensive properties. The shadows of night will add charm to almost any plot of smooth, rather high meadow. It is well, perhaps, to have a few trees, but no buildings, in the background, in order that the figures may be silhouetted against the sky. By covering up the distant objects and making nearer ones dim in outlines, these same accommodating shades of night will help to give that awe-inspiring feeling of space, of immensity, which is so important if we are to transport our audience to that great unclaimed wilderness that Texas used to be.

LIGHTING THE STAGE

Having selected a place for the stage, the next problem is to light it, for, of course, the audience must be able to pick out the actors from among the shadows. A bright light would surely spoil things from every point. At no time must there be more than a soft glow. After the camp fire is made this will suffice, if the stage is in the open away from the timber and buildings, as it should be.

In the opening scene the boy, Granville Rose, will walk ahead of the wagon and carry a torch.

A place should be roped or marked off for the audience directly in front of the stage so that they will be near the stage and get full benefit of what takes place within the glowing circle of fire and torch light.

SPEAK DISTINCTLY AND ACT DELIBERATELY

Perhaps the most important factor in staging an outdoor performance such as this is deliberation of action and speech. Rehearse until every actor is perfect in speech and stage business. On the night of the performance let the teacher or director see that everything is in readiness, and then take his place in the audience. But the impression he should have left with the young actor is: "Take time to utter every syllable of every word. Be sure that every movement can be seen by every member of your audience." If the teacher, in training the actors, insists that they keep their voices at lowest normal pitch, he will remove a big temptation for fast talking, as well as make the speeches fall much more pleasantly on the ears of the audience.

PROPERTIES.

1. *An ox cart if possible.* Otherwise a very old jaded team, and the most wretched, primitive, covered wagon which can be provided. Let bed clothing, cooking utensils, etc., packed for a hasty and hazardous flight, be conspicuous.

2. *Wood for making fire.* It should be strewn about so that it may be gathered by the refugees as part of the stage business.

3. *Torch.* Ashes previously moistened with kerosene, or corn cobs similarly treated will burn brightly for some time.

4. *Riding horses.* There are several for the characters who enter on horseback.

5. *Some bread.*

6. *Blankets and coverings,* to be used when refugees go to sleep.

7. *Fire-arms* for the men.

8. *Directions for making the flowing robe:* Take five widths of cheese cloth (for very slender figures four may do) the length of the person from shoulder to floor plus allowance for hem. Seam up the five pieces—allowing two widths for the back and three for the front—leave openings in the side seams large enough for the arms to go through easily. Run a draw string in the neck, leaving an inch heading. From the neck gathering to

the top of each arm's eye run a draw string and gather in material until you have a short shoulder seam. Take two yards of the cheese cloth and cut across the middle; fold each yard strip lengthwise in the middle, and sow into the arm hole with the fold at the bottom and the selvage edges at the top—catch these edges together with ten or twelve stitches taken at the top of the sleeve and then let the scarf sleeve flow from the arm.

For the Grecian robe make a flowing robe. Take a cord, narrow ribbon, or strip of cloth, cut in two in the middle and fasten in the neck just where the shoulder gathers begin. Bring the cords down and cross them on the breast, take around the body just below the bust, bring up and cross in the back.

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

UNCLE NED, a big boy }
AUNT DILCY, a big girl } *the anti-masque or comedy characters.*

Let them be dressed as you imagine the faithful black servants of a hard-pressed Texas family of 1836 would be. Uncle Ned carries a rifle and whip.

MRS. ROSE, a Texas pioneer woman whose clothing shows privation and hardship. She carries a tiny baby.

MRS. DYER, same as Mrs. Rose.

TWO LITTLE GIRLS, belonging to Mrs. Rose—one about eleven and the other younger.

THREE CHILDREN, belonging to Mrs. Dyer. One about four years old, who clings to Aunt Dilcy.

GRANVILLE ROSE, a boy about thirteen.

DR. ROSE, an old man. Pioneer, country doctor.

ADAM STAFFORD, a cripple.

JEFFERSON TURNER, a daft man, who has lived very long in the wilderness.

HARVEY STAFFORD, a young pioneer.

A MESSENGER, who has ridden hard from the scene of the battle. *There should be at least six volunteers from the U. S. In case so many large boys are not available, some of the larger girls, who appear as angels later on, could take these parts.*

ALLEGORICAL CHARACTERS

1. *Hospitality.* A flowing white robe which reaches from the neck to the floor; hair loose, over which is thrown a bright pink scarf long enough to float gracefully from her extended arms as she holds it out while bending as though in benediction above the sleeping mother and children.

