



Archbishop Hannan High School Blackfriars Audition Packet

Radium Girls

By D.W. Gregory

Synopsis

In 1926, radium was a miracle cure, Madame Curie an international celebrity, and luminous watches the latest rage—until the girls who painted them began to fall ill with a mysterious disease. Inspired by a true story, *Radium Girls* traces the efforts of Grace Fryer, a dial painter, as she fights for her day in court. Her chief adversary is her former employer, Arthur Roeder, an idealistic man who cannot bring himself to believe that the same element that shrinks tumors could have anything to do with the terrifying rash of illnesses among his employees. As the case goes on, however, Grace finds herself battling not just with the U.S. Radium Corporation, but with her own family and friends, who fear that her campaign for justice will backfire. Written with warmth and humor, *Radium Girls* is a fast-moving, highly theatrical ensemble piece for 9 to 10 actors, who play more than 30 parts—friends, co-workers, lovers, relatives, attorneys, scientists, consumer advocates, and myriad interested bystanders. Called a "powerful" and "engrossing" drama by critics, *Radium Girls* offers a wry, unflinching look at the peculiarly American obsessions with health, wealth, and the commercialization of science.

Author's Note

Radium Girls is a work of historical fiction. Although it is based on events that occurred in and around Orange, New Jersey, between 1918 and 1928, the characters and incidents portrayed have been shaped to serve the drama. Certain characters are entirely fictitious and others are based on multiple individuals.

Performance Dates

October 14, 15, 16 at 7pm at The Fuhrmann Auditorium

Audition Dates & Location

August 17th & 18th, 3:30pm-4:30pm, Room 208

Please keep August 19th open in case callbacks are needed

Audition Process & Instructions

Auditions will consist of readings from the script. Monologues of your own choosing do not need to be prepared. Students will use the provided audition sides in this packet. These sides need to be prepared based on what roles students are interested in. We may also ask you to read for parts that you may not wish to be considered for.

Resumes and headshots will be accepted but are not required. Please print out the audition form provided below so you can indicate your character preferences, availability during the rehearsal period, and other valuable information. Students should have their audition form filled out and ready to turn in when they walk into the audition room. Upon walking into the audition, please state your name, grade level, and which roll you will be reading.

Please take some time to review the play synopsis, character summaries, and other information provided. This will help you decide on the roles for which you would like to audition.

Audition Sign Up Form

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0845A5AB2EAAFE3-radium>

Access Code: BLACKFRIARS

Rehearsal Schedule

Rehearsals will begin August 23rd and are held Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30pm-5pm, and Saturdays from 9am-12:30pm beginning September 18th. Tech Week will take place at the Fuhrmann Auditorium with the following schedule:

- Saturday, October 9th: 9am-4pm
- October 11th & 12th: 3:30pm-8pm
- October 13th: 1pm-8pm
- October 14, 15, 16: Showtime at 7pm

Rehearsals may be added/changed depending on need. Once the show is cast, a more detailed calendar will be sent out regarding the rehearsal schedule and actors called for each day. All actors must be available during tech week.

****Conflicts must be noted on the audition form prior to the beginning of rehearsals.****

Radium Girls Character Descriptions

This show is written for actors to have multiple parts, but the cast can be as large as needed. Depending on casting, actors may have more than one role. Grace Fryer and Mr. Roeder will not be double cast in another role.

THE WOMEN IN THE FACTORY:

GRACE FRYER.....A top-notch dial painter, she is the heroine of the play, must have innocence and naivety but show great strength and conviction, 15 at the start of the play, 26 at its close

KATHRYN SCHAUB.....Her friend and another dial painter, she is sincere in her friendship and shares the same struggles as Grace, 15 at the start of the play

IRENE RUDOLPH.....Kathryn's cousin and another dial painter, 17 at the start of the play, Later she is in her 20s

MRS. ALMA MACNEIL.....Their supervisor at U.S. Radium Corp.

