

# *Radium Girls Design Packet I*

## **OVERALL THEMES, MORALS, AND CONCEPTS:**

- **Corporate neglect, malfeasance, and malign treatment of workers**
  - Real World Example: those who previously worked asbestos
  - Real World Example: foreign laborers in other countries who extract metal from used electronics
  - SHOW Example: postponing the trial multiple times waiting for former employees to pass away, A2S4
  - SHOW Example: quietly misleading public about the actual cause/diagnosis of employee deaths, A1S10
- **Balance between protecting public health versus protecting business interests**
  - Real World Example: debates between those who promote hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) for natural gas extraction and those who fear it will contaminate drinking water
  - SHOW Example: Roeder’s decision not to offer adequate compensation for sick former employees and his willingness to suppress public knowledge of the connection between former workers’ deaths and the plant, A1S5
- **The struggle between personal motivations versus public pressures**
  - Real World Example: selling a piece of property to a land developer despite unanimous agreement among neighbors who have agreed not to sell their property
  - SHOW Example: Knef’s initial support of the girls’ rights for compensation from the company, and then his later alignment and proposed alliance with the company, A1S9 & A2S4
- **Media’s role in shaping public opinion and motivations behind media coverage of topics**
  - Real World Example: American media coverage of U.S. diplomats’ deaths as being senseless acts of mob violence
  - Real World Example: why America media coverage of the royals has increased in recent years
  - SHOW Example: Sob Sister & Reporter changing public opinion about the plight of the girls who worked at the plant, A2S1
- **Role of government in regulating private industry**
  - Real World Example: lack of proper government regulation of the banking industry
  - SHOW Example: Roeder’s intentionally misleading the U.S. Labor Department by including only one page of Drinker’s entire report of findings from the company, A1S9
- **Differing interpretation of science to support opposing arguments**
  - Real World Example: The continuation of debate on man’s role with regards to climate change
  - SHOW Example: U.S. Radium paying reputable scientific officials to promote company-friendly diagnosis and treatment of sick current and former employees, A1S10
  - SHOW Example: Wiley’s discovery and public disclosure of Drinker’s complete report on conditions at the plant, A2S5

## **WHAT’S THE POINT?**

Once you have an understanding of the show’s themes and their historic and present-day relevance on our lives, your design choices can become much more inspired, imaginative, and meaningful for you AND the audience.

- Where scenic design choices are concerned, how can we design elements that accurately display the dial factory floor of the U.S. Radium Corp. with a contemporary factory floor where dangers might exist for modern day workers?
- Where lighting design choices are concerned, how can we symbolize the use of misleading scientific information during key moments of the show between medical personal and employees?

- Where property designs go, how can we produce a human jaw bone immersed in a jar of formaldehyde that's as palpably disturbing of a visual from twelve rows back into the audience as it is from twelve feet away onstage?

## THE POINT IS...

Invest yourself thoroughly in the text. Read it. Understand it. Live with it, and then allow your imaginations to prompt some amazing new ideas on how to present everything that it has to say.

## ASSIGNMENT 1 – DUE: Sat, Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>

Your first task is to read through the script over the weekend. Next, with your design partner, generate at least 8-10 ideas on a bullet point list for your respective area of design. Maybe one concept is just an image of a piece of furniture or an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century parlor design you really liked. You're free to include pictures of set pieces, props, or lighting effects from other productions or real-world sources that you can find online. For sound design, you might even include example sound-effects you come across, and include their link. Email your ideas as a Word document to both of the following addresses by Thurs, Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>. We'll then discuss your ideas during subsequent design meetings that target different areas of design. THANK YOU, EVERYONE!