2. *Industry.* A rough dark shawl or cape envelopes her completely, which she throws open at the point indicated in her speech and shows a sparkling lining, and a bright yellow robe. Tinsel rope, sold for Christmas decorations at a few pennies a yard, sewed to the inside of the mantle makes a pretty silver lining. These should be three or four inches apart down the side fronts.

3. *Frugality.* A small girl in a simple white dress with garlands of wild flowers, pretty grasses or leaves in her hair, wound about her waist, her neck and body and hanging prettily from her arms. Garlands are easily made by tying the stems with twine.

4. *Science.* A tall girl in white Grecian robe—hair drawn simply back and done low on the neck. She has in her hands a small scale and builder's square.

5. *Health.* The rosiest, jolliest, little child who can take a speaking part. She should wear a flowing robe of pale pink which comes just to the knees, cut low in the neck and made without sleeves; no stockings, but slippers or sandals. She carries a big sheaf of foliage, grasses, and wild flowers.

6. *Beauty.* A graceful, tall, slender girl in white Grecian robe—hair done low on the neck. A strip of pale, green cheese cloth four yards long caught in the front just about at the knees or a little below, brought around loosely enough so that it does not bind when she walks, tied in the back in a big soft knot which is caught to the robe at a point somewhat higher than the front fastening. Bring the left end, which should be shorter, in a loose flowing drape up and throw, loose end to the back, over the left arm, which should be held easily extended on a line which retards a little from the advancing position of the body. The longer end should be held lightly in the thumb

and fingers of the right hand. The right arm is thrown up in a pretty curve in front of the downcast face as though to hide it. If a little more expense is not minded a green gauze or chiffon scarf would be more ethereal and pretty.

7. *Patriotism.* Tall girl in white Grecian robe. She carries a torch and balance scale.

PROLOGUE

(To be spoken by the teacher.)

We have called our little entertainment a masque because no other name would do. It is not a drama of Texas History for great actors to try their genius playing upon all the human passions, and great producers exhausting all technical and financial resources in staging. It is not even a pageant to call forth all the dazzling splendor of costume and scenic effect. It is just a little charm, dear friends, that we will try to work by the witchery of this beautiful night, to take you upward out of time and place, into that misty limbo of eternity, where the voices of those who made "San Jacinto" a great day are ever speaking to the ideals that shall keep it great throughout the ages.

VOICES OF SAN JACINTO NIGHT

PART I

From far to one side, so that it seems to be coming into sight from a distance comes the wagon or cart. Granville Rose walks ahead carrying torch. Uncle Ned drives. In the wagon are Mrs. Rose with her infant, Mrs. Dyer with her smallest child. The other children and Aunt Dilcy walk. As they approach they sing. Group the characters as closely as possible on account of the singing.

TEXAS, FAIR TEXAS

Tune: Juanita (Spanish melody)
Far o'er the hillside,
Gentle shadows softly fall,

Where, through the day-light
 Came the battle's call.
 In our soul's deep grieving;
 Bow'd by bitterness and woe,
 Dearest hopes were leaving,
 That the heart can know.
 Texas, fair Texas,
 Thou hast taken all we had!
 Texas, fair Texas,
 Beauteous land and sad.

Where, in their splendor,
 Other springs shall bloom as brave,
 Green leaves so tender,
 Shield the lonely grave.
 Sorrow past all knowing
 Thou hast given for our own.
 Fragrant night winds blowing,
 Hear our anguished moan,
 Texas, dark Texas,
 On thy cruel breast they lie!
 Texas, sad Texas,
 Tomb of our lov'd, good bye!

Time the song so that it will end just about the time the procession reaches the center of the stage. Hoof beats are heard—and the wagon halts. The little child cries for Aunt Dilcy, who takes him.

UNCLE NED. Who dat now?

MRS. ROSE. Who comes?

DR. ROSE. Do not be afraid. (*Dr. Rose and Adam Stafford ride up and dismount.*)

THE CHILDREN. The soldiers! Has General Houston come with the soldiers?

Are the Mexicans coming?

Will the Comanches eat us?

MRS. ROSE. The cattle, father?

DR. ROSE. We got some of them out onto the prairie, but many were drowned. The water is rising hourly in the bottoms.

The Trinity is now impassable, and many families are cut off from escape, to face the Mexicans on the other side.

MRS. DYER. Perhaps better the Mexicans on that side than the Comanches on this. Have you heard more of their raids?