THE COMPANY MEN:

ARTHUR ROEDER.....President of the U.S. Radium Corp., may seem cold-hearted and evil in his decisions, but he is ambitious and has a different set of motivations, not malicious in nature, 34 at the start of the play, 65 at its close

EDWARD MARKLEY.....Legal Counsel for the company

C.B. "CHARLIE" LEE.....Vice President of U.S. Radium Corp., later President of the company, supports the company at all costs

DR. VON SOCHOCKY.....Founder of the U.S. Radium Corp., Inventor of the luminous paint, validates all with scientific fact and has a long journey to resolution, has a Ukranian accent

THEIR FAMILY & FRIENDS:

TOM KREIDER.....Grace's boyfriend, several years older than she

DIANE ROEDER.....Married to Arthur Roeder

HARRIET ROEDER.....Their daughter, 9 years old at first, later she is in her 30s

ANNA FRYER.....Grace's mother

THE ADVOCATES:

KATHERINE WILEY.....The executive director, New Jersey Consumer's League

RAYMOND BERRY.....An attorney for the dial painters

THE SCIENTISTS:

DR. CECIL DRINKER.....A Harvard industrial hygienist
DR. HARRISON MARTLAND.....The county medical examiner
DR. JOSEPH KNEF.....A dentist
DR. MARIE CURIE.....Discovered radium
FREDERICK FLINN, Ph.D.....Columbia University industrial hygienist

THE PRESS:

REPORTER (JACK YOUNGWOOD).....A reporter, Newark Ledger
SOB SISTER (NANCY JANE HARLAN).....A tabloid reporter, New York Graphic,
she provides ongoing commentary throughout the play and ultimately has
her own interests in mind as well

THE WITNESSES:

WILLIAM J.A. BAILEY.....An entrepreneur, manufacturer of Radithor
MRS. MICHAELS.....A consumer of Radithor
SOCIETY WOMAN.....Mrs. James (Cora) Middleton, a well-bred woman
CLERK.....An overworked public employee
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO TAKE AN INTEREST IN THE CASE.

THE TIME: The 1920s

THE PLACE: Orange, New Jersey

BLACKFRIARS

Radium Girls Audition Form

Date: _____

Name: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Grade Level: _____ Parent's Cell: _____

Hannan Email: _____

Height: _____ Hair Color: _____

Roles you would like to be considered for:

_____ Are you willing to take ANY role! (*please check if applicable*)

Technical: Lights Sound Building Backstage Crew Painting

Special Skills (*dance, musical instruments, etc.*): _____

Past Theatre Experience:

Play:	Role:	Organization:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

CONFLICTS:

Rehearsals begin Monday, August 23, 2021 - see the general rehearsal schedule listed in the audition packet. Please list **ANY known conflicts** through the run of this rehearsal schedule/production. All cast members must be present for tech week and the run of the show. A more detailed rehearsal schedule will be sent out once we begin with who is expected to attend each rehearsal. This is a commitment and it takes everyone to put together a successful show. Two unexcused absences from rehearsal will result in your role being recast.

August 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
15	16	17 Play Auditions 3:30-4:30pm Rm. 208	18 Play Auditions 3:30-4:30pm Rm. 208	19	20	21
22	23 3:30-6:00 (Read Through) Rm. 210	24 3:30-5:00	25	26 3:30-5:00	27	28
29	30 3:30-5:00	31 3:30-5:00				

September 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2 3:30-5:00	3	4
5	6 Labor Day Holiday No Rehearsal	7 3:30-5:00	8	9 3:30-5:00	10	11
12	13 3:30-5:00	14 3:30-5:00	15	16 3:30-5:00	17	18 9:00-12:30
19	20 3:30-5:00 Costumes Due	21 3:30-5:00	22	23 3:30-5:00	24	25 9:00-12:30
26	27 3:30-5:00 Cast Pictures	28 3:30-5:00	29	30 3:30-5:00		

October 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 9:00-12:30
3	4 3:30-6:30	5 3:30-6:30	6 3:30-6:30	7	8 Load in	9 9:00-4:00 @ Fuhrmann
10	11 3:30-8:00 @ Fuhrmann	12 3:30-8:00 @ Fuhrmann	13 1:00-8:00 @ Fuhrmann	14 7:00 Show	15 7:00 Show	16 7:00 Show

Calendar is subject to change

Mr. Roeder

The Moment Before: The girls in the factory have just been found playing with the paint and putting it on their faces so they glow in the dark to play a trick on their friend Amelia.