- [wbhsdramagreene@gmail.com](mailto:wbhsdramagreene@gmail.com)

- [verloove@westbloomfield.k12.mi.us](mailto:verloove@westbloomfield.k12.mi.us)

# Now, on to the design concept!

## OVERALL DESIGN CONCEPT:

The world of our play revolves around historical events and the lives of actual human beings. Moreover, the play's structure and form do not render a cartoon depiction of the events. Arthur Roeder isn't a manipulative, evil company president who seeks to kill any number of people in order to maximize company profits. A constant inner-battle is at-play within him once the action of the play begins. We are given a portrait into the lives and struggles of those who inhabited a small corner of the world in Orange County, New Jersey nearly one hundred years ago today. My goal for the design plan is three-fold:

1. Offer audiences an authentic, intimate portrait into the lives of the people who share the story of the play through:
  - a. Developing unchanging staging areas with thoroughly elaborate and highly detailed, rich choices. Wall coverings, set dressing, furniture selection, and property design and costume design choices should all be historically accurate while at the same time reveal a great deal about the lives of those with whom they come into contact.
2. Move through the actions of the play in a nearly seamless fashion from beginning to end through:
  - a. Live-scene changes that are polished and well-coordinated
  - b. Lighting designs that smoothly serve to focus audience attention on live action while hiding areas involved in change
  - c. Lighting designs that intelligently cross-thread shared moments of multiple locals during select scenes
3. Develop and embed design choices into the production that, above all others, serve to illustrate the dominant theme of the show:

- a. The world of our play mainly tackles the issues of the relationship between workers (especially those at the lowest rungs) and their employers (especially those at the executive level). The divide should be visually clear, but not lend itself to the cartoonish.

## **SCENIC DESIGN ELEMENTS:**

### **What We Have So Far:**

The scenic designers have already roughed out a few basic elements of the main structure. We will be including three rectangular platforms of varying height that will be used for staging the lion's share of the production locales.

Some additional components that have been discussed but not yet developed include:

- Use of glow-in-the-dark paints used in conjunction with black lights to illuminate various elements of the structure at different points in the show
- Additional structural components brought in from fly, possibly including:
  - Partial roof structures
  - A watch face
- Construction of period-appropriate furniture pieces, including:
  - Dial-painting studio worktables and stools
  - A corporate boardroom table
  - Dentist office exam chair
  - Other large furniture pieces that accurately display the time period

### **Specific Design Requests:**

As with property design, again, I ask that we be as period appropriate as we can fiscally achieve given our time and labor constraints. Do some real research online to figure out how homes, factory floors, public institutions, and private offices of this time period looked.

Next, work to starkly separate the world of the various classes of people we have in the production. The interior appearance of Mrs. Fryer's (Grace's mother) home should absolutely indicate a vast separation of wealth from that of the Roeder's. Roeder's office must indicate his status to a tee. Additionally, work to ensure that these distinctions draw subtle impressions on our audience. The visual separation should clearly break down between both groups.

### **Research Resources:**

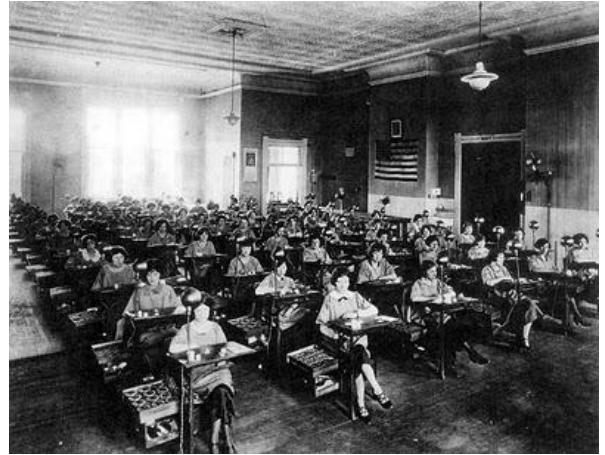
There are a ton of resources available. My initial digging has only scratched the surface. Do some digging yourselves. There really is a mini-treasure-trove of stuff out there. Here's a sample:

### **RESOURCE LINKS:**

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radium\\_Girls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radium_Girls) - General info. about our story
- <http://www.radford.edu/~wkovarik/envhist/radium.html> - Additional info. an Illinois memorial
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Radium\\_Corporation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Radium_Corporation) - History about the company
- <http://www.geni.com/people/Sabin-Sochocky/5725024541180084435> - A little on the company founder
- <http://blogs.plos.org/speakeasyscience/2011/03/25/life-in-the-undark/> - Some history on the use of radium
- [http://www.curatedobject.us/the\\_curated\\_object\\_/2010/02/exhibitions-minneapolis-.html](http://www.curatedobject.us/the_curated_object_/2010/02/exhibitions-minneapolis-.html) - early 20th Century office design photos