A. STAFFORD. We have seen no trace of them today. We had better camp here on this knoll and rest and dry our clothing. *Uncle Ned attends to placing wagon in place previously determined upon. It should be arranged so that the angels have a place of egress invisible to the audience. He loosens the team. The children gather wood and the men build fire. The actors group themselves about the fire so that the light falls on their faces.*

LITTLE GIRL (to Dr. Rose) Father, will the Mexicans eat us now, since Colonel Travis is dead?

UNCLE NED. Hesh up, Honey. Better not no Mexicans come round here. Dey gwine see whut Uncle Ned gwine do. *(Makes pass with stick of wood, to kill imaginary Mexicans.)*

A. STAFFORD. Some day Santa Anna and his bloody butchers will pay for this. Texans will not forget Goliad, and the black flag of the Alamo. *(Here the figure of Jefferson Turner, which has been creeping up, steps into the light. The men instantly sieze and level their weapons, while from the children comes the frightened whisper "Comanches!")*

UNCLE NED (going down on his face) Oh Lawd Gawd Marse Injun! you can't use no black wool off'n no low down nigger haid.

JEFFERSON TURNER (leaping out in front of the fire and brandishing his knife). Where are Comanches? Show me the trail. Sixty-one scalps now, sixty-two before morning. Show me the trail I say! *(The mother is busy hushing the children, who scream with fear of the knife.)*

THE MESSENGER. Who are you stranger, and what is your business here?

JEFFERSON TURNER. I'm the Indian hater. That's who I am. I was Jefferson Turner, a white man with a heart in his breast and a wife and three little children in his home. Where is the home? Gone! Comanches burned it. Where

is the wife? Dead. Comanches murdered her. Where are the babies, my beautiful little boys? (*Covers his face with his hands and sobs; then brandishing his knife and advancing toward the messenger, he almost shrieks*) Comanches murdered them! Now show me the trail. Sixty-one Comanche scalps I had this morning; sixty-two before tomorrow, and a hundred shall hang in the Indian hater's camp before the winter kills the leaves, and Jefferson Turner with them.

MRS. ROSE. There is no trail here, Jefferson Turner. That was only the foolish cry of women and children in terror. But talk no more of scalps tonight for you are hunger spent and very weary. (*She takes a slab of corn bread from her pocket and gives him half and divides the rest between the two smallest children. Turner takes his piece and sits down beside the fire.*)

DR. ROSE. Uncle Ned, is this the way you kill Mexicans and Indians?

UNCLE NED. (*Sheepishly*) Marse Doc, Ah thinks may be dem Injuns gwine think ah's a gater till you all kin git you guns.

AUNT DILCY. Gater—hugh! Dey gwine think you's a fool scairt to def niggah, jes lack you is!

UNCLE NED. Hush yo mouf 'ooman! Yo' ain' kill no injuns.

AUNT DILCY. No mo' is you! But ah feel lack ah's gwine kill a fool niggah right soon! (*They glare at one another. Voices and hoof-beats heard. Men grasp weapons and stand alert; women and children draw back into shadows. Harvey Stafford and the volunteers ride up.*)

HARVEY STAFFORD. Adam—brother, why are you here?

ADAM STAFFORD. Harvey!

HARVEY STAFFORD. (*Dismounts and advances into the light, shaking hands.*) Why, Dr. Rose! Mrs. Rose! Mrs. Dyer! Granville! and all the little folks! Why are you here?

MRS. DYER. Then you bring no news from the army. You cannot tell us how it is with our men. The worst, however bad, were better than to know nothing.

HARVEY. No. I and my friends here are just returning from the United States with plenty of powder and shot to teach Mexicans how to treat American settlers.

DR. ROSE. I am afraid the Mexicans are past teaching.

HARVEY. There has been an invasion? We have fought them? You are driven from your homes by the Mexican Army?

ADAM. The desolation of Texas beggars description.

HARVEY. Where is General Houston, and where is the American Army?

DR. ROSE. We do not know. Colonel Travis and his little band of heroes were trapped in the Alamo and butchered. One night a herd of buffalo came sweeping across the country, trampling the fields till they packed them hard, and raising dust which blackened the sky like a hurricane cloud. While we were taking counsel how to save our scalps from the savage horde which we thought were driving the bison,—for most of the men in the settlement had gone to join General Houston,—the courier came. He came from General Houston with a dispatch which told that our army was in retreat, that President Burnet's Cabinet had gone to Harrisburg, and that settlers were warned to flee. Since March the fifteenth we have been in flight, enduring cold, wet, hunger, and hardship which no language made by man can ever tell.—We buried our little girl at Liberty, Sir.