Act I

RADIUM GIRLS

15

ROEDER. Well. (*A moment as he regards them.*) Girls. This paint you've been playing with. It's very expensive. You realize this? (*Mumbled acknowledgment.*) It takes several tons of ore to produce a single gram of radium. That's a lot of work—hard work, for the men in the extraction plant. But they do this work gladly. You understand why? Why they work so hard? What we are all working for?

GRACE. The war?

ROEDER. That's right. The war. The dials you paint save lives, girls. Our boys in the field depend on them. To read them in the dark, no mistaking what they see. Otherwise...some of those boys won't be coming home. So, girls. If you play around and don't take the work seriously...well, you're playing into the hands of the Kaiser. And we don't want that, do we?

GIRLS. No sir... Oh, no! Etc.

ROEDER. So let's get back to work now and leave the tomfoolery to home. (*The GIRLS file away, but GRACE lingers.*)

GRACE. Mr. Roeder? I just—I just wanted to say. I—I am sorry. I won't do nothin' like this ever again.

ROEDER. Well, dear. Just keep this in mind: If you do right by us, we'll do right by you.

Mr. Roeder

The Moment Before: Roeder has just been given a report by a Harvard scientist suggesting that Radium is the cause of the girls' illness. The Dept. of Health wants the report, and Roeder decides to give them only one page to buy more time.

50

RADIUM GIRLS

Act I

ROEDER. Scientists! Government men! They have no idea what it takes to run a business. Von Sochocky thought advertising was a dirty word. He laughed at the very idea of promotion. I can't tell you how many times I walked into that man's office and he turned a deaf ear to everything I told him. But, Charlie, we showed him. We showed him! Look at us. We are the world's largest single supplier of radium. The largest in the world. You know what it took for us to get here! Do you think I am going to stand idly by and let our good name be dragged through the mud? *(He holds out the paper to LEE.)* Trust me, Charlie.

Mr. Roeder

The Moment Before: Roeder is now retired and in his 60s. He reflects on the last time he saw Grace Fryer and the girls as the U.S. Radium Corp.

ROEDER. I think back on those days—and I try to think—how could it have happened? I remember so clearly climbing the stairs to the studio at Alden Street. At the top of the stairs, those wide, high windows, and the slant of light, the way it hit the floor, the way the floor creaked under my feet—the smell of the place, chalky, like an old schoolroom, and all those girls—schoolgirls, really—all bent to the task, in their plain green smocks, their delicate little hands moving so quickly. No man could work the way those girls did. So careful. So fast. Those brushes flying from the dials to the paint to the dials—to their lips. *(Beat.)* Try as I might, Harriet, try as I might—I cannot remember their faces. *(The irony strikes him.)* I never saw their faces.

Grace Fryer

The Moment Before: Markley, legal counsel for the company, brings settlement papers for Grace to sign. She begins to question the terms of the settlement and Markley gives her 24 hours to sign the papers or the settlement offer is off the table.

GRACE. You're trying to tell me if I don't sign these now—but I came back a week from now and said I changed my mind, you'd still rather go to court? You'd still rather some judge get a look at me...and take your chances I won't win on sympathy alone? Twenty-four hours. You're just trying to bully me.

MARKLEY. Very well, then. Miss Fryer. I'll take that for a no. And we'll see you in court. (*MARKLEY packs up his briefcase and exits as MRS. FRYER sees him out.*)

GRACE. Yes you will! You will see me. If they have to carry me in there, you'll see me. You and Mr. Roeder both!

MRS. FRYER. You call that man back.

GRACE. I'm goin' to court, Ma.

MRS. FRYER. What are you trying to prove? You know you can't win!

GRACE. I want those people to look at me! I want them to look at me and explain how it's my fault I got sick working in their factory!

MRS. FRYER. And what will that get ya? What?

GRACE. Ma. All my life, I've done what other people told me to do. I quit school. Because you said I should. I put that brush in my mouth 'cause Mrs. McNeil said I should. I never said, please can't I finish school? I never said, I don't like the taste of this paint. I never argued. Even though I knew—Ma. I knew somethin' wasn't right. At night, I'd lie in bed, and I'd see my dress. Hanging on the back of the closet door. All aglow. My shoes on the floor. My hairbrush. And comb. On the dresser. So much light, Ma. So much light! And I never once questioned. I never once asked! Don't you see? They knew I wouldn't. *That's* what they were counting on.

