Junior Thespian Induction Script

“Ladies and Gentleman, family and friends, it is a pleasure to welcome you here to share in the induction of \_\_\_ members into \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(school name)’s Troupe No. \_\_\_\_ of the International Thespian Society. Through hard work, sacrifice, and dedication, the candidates have earned the right to be called Thespians. It is a title of honor, signifying a commitment to an art as old as humanity.

“Commitment to theatre is what the International Thespian Society is all about. The Society was established in 1929 by a group of college and high school teachers in Fairmont, West Virginia. They named their organization for Thespis, the Greek who, according to legend, was the first actor; their guiding principle was a dedication to excellence in theatre arts in

secondary schools. In the \_\_\_ years since, the Society has grown into an international organization with more than 2.2 million members, but its goals haven’t changed; the International Thespian Society still strives to make education and arts programs places for good theatre and to honor those students who do theatre well. The Society is a service as well as an honorary organization

 Introduce and read from the speech delivered by playwright Robert Patrick at the Thespian Society’s fiftieth anniversary

celebration during the 1978 Thespian Festival.

“For 20,000 years we humans have had what we called ‘impossible’ dreams: space travel; time travel; telepathy; to live other lives; to raise the dead; to create living creatures; to live forever; eternal youth; unity with our fellow humans.

“Philosophers and spiritualists have used magic, alchemy, intellect, voodoo, and physics in quest of these goals. Some have been attained by science. Some still evade us. Some, even science calls ‘impossible.’

“And yet for all these thousands of years, we have already possessed those treasures, whenever there was an empty space, a poet, actors and an audience: in theatre.

“Space travel? The bare stage behind me, with a few words and a pantomimist’s skill, becomes the surface of the moon or the center of the Earth. On this stage we can be in Arabia or Iceland, Okinawa, Elsinore, Brigadoon, Oklahoma, the South

Pacific, or Our Town.

“Time travel? On any evening, afternoon, or early morning we can return to ancient Egypt, classical Greece, imperial Rome, Elizabethan England, the France of Joan of Arc, California in the gold rush—or in one play travel from Cairo to Paris to Istanbul to Washington, D.C.

“Raise the dead? In any or all of these times or places, people live again: Sir Thomas More, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Elizabeth herself—plus a million casual strangers some playwright met and liked or despised or wondered about centuries ago.

“But we do not merely watch these people, uncomprehending, as tourists. At those moments when real living people would stand stuttering, stammering, or trembling with illiterate rage, these fascinating people open their mouths and speak their thoughts aloud: Hamlet comes on and in ten words speaks the tormenting choice that underlies the ecstasies and agonies of every adolescent. Frankie Adams articulates the confusions and discoveries that mark the end of childhood; King Lear screams the anger of old age; and Eliza Doolittle, happily awake in bed, peeks from under the covers and confides in us that she could have danced all night!

“But excuse me—there never was a Hamlet, a Frankie Adams, a king called Lear, nor an Eliza Doolittle. …And yet they have appeared alive and joyous in literally thousands of places. Simultaneously on a hundred stages at once around the world, these absolute hallucinations recur! We have seen the creation of life so often we have forgotten it is a miracle.

“Telepathy? It’s telepathic travel in the minds of geniuses through ancient and imaginary lives of forefathers and phantoms for all eternity; what are the scientists and the statesmen troubling themselves for? Aren’t they sitting there in the dark beside us as we all, side by side, rank on rank—people who might not even be willing to talk to one another outside the theatre—laugh together and gasp together, and are not even ashamed to cry because we can hear that others in the dark around us are crying? Isn’t it another kind of mindreading, a growing together of spirits that makes 2,000 people laugh simultaneously at the silliest slapstick joke?

“These incredible treasures are everywhere—everywhere that there is an empty space, a poet, actors, and an audience. When they ask you, ‘What is theatre for?’ simply tell them: ‘It does what every other field of human endeavor is struggling to do.’”

.It is my pleasure to welcome you here to share in the induction of the first members of (school name and troupe number).

“Since 1929 the International Thespian Society, the student honorary division of the Educational Theatre Association, has worked to promote theatre arts in education. The organization is named for Thespis, the Greek who, according to legend, stepped out from the chorus and became the first actor.

“Students become members by earning points for their work. Junior Thespian membership is granted for the performance of meritorious work in theatre arts that meets the International Thespian Society’s guidelines. Points are earned for hours spent in rehearsal and performance, working on production crews, working behind the scenes, doing advocacy work, and helping with Junior Thespian projects.

“Just as points can be earned in many different areas of the theatre, theatre provides many different areas of learning. Not only does theatre serve as a bridge that connects to the other fine arts disciplines of dance, music, and painting, but also into such areas as history, literature, science, math, psychology, home economics, drafting, industrial arts, marketing, computer science, and others. Theatre also stimulates creativity and problem-solving skills.

“Involvement in theatre builds confidence in students, and it enhances students’ abilities to work in groups toward a common goal. Theatre helps students develop self-discipline and encourages commitment to a cause.

“For some, theatre could provide a career path; however, for most, it is a creative and social outlet. It makes no difference: for the student, theatre in school is an enormously valuable experience.

“Actors are called Thespians in honor of the first actor, Thespis, who emerged from the ancient Greek chorus and became an individual character in the play. Theatre is said to be more than 6,000 years old. The priests of Egypt created the first dramatic literature with highly emotional religious hymns. Later, in Greece, drama evolved and flourished, becoming an integral part of the lives and culture of the people. Today, we are in an era of more realistic theatre. Modern plays attempt to portray life honestly, whether comic or tragic. As young people of today, you are part of the living theatre. Those of you who have earned membership will be inducted as members of \_\_\_\_\_Troupe#\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the International Thespian Society.”

“I am honored, therefore, to present membership to the following students who have fulfilled the requirements through their deserving work in the theatre and through Thespian activities.

“When I read your name, please receive your membership card, certificate, and induction pin.”

(Read the names and review the accomplishments of students earning membership.)

“Would the new inductees please repeat the Thespian pledge after me:

“I promise to uphold / the aims and ideals of the International Thespian Society. / I am a student of theatre and excellence is my ideal. / I promise to perform my part as well as I can; / to accept praise and criticism with grace; / to cooperate with my fellow thespians / and work for the good of the troupe; / and to share my love of theatre.”

“Congratulations, and welcome to membership in the International Thespian Society as Junior Thespians. Always remember the International Thespian Society motto, which comes from Alexander Pope’s ‘Essay on Man’: ‘Act well your part; there all the honor lies.’”

*I. If the induction of the members is part of an awards ceremony, conferring letters, stars, bars, Honor Thespian ranks, scholar distinctions, and awards can follow.*

J. In spring, if the officers for the coming year have been elected, they may be introduced at this time.

“Thespians, the future of our organization depends on the dedication of all members and on the vision and the ingenuity of the officers. The members of our troupe have selected the following officers to direct our activities in the future: (Introduce the officers.)

“It is my honor to confer upon you the charge of your offices in the International Thespian Society. I extend to you the trust of our members and of the Society in striving for the advancement of theatre arts in our education and in our community. Congratulations.”