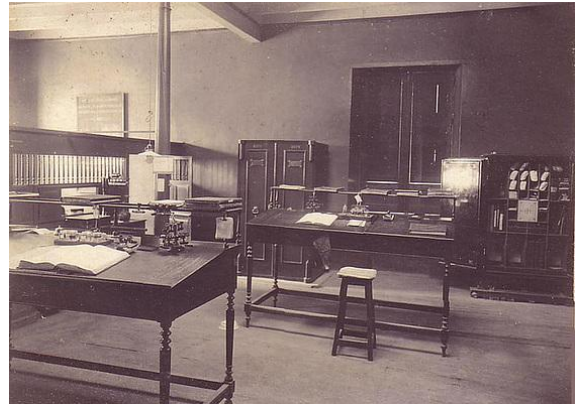
The dial factory in Orange, NJ.



Another shot of the factory floor.



Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century parlor, upper class.



Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century office.



Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century board room. Classy!



Open up, this won't hurt... much.

### Additional Considerations for Scenic Elements:

Our scenic designers have a lot on their plate. I need you guys to work up plans for all of the following areas of design for the show:

- Interior designs for our three platform staging locations, including wall design choices for the two US platforms that don't change locales (much).
  - I'm really angling for wood paneling and a couple of fixed lighting fixtures in Roeder's office. Check out the image above.
- Ideal selection of furniture for set. We can't afford to buy much in the way of new furniture, but I want you to have targets for what we ideally *should* have for historical accuracy given unlimited resources.



That will allow you to make the best decisions with regards to choosing from what we do have, what we can convert or build, and for hunting in order to borrow items.

- Selection of objects for set dressing. This area also spills into the domain of the property designers as well. I thought we fell short on this last fall, and it's a really important area to me. Think about the characters and consciously fill their spaces with items and objects that reflect who they are as people. Again, historical accuracy is important, but so is your rational. Choose things that make sense.
- Additional structural elements. What can we fly into the set, add to the background, etc. to finish out the structural components of our design?
  - Maybe we go with some roof structures
  - Maybe a giant watch face (worried that this might be a little clichéd)

## PROPERTY DESIGN:

Your design area has a large job ahead. The show has a huge list of required properties. The main guiding principle I want you to following when selecting items is (broken record) historical accuracy. A close second with regards to your selections is that the item fits the character. It might help to read the [character descriptions](#) when choosing personal items.

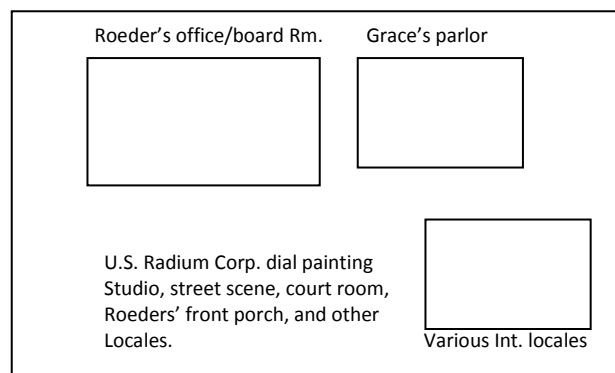
I have been working very diligently to mark specific property needs in my prompt as I've been blocking the show. I will provide you with a list of these items as soon as I can. I'm sure we'll also come up with a list of additional "filler" props for the set as we go along. Once more, I'd rather have less that's historically accurate than more that's not. Still, let's go as far as we can. It would be great to fill the interiors of our various locations with a few key items that really communicate volumes to the audience.

I think you'll have a lot of fun with many of the items. For example, we need a piece of a human jaw bone in formaldehyde. Nice! Anyway, it's a long list. I'll have an SD gather the content from my prompt and turn it over to you. Please take some time on your own to make lists as you read through the script.

