Costume Design

Quick Tips
Read the author’s introduction!

Read pages 3–8 of the playbook. This will help guide your choices.

As a designer it’s VERY important that you consider the playwright’s intent for his or her vision of this piece of art.

You do not have to design exactly as she prescribed, but you should consider the suggestions as a guide for your own thought process.
**Theme must be decided First.**

Complete the inspiration board. Search the internet for images that reflect the theme. Create images that reflect the theme. Every item in the collage work should be a reflection of what look will be created in the actor’s costumes. Include patterns, shapes, and images related to the clothing of the world of the show. The board may be digital, but it can be a challenge getting it printed to the correct size if your student qualifies for state.

Tip-Keep images in hard copy or digital format for your student to refer to back to throughout the design process. The student may wish to wait to complete the board until the design work is done in order to be sure to include artwork that made it into the final designs.
Costume design

This category is always very competitive. Student designers are wildly talented. The designer should be able to draw proportional human figures wearing clothing. A great resource to help budding artists refine their skills is this book.
General costume drawing tips

Everything counts and neatness is key.

Students should have a deep understanding of each character. They should have determined each character’s personality characteristics, the character’s arc (their change from beginning to end), they should deeply understand the clothing of their chosen time and place before a pen or pencil hits a paper or a screen.

Students should have a solid understanding of color theory.

Students should consider how each costume piece will function on stage and on an actor’s body. They must consider that their renderings would be the artistic guide for the costume shop to use as they build these costumes.
Character progression 11x17 plate

The designer may select any character, and must draw the character in Act 1 and Act 2 including character name, and scene.

Follow the instructions carefully as to labelling as they are described in the Costume Design Challenge.

Tip- Consider changing costuming to reflect a change in the character’s emotional state, location, and season during the scene.

Tip- ground the character by creating a shaded floor.

Tip- The designer should be realistic and consider how the actor will move and how each costume piece will function.

Tip- render either digitally or by hand. Use a media that the designer can use well and with confidence. As designs are created, the designer must prepare to justify every aspect of the costume as it is linked to the location, the character as an individual, and his or her role in this time and place in the world. The designer must be able to articulate each element clearly and back decisions with specific examples from the script.
Scene snapshot 11x17

A single scene with two or more characters in the same location. Label should include the play name, characters, act and scene.

Tip-The background should be linked directly to the theme and time period, but not so busy, dark, or overpowernig that the characters are lost. Consider how their clothing silently tells the story in that moment in time. The designer should be prepared to explain and justify costume choices for the characters generally and in this moment in time.
This is a full color rendering or photographs of the realized designs.

Label with play name, character name, and act and scene.

Tip- every color, every piece, every material should have a storytelling purpose. The costume should help tell us the character’s social status, station in life, personality, educational level, intelligence, the time period in which he or she lives, and give clues to the character’s role in the story. The designer should be able to answer all these questions.

Tip- Remember this should be a detailed guide for the costume shop.

Tip- Ground the character if this is a rendering.

Tip- Remember to select swatches at least 1x1 or larger. Lay out the swatches in a neat, artistic manner. Place a piece of tape behind fabrics to prevent fraying when swatches are cut. Including different textures can add to the display.

Tip- If renderings are digital, or you are rural, online fabric stores often have digital swatches of fabrics that can be imported into a digital layout.

Artistic embellishment is nice, but don’t overdo it. Keep the designs clean and beautiful. The focus should be the costume, not the board around it.
Remember...

In one of plates 2, 3 or 4, the designer must include The Creature and Mary Shelley.

This is up to the student.

Tip—It is often easier to create a state-ready black display board for plate 4 as it includes swatches and the complete design, although it isn’t required. My students have always rendered either by hand or digitally and then placed the printed or cut out design on the board with the labels and physical swatches. This could however, be accomplished digitally by scanning physical swatches or using digital swatches.
Review the requirements for the justification paper and follow the format and requirements closely.

Explain your time and place choices providing direct reasoning from the script. Keep your wording concise and direct.

Explain your theme choice and link it to the script. Explain your artistic choices and how the colors, fabrics, and style choices all work to tell the story visually and enhance each character.
Prompt address

Select several key sentences from your justification paper that best summarize your overall theme choice and design strategy. Create a short, concise paragraph using those sentences.