Kathryn

The Moment Before: The girls are working in the factory. Kathryn & Irene are telling Grace about Amelia's funeral and the boy from another department who they think was in love with her.

KATHRYN. And can you imagine? Can you imagine? If he loved her and he never told her, never could bring himself to say! Because...because she was *so* beautiful...and...and he was *so* shy. And now it's too late. It's too late, their love is forever thwarted. He didn't tell her, and he'll never get a chance ever again. *(They reflect on this realization somberly.)*

GRACE. Poor Amelia.

KATHRYN. Poor Amelia!

IRENE. Poor kid.

KATHRYN. Her family took it awful bad, Grace. Albina, Quinta, everybody. Everyone of 'em cryin'. Even her father, cryin' so bad. I never saw a man cry before and not like that—just bawlin' like a baby.

Kathryn

The Moment Before: Kathryn's cousin Irene has just died. The Dept. of Health says U.S. Radium Corp. is in full compliance with all state health and labor regulations.

KATHRYN. I wanna file another complaint.

GRACE. I just don't see what good this is gonna do, Kathryn. To make such a fuss this way.

KATHRYN. Grace. Three surgeries and they wanted to cut her again. She finally said no. She knew. What was left of her jaw rotted so bad, the smell was terrible. And, Grace. The worst of it is. I couldn't look at her. Irene was so afraid of being alone—but I left her alone. When she died it was the middle of the night, and nobody was with her.

Von Sochocky

The Moment Before: Von Sochocky is stepping down from the U.S. Radium Corp. and Mr. Roeder will be the new company president. He is saying his goodbyes to the girls in the factory.

ROEDER. Yes. As some of you may have heard by now, Dr. Von Sochocky is stepping down—and he wanted to take this opportunity—

VON SOCHOCKY (*cutting him off*). ...to make with goodbye. And Mr. Roeder has kindly consented. (*He pauses, looking for the words.*) Some of you I have known since you were little girls. Coming here during

the war. Working so hard! Day after day at the bench, two hundred, three hundred, some of you, five hundred dials a day! So excited to be part of our work here. When this company I start, in my own kitchen, mixing up the paint, I knew I found something miraculous, to make life better...easier... And now...what do I read?... (*He taps the red book thoughtfully.*) ...more and more uses are there for the radium... More than I dreamed possible. (*He stops. MRS. MACNEIL dabs her eyes with a kerchief.*)

VON SOCHOCKY. And Mr. Roeder. Let us good luck wish to you also. To the plate he steps as your new company president! Our congratulations to you.

ROEDER. Thank you.

VON SOCHOCKY. When Mr. Roeder came four years ago to us, I saw in him a young man of great enterprise—

ROEDER. Thank you—

VON SOCHOCKY (*overlapping*). And great ambition!

ROEDER. Yes, thank—

VON SOCHOCKY (*overlapping—a false cheerfulness*). Little did I guess the direction your ambition would take. But! One of the things that makes this country great is the opportunity it presents to a young man...and his friends.

VON SOCHOCKY. And so, ladies! Let us wish Mr. Roeder the very best in the new direction he intends the company to take.

Wiley

The Moment Before: Miss Wiley is speaking at the Women's Club of Orange. Grace meets with her to see if Wiley is willing to help her and the other girls get a good lawyer and fight the U.S. Radium Corporation.

GRACE. So you will help us?

WILEY. I think I can help you. If you're willing to take some chances.

GRACE. Chances?

WILEY. Miss Fryer. If you would be willing to set aside your own need—just for the moment, we can put a stop to that company. We can stop them dead in their tracks.

GRACE. What do I have to do?

WILEY. We start by putting you on page one.

TOM. Page one? You want her to talk to the newspaper?

WILEY. Not just one newspaper. Many, many newspapers.

TOM. Is that really necessary? All we want is for Grace to get her compensation—

GRACE. Tommy. Let her finish.

WILEY. I understand your concerns. But this company has already shown it's willing to go to extremes to protect itself. No, I'm afraid the only way we'll get to them is to hit them where it matters most. Their public image. When every newspaper in America tells your story. How you were sorely treated. How you suffered. How the company denied all responsibility! Believe me, Miss Fryer, when that happens, Arthur Roeder will come to the table with his hat in his hands. (*GRACE looks to TOM. He nods.*)

Flinn

The Moment Before: Dr. Flinn has arrived at Grace's home to examine her as her health has deteriorated even more. Flinn tells Grace her blood work looks great and radium is not the cause of her illness. Grace questions about other girls who are sick that she has read about in the papers. What Grace doesn't know is that Flinn is working for the company.