ADAM. While we were bringing the cattle out of the flooded bottoms we thought we heard the rumble of distant cannonading, but we knew nothing of a battle.

MRS. ROSE (*advancing*). It is night, and you are travel spent. Will you not rest, and dry yourselves beside our fire? We are without food to offer you.

HARVEY. No. We will ride on toward the Brazos as long as our horses last. They are still quite fresh. Perhaps it is not yet too late to join the battle and fight for Texas.
Action of saying good-bye.

MRS. ROSE. God be with you. We will pray that you may not be too late. (*Harvey and the volunteers ride off.*)

DR. ROSE. It is not safe to linger long. We must rest only a little while. (*They group themselves about the fire and sing very softly.*)

Abide with me. Fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, Oh abide with me!

(*Uncle Ned Sleeps.*)

ADAM. Uncle Ned! Oh, I say, Uncle Ned!

AUNT DILCY. (*Taking aim with a stick*) Niggah! (*Uncle Ned wakes up, looks startled, and then catches himself.*)

UNCLE NED. Sh—Ah jes' thinkin' bout dem Injuns!

AUNT DILCY. Mus' a been thinkin' dey gwine make yuh go to wuk!

ADAM. Gear up, Uncle Ned. We've got to be moving. (*Business of getting the team ready.*) *From the distances comes the sound of a voice calling. The words cannot be distinguished. The women clasp the sleeping children. The men smother the fire, and get their guns ready. Uncle Ned crawls under the wagon.*

ALL. (*In stage whisper*) The Mexicans!

Hoof beats. A rider comes on. He calls.

MESSENGER. Turn back. Turn back. No danger! The Texas army has whipped. The Mexican army are prisoners! (*He rides up to the fire and dismounts.*)

MRS. DYER. (*Goes up to him excitedly.*) What do you say? We've won? My husband and sons are not dead?

MESSENGER. I think not, lady. Only two of our men lost their lives, though some twenty of us learned the feel of Mexican bullets, General Houston among the number.

ADAM. Where was the fighting?

MESSENGER. Just where Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto meet.

UNCLE NED. (*Crawling from under the wagon.*) We've won. Glory be! Us thought you'se de Mexicans. Ah's jest git-tin' whar de dew-fall ain' gwine spile mah powdah so's ah kin blaze away and blow dey haid off!

AUNT DILCY. He mean he gittin' whar de bullet-fall ain' gwine spile he good fo' nothin' black hide! (*They glare at one another.*)

DR. ROSE. We will camp here tonight and turn our faces homeward in the morning.

MRS. ROSE. Will you not share our fire you daft stranger—see he sleeps already. And there is room for you.

MESSENGER. Thank you for your kindness. But I must press on and call back others. (*He mounts.*) Good-night. Long live the New Republic.

ALL. Good-night, Soldier of San Jacinto. God speed your errand. Long live free Texas! (*Messenger rides off. From the distance comes his voice calling, "Turn back! Turn back." They take blankets from the wagon and all the refugees lie down.*)

DR. ROSE. The freshet will protect us from marauding Comanches. We will all sleep tonight.

MRS. ROSE. The poor frenzied creature there (points to Jefferson Turner), I suppose he will not harm the little ones. Perhaps we entertain an angel unaware. We're told they often wear a meaner garb.

ADAM. May he bring the blessings we so sorely need. (*All drop off to sleep. Let the stage rest a minute in absolute stillness. Then from the wagon, clearly and sweetly comes the Angel's song.*)

Gifts the Angels Bring.

Tune: Rock of Ages

Thou who hast sorrowed sore

Hast suffered not in vain

We bid thee smile once more

Thy skies shall shine again;

And thy glad thanks shall ring,

Thanks for gifts the angels bring.

Appear—first angel, who bends with arms extended above the sleeping mother and children. She speaks very slowly and distinctly.

HOSPITALITY. Around the outer gates of every home wait angels who would like to enter in and bless. So closely to the portals do I stand that, should the mortals in the house but open the door so wide as to admit the tiniest stranger that ever felt lonely and forlorn,—I'd enter through that crack, and, dear Mother person, no other joy on earth can ever touch the joy of me. My name is Hospitality, an Angel of good omen, for not least of all the blessings that I bring are sister angels that come after me and crave your gracious entertainment. Blessed is the home which shelters all. (*Hospitality moves lightly over and stands in front of the fire and to the left. And the next angel enters standing over the mother.*)

INDUSTRY. The angels, too, are often judged by outward show and not by inward grace. My shaggy coat is often pushed aside among the crowd of daintier guests. Yet those who do me honor, bid me lay aside my coat and rest beneath their roof, find the precious silver lining in my rough cloak and see my gown as dazzling as the best. (*She throws open her coat.*) I am a wholesome, happy presence in the house, and constant gifts of value great come to the host who honors me. Thrice happy, happy, happy home whose children Industry has blessed. (*Takes place opposite Hospitality on the right.*)

Third angel comes in.

