

# THE WIZARD OF OZ

By L. Frank Baum

Adapted for a Large Cast Version  
of Young Performers

By  
Kathryn Schultz Miller

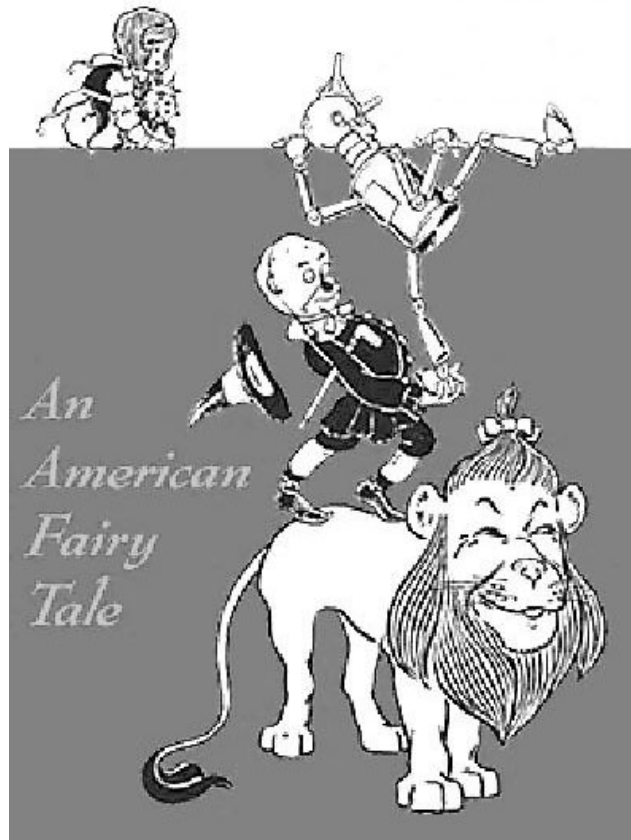


Illustration by W. W. Denslow, original Oz series illustrator.

## TEACHERS GUIDE

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# ***Wizard of Oz*** **TEACHERS GUIDE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Like all artistic expression, theatre is a celebration of life's experiences. For children it is even more. It is a reaching for the future, an exploration of what is to come, a lovely excuse to dream about the path that lies ahead. Any child can ride a giant crane or become a princess, a wizard or a knight in shining armor. Any child can kick around all the reasons why princesses do what they do; experience all the obstacles and triumphs involved in slaying that pesky dragon. Navigating through a theatre world is daydreaming in motion. And it can be a wondrous and nurturing place to grow.

This guide offers lots of information and suggestions to enhance the learning experience and many tips on directing the play. You can pick and choose what makes the most sense for you and your students. You know what to do with it – you're the teacher!

But remember this. Our children have a long dream ahead of them. This is the place for them to test their creativity, explore their farthest limits, and to begin to understand the place they will take in the real world. All the things that might worry you, the things you might think are important – costumes, scenery, learning lines, getting it right, making it “good” – have very little to do with the blossoming that is going on in a young player's mind. This play has been written to take the emphasis off of all that, leaving you to concentrate on what really matters. It's the process, that feeling around in the dark, that means the most. Place your emphasis on the joy of creation. At every bump in the road choose the path of fun and exploration. Give your young friends a safe place to “play” and imagine. Give them roots and wings...

And guess what? I promise you – the play will be better than your wildest dreams!

***Kathryn Schultz Miller***

## **CONTENTS**

### **STUDY GUIDE**

The first part contains information about the play's subject that you can use to enhance the play project. You'll find background, history, resources, bibliography, along with suggested classroom activities, studies, and discussions.

### **PERFORMANCE GUIDE**

The second part contains information, ideas, and suggestions to help you and your students create, rehearse, and perform the play.

## ***The Wizard of Oz*** **STUDY GUIDE**

### **SYNOPSIS**

***The Wizard of Oz*** is the story that started it all. It begins when a little Kansas farm girl, Dorothy Gale, and her dog Toto are blown away in a tornado and land in a fairyland named Oz. Here she meets a very unusual cast of characters - the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and Cowardly Lion, and together they go on a quest to see the Wizard of Oz, each of them seeking what they want most in life. Making their way along the Yellow Brick Road through a series of hair-raising encounters, they arrive at the Emerald City only to be told by the Wizard that they first must kill the Wicked Witch of the West before he will grant their wishes.

They eventually overcome many dangerous challenges and dispose of the witch (although quite by accident), and return only to find that the Wizard is really just a humbug. He craftily addresses everyone's wish but Dorothy's, which is to return home to Kansas. So once more Dorothy and her friends set out, this time to find the Good Witch of the South. These last adventures end happily with Dorothy and Toto returning home, thanks to something she had all along.