## LIGHTING DESIGN:

Last year we had a beautifully lit set, but the selection of the show didn't provide much of an opportunity for stretching creative muscle with regards to lighting design choices. That is not the case with this show. You have a lot of decisions ahead. Here are a few of the areas that you'll need to consider to get started:

- Composition: We really need to work to isolate our various staging locals as much as possible. To save instruments, we probably won't alter the time of day for the unchanging set locations (Roeder's office/board room, Grace's parlor).
  - We need to isolate these areas as completely as possible to facilitate fluid entrances and exits in blackout as characters for upcoming scenes take their place on the stage and in order to cover set changes live during scenes.
  - Here are the basic areas you'll need to focus on lighting and isolating:



- Revelation of Form: Oooh, aaaah. What if we play with this component of lighting to change the audience’s impression of the additional scenic elements as the show unfolds. Again, a dial face is clichéd, but what could we do with a binding structural elements that isn’t fully revealed or that somehow changes through adjustment of position in fly and/or lighting as the show unfolds? Ideas?
- Mood: I think you have a lot of opportunities for playing with this element, especially where the DSL platform is concerned. We might also be able to weave in a little adjustment of the lighting during key scenes in the other two platforms, but I know that we’ll be a little limited by the numbers of instruments we have to do this.
  - We have already discussed the use of black light to color certain elements of the set that will stand out at key moments. This could be very visually effective and exciting.
  - I’m also really excited to see how you can shape the mood of the larger scenes in the show. How can the factory floor appear differently from A1S1 & A1S3 to when the space is going to be abandoned in A2S10 (see the [master scene grid](#))?



Don’t think I want to go this direction, but some elements are interesting. Wow. Interesting. It’s [A1S9](#).



“[Wah, wah, wee, wah!](#)” A lighting effect we could use for the start or end of [A2S4](#)? VERY COOL!

Overall, this [designer’s work is worth checking out](#). I think his overall lighting concepts are definitely too dark for my tastes, but he does make some visually stunning choices.

**SOUND DESIGN:**

Again, you have a lot more on your plate for this show than you did last fall. As with lighting and properties, I've been trying to identify and mark sound cues in my prompt as I've been blocking the show. There are a decent number of specific sound effect requirements of the normal sort (doorbells, doors opening, etc). I think I'd also like to add some environmental layers at the start of each scene. I don't want to go over the top with them, but you have some options for coloring the mood of upcoming scenes with appropriate sound.

Music is another area of concern for sound design. I'm hoping to use both popular music of the era as well as a few small moments of underscoring from more contemporary times. I'd like you guys to begin work by developing a short list (perhaps 6-8 songs) of popular selections from the time of our show. This music will be used for pre-show, intermission, bows, and possibly during a few periods of scene change that take the longest. Ideally, see if you can find the examples of the selections you find on Youtube and share the link in your list of design ideas.

### **COSTUME DESIGN:**

I have a few specific concept ideas that I'd like to explore with regards to costuming this show. First and foremost (yes, it's a running theme) I want to keep things historically accurate. Having said that, color may drift a tiny bit away from historical accuracy if the choices reasonably well fit and lend themselves to the design concepts we're shooting for. First, let's do a quick snapshot of likes and like-not-so-much's from past productions of the show.



Image A.



Image B.



Image C.



Image D.





Image E.



Image F.



Image G.



Image H.



Image I.



Image J.



Image A. I like it. The girls appear, more or less, to be accurately depicted from the few photos of the original dial painters that are online. However, this doesn't support a design angle I'd like to consider. Still, I like it. I definitely like their aprons the best.

Image B. I don't like it. Their uniforms strike me as being more akin to robes reminiscent of the Middle East.

Image C. This is a much bolder choice. Not as accurate to what the girls would have worn, but it is closer to a possible concept. Still, is it *TOO* strong of a choice?

Image D. I don't like the ribbon around her neckline. The gowns don't feel right either. I do like the scarves.

Image E. I'd draw most of your attention to the judge. Perfect! Historically accurate for the era. Just perfect.

Image F. PERFECT! That's Von Sochocky in his final scene, [A2S12](#). I particularly love the heavy velvet robe. Spot-on design.