FLINN. Miss Fryer! Don't tell me you pay any attention to the papers! Those stories are not scientific!

GRACE. But—

FLINN. Reporters are not scientific. They do not follow scientific methods. They write to sell, not to educate. The scientist is not concerned with what sells. He is concerned with the truth. He undertakes years of painstaking study to arrive at an understanding of intricate natural processes that most people could never presume to comprehend! You would do well to listen to science and ignore the nonsense that is printed in the newspapers. Because I can tell you right now—radium has nothing to do with what's ailing you.

Sob Sister

The Moment Before: Sob Sister with The Graphic is offering Grace and Kathryn \$5,000 for exclusive rights to their story and is trying to convince them to take the offer.

TOM. You're gonna talk to them reporters anyhow. Why not get somethin' out of it?

SOB SISTER. He's right, ya know! Why give your story away when people are crazy to read it? Believe me, you girls could cash in big. The day we ran the feature on you—BANG! Sold out of every copy at every newsstand. Everybody can sympathize with the plight of some poor sick girl facing certain death—with no hope of fulfilment in motherhood. *(Her words are like a slap across the face.)*

TOM. Grace. At least think about it. *(GRACE wheels KATHRYN off as TOM follows.)*

SOB SISTER. Sure. Think it over. I understand—you're worried about what people will say. But hey—you gotta think about your own interests here. There's no reason you shouldn't get something out of all of this. Look out for number one, that's the way. Everyone else is out to get what they can. For sure. Why should ya sit back and keep your nose clean when everyone else is up to their elbows in it?

Society Woman

The Moment Before: Madame Curie is embarking on a tour of the U.S. and meets with members of the press. Societywomen introduces her.

Act I

RADIUM GIRLS

17

(MADAME CURIE steps up to the podium with VON SOCHOCKY and SOCIETYWOMAN. This is Cora Middleton, a well-heeled, well-spoken woman of dignity. She takes a great interest in science—and any other issue likely to place her at the center of excitement.)

SOCIETYWOMAN. Welcome all, welcome all! I must ask you, ladies and gentlemen of the press, please limit your questions! Madame Curie is about to embark on an exhaustive tour of the country. And she is under strict doctor's orders to rest—although, in the typical fashion of a scientist who can think only of her research, her life's work—she has refused to rest! *(Approval from the CROWD.)*

REPORTER. Madame Curie!

SOB SISTER. Madame Curie!

REPORTER. Madame Curie!

SOCIETYWOMAN. No more questions! Madame Curie is on a tight schedule! Mrs. Andrew Carnegie has sent a car—and will escort Dr. Curie personally—as will I—to Washington—where President Harding will present the gift—of one gram of radium! *(Cheers and excitement as MADAME CURIE and CROWD exits leaving ROEDER and LEE.)*

Other Members of the Public

Letters / Fan Mail to the radium plant girls during their legal battles. Grace reads them to Kathryn as she is visiting her in the hospital.

ELDERLY WIDOW. Dear Miss Schaub. I read of your sad story in the Boston Globe and am so sorry for your plight. It seems in this time of rapid advancement the well-being of the average worker is overlooked. I would like to share with you girls the key to my own good health at the age of ninety-two! It is called Christian Science.

VENECINE SALESMAN. Dear Miss Fryer. I read of your woeful situation in the Atlanta Constitution and I am prepared to offer you a solution! VENECINE! A wonder tonic made from all natural ingredients, VENECINE will restore your health and vitality. We are prepared to offer you girls a lifetime supply of VENECINE in exchange for the *exclusive rights* to use your pictures in our advertisements.

(SALESMAN freezes as lights up on:)

LOVESICK COWBOY. Dear Girl. I read about you in the Billings Gazette. I run a hundred head of cattle up here and do very well by myself. I have always longed for a companion and am well equipped to offer you a comfortable home in your final hours. A girl like you has suffered so much— Don't you think you deserve a few fleeting hours of happiness? Sincerely, your admirer, Leonard F. Watkins. P.S. Enclosed is my picture.