FRUGALITY. Though I have ceased to be a guest of fashion in city, and in country too, I am a giver of rich blessings which mankind can ill afford to scorn. Hand in hand with my best friend, Sincerity, I scatter homely pleasures of hearts in tune, wholesome friendships in the home, hearth's light, jolly hours in the sweet outdoors, I hear pensive moments in the lovely days, these are the boons thy children shall take, Mother of Texas, if thy roof-tree shelter Frugality. (*Takes place beside first angel.*)

Enter fourth angel.

SCIENCE. My name is Science, and though, by blind mistakes of human folk, I oft have been confounded with imps and demons from the deepest depth, I am an angel still, and

such have ever been to man. I would dwell, Oh Mother Love, with thine and thee—for I alone can help thee teach thy children how to use the gifts that other angels bring. Industry and I together can yield earth's dearest treasurers up to thee, and e'en Frugality will waste her fruitfulness while there are hungry yet to feed and naked still to clothe if thou doest not join her hand in mine. Turn Science from thy door and these (*points to the children*) must die. (*Takes place beside second angel.*)

Enter fifth angel.

HEALTH. (*Tripping in lightly with arms outspread.*) Room, I cry, make room! Cities and towns are crowding me out, and country-folk carelessly trample me into the dirt. Where green grass is growing, and fresh winds are blowing in tree-tops that rustle and sing,—where neat wide lawns spread out, and happy cattle walk about,—where Industry and Science take delight in houses clean and shining bright, there *Health* cannot help but live, and just herself is the richest blessing she can give. (*Takes place beside third angel.*)

Enter sixth angel, who runs in as though she were eluding pursuers. Her face, when she first enters, is covered by the scarf which she holds in the fingers of her right hand.

BEAUTY. (*Sees the other angels.*) Yes, they are all here, Industry, Frugality, Science; now surely I may come, for the friends of them will be able to understand my secret. In every spot beneath the blue sky, I am, and have been since creation. My name is Beauty, and I walk beside mankind in all the daily tasks—a maiden whom earth, yearning, fain would seek, yet daily scorns. I may not be lured by tricks and shams. Oh children of men, ye have a lesson yet to learn that in everything, without and within, only Truth is Beauty, and Beauty is only Truth. (*She takes her place beside the fourth angel.*) *Enter seventh angel, wearing white Grecian robe and carrying lighted torch and balance. She walks very quietly across, and stands with arms extended.*

PATRIOTISM. I come to you from the battlefield. Oh mortals! Ye always see and know me there. Yet, when the cannon smoke has cleared away, I, the gentlest angel of them all, am left forsaken, to die of loneliness and neglect. Patriotism is sorely grieved to fight. Courage to stand for the true and the good, whatever it costs—clean governments, just rule for all, strength in the bond of brotherhood—these are my gifts. Take them, I pray! Keep them, and me. Leave not Patriotism, with the dead on the field! (*She walks out to center, between the two groups of angels, and the seven make a line across the center of the stage. They sing.*)

THE TEXAS HOME SWEET HOME

In a cottage or palace, wherever thy home,
 These angels who bless thee, shall thou ne'er let roam;
 A charm from the skies shall hallow thee then,
 Which angel presence brings to the homes of blest men.
 To honor thy sacred dead,
 The angels have said,
 Texans, build thee thy home.

The angels pass around into the background. The sleepers waken quickly, and rise. All sing:

AWAY BACK HOME TO TEXAS

Tune: "Dixie"

We're all going back to Texas
 No hardship now affects us
 Turn ye back! Turn ye back!
 Turn ye back! Texas land!
 In Texas land where we were grubbin,
 We gave old Mexico a drubbin'
 Turn ye back! Turn ye back!
 Turn ye back! Texas land.
 In Texas land we'll take our stand
 To live and work in Texas
 Away! away! away down South in Texas
 Away! away! away back home to Texas.

The teachers and reception committee should begin moving about the audience, greeting them and drawing their attention from the stage, so that the actors can leave as inconspicuously as possible.

THE END