Images G. & H. The woman who designed this show meant business. What *detail!* I don't know how similar we can get for our Sob Sister, but this is amazing stuff. Love the fir-lined coat and head. Amazing.

Image I. Think I really like this director for Knef. He should appear vulnerable, yet manipulative. He's essentially a weasel. I love the idea of putting a bowtie on him. He does need a white dental coat as well.

J. I like the hat and really the overall look of our Grace here. I DO NOT like their Wiley. Ms. Wiley must illicit a quietly commanding sense of strength and power. She is a woman ahead of her time and a defender of the people. Her appearance must convey her strength and resolve.

### **Additional Costume Design Notes by Character:**

Grace: She is the heart and soul of our story. Early on in the show, she should convey a bright sense of optimism and love of life. However, as the story progresses, I would like her costumes to increasingly suggest a sense of life leaving her. More on this later.

Kathryn and Irene's appearance should mirror that of Grace, more or less. I want to replicate Kathryn's visual regression in the same manner as Grace as well.

Roeder should appear different from Von Sochocky in that he is younger, more ambitious. I believe Roeder would appear more concerned with polish with regards to fashion. Still, I don't think I want him in a dark suit I truly feel that something in light grey is more appropriate for him. Blacks, greys, and charcoals will support little sense of depth for the character.

Markley: I feel as though Markley should be dressed a bit darker. He's the safety-line and damn for the company's well-being. As such, he must project strength and resolve.

Von Sochocky: I see him as dressing for an era that has passed him by a bit. He's should be utterly formal, but at the same time, I want the audience to thoroughly sympathize with this character. He should appear likeable. My thoughts lead me to believe he is dressed in darker tones, but I'm not sure.

Sob Sister and Reporter: I have already presented some visual perspectives for Sob Sister. Our male reporter should reflect the male counterpart of this duo. Would brown trench coats have come into fashion yet? Certainly, a hat is necessary. That's all I got!

Mrs. Roeder: I have some definite thoughts on her. I really want to angle Mrs. Roeder quite far towards communicating wealth, privilege, and refinement. She is the epitome of high society. It is her refinement and obvious display of wealth that further renders her a target among her own peers.

Lee: He should appear visually different from Roeder, but he should also seem to be cut from the same cloth. They are entirely complimentary of each other's thoughts and ideas where the company is concerned. As such, their attire further demonstrates the compatibility of their thinking.

Tom: Tom is a postal delivery man by trade. I'm not sure if we ever actually want or need to see him in uniform though. There's mention of him below that I'd like you to check out. He should appear working class, likeable, and good-natured. He also needs hints of his inner drive. Tom's a basic guy with no frills or flash.

Berry: He should absolutely compliment Ms. Wiley in attire. He embodies the legal manifestation of David versus Goliath in our story. His clothing should suggest that he is on the side of good, and it should somehow command a sense of quiet strength. Perhaps his appearance is somehow much quieter than that of Ms. Wiley.

Society Woman: She's very much akin to Mrs. Roeder. She should embody refinement and elegance. Again, I believe the link to production images listed below displays a wonderful example of the Society Woman.

Macneil: She's the company's woman, and she's one of the few intermediary figures we have. She serves on the side of the fence that support the company, but we should also clearly understand that she was once in the shoes of the girls on the floor.

### **Specific Costume Design Concepts:**

I'm having a tough time reconciling some concept directions I'd like to consider with historical accuracy. Here's one example. I'd really like to play us the bland, simple, light/white/plain attire of the dial studio workers at the beginning of the show. At the same time, I'm really adamant about exploring a way to show these characters in a visually bright and colorful manner early on in order to display their health and vitality. As the show progresses, and their health readily declines, it would be interesting to literally see a rapid decline of color in their attire. I'm curious to know your thoughts on this, Judy.

Another general concept I'd like to explore is a way to clearly define a line between our underlying employees, their family members, and those who come to their aide, and the company officials, expert witnesses, and board members. Anything we can do to visually illustrate this division through their costuming is encouraged.

Last but not least, I would encourage you to take a look at all of the [production images](#) from this particular show. Overall, they did an amazing job with the costuming. I love the images of the guy with the newspaper. This really feels like the look of our Tom to me.