### **THE WRITERS OF OZ**

Over the years there have been hundreds of books and publications written about the magical Land of Oz, from the first Oz book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, by L. Frank Baum, to contemporary novels, storybooks, comics, and television shows for today's audiences. Baum, as creator of the Oz stories, is regarded as the foremost contributor, having written the original series of 15 books published from 1900 to 1920. After Baum's death, his editor, Ruth Plumly Thompson, continued the series, writing 19 more Oz books from 1921 to 1939 and two more in the 1970s a few years before she died. After Baum and Thompson, there were numerous Oz contributors including John R. Neill (Oz illustrator), Jack Snow, and Rachel R. Cosgrove, to name a few.

### **L. FRANK BAUM: American Storyteller - Father of Oz**

*"When I was young I longed to write a great novel that should win me fame. Now that I am getting old my first book is written to amuse children. For, aside from my evident inability to do anything "great," I have learned to regard fame as a will-o-wisp which, when caught, is not worth the possession; but to please a child is a sweet and lovely thing that warms one's heart and brings its own reward..."*                      -- L. Frank Baum

Like the characters he created – Dorothy, the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and others – L. Frank Baum traveled a long road to reach his goals. Along the way, he

encountered physical illness, bankruptcy, rejection and failure. However, like any hero, he triumphed in the end. Today, audiences still read and enjoy his fairy tales, proving L. Frank Baum to be a master of storytelling.

Lyman Frank Baum was born to Benjamin and Cynthia Ann Stanton Baum on May 15, 1856 in Chittenango, New York.. Benjamin Baum made his fortune in the oil business and the family enjoyed a happy existence which revolved around friends, family and church.

Since birth, Frank suffered from heart trouble. Frail and sickly, he stayed close to home, receiving his education from a private tutor. Once he learned to read, he could be found in his father's study, devouring volumes by Dickens and Thackeray. He also enjoyed fairy tales, although he found that he didn't enjoy the presence of witches and other frightful creatures that often popped up in the stories. He vowed that someday he would write fairy tales that would not frighten young readers.

For his fourteenth birthday, Frank received a small printing press. Inspired, he and his younger brother began publishing a neighborhood newspaper. The journal boasted poetry, articles, editorials and word puzzles. He also earned money by printing signs, stationery and program. When he was 17, Frank started another paper, *The Empire*, and a magazine for stamp collectors. As he grew into an adult, he worked at a variety of positions, including salesman, reporter, owner of a print shop, director of a chain of opera houses, and actor.

Family and friends found him charming and delightful. He loved to tell and hear stories, and some even said he himself could not distinguish reality from events he had only imagined. Practical jokes and word games also enchanted him. In 1881, Frank's charm won him the attention of Maud Gage. They were married the following year.

In the year before his marriage, Frank wrote a melodrama entitled *The Maid of Arran*, which became a local hit. After the wedding, Frank and Maud toured with the company for a while, then moved to Syracuse, where Frank labored as a salesman.

Although Benjamin Baum had passed his businesses and money on to his son, Frank soon found that a clerk had gambled away all of the business's capital. He continued to write, attempting to pull himself out of bankruptcy. Several years later, the Baums moved to the Dakota Territory, where yet another business dissolved in bankruptcy. In 1891, Frank moved his family to Chicago where became a buyer and a salesman. Although he traveled a great deal, he continued to write.

Frank loved children, and delighted in telling them stories. He would read Mother Goose rhymes to his children, who simply could not understand why a mouse would run up a clock or why a cow would jump over the moon. Frank made up his own explanations, which Maud urged him to publish. Her insistence led to *Mother Goose In Prose* (1897). He continued to write and publish both fiction and non-fiction.

Although he published many books, Frank achieved popularity and fame because of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). The book wowed audiences with its story and its vivid illustrations. It became an instant hit, and earned the honor of best-selling book in 1900. Since the book had been so successful, Frank decided to adapt it for the stage. *Oz*, his musical extravaganza became immensely popular, and toured for 9 years. Frank wrote 14 more Oz books, two of which were published after his death. He also tried adapting the stories for stage and film, but had marginal success. Once again, he faced bankruptcy.

After many years of hard work, Frank grew weaker and weaker, but he continued to write, even if it was only a little each day. He stashed two manuscripts in a safe deposit box to be published if he became too ill to write.

On May 5, 1919, L. Frank Baum suffered a stroke. He died quietly the next day. He is buried in Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California.

Frank's oldest son, Frank Jr., and others continued the Oz legacy by writing and producing more Oz books, plays and radio shows. However, none of those mediums achieved as much success as the 1939 MGM movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, starring Judy Garland as Dorothy. In fact, most people probably know the movie better than the book.

Although L. Frank Baum's work has been criticized as overly-sentimental, racist, and too fantastical, it still endures. When his books were banned in schools and libraries, children still found them. Oz lives on because children love to immerse themselves in a fantasy land, where animals talk and a little girl struggles to find her way home.

### **Oz Books by L. Frank Baum**

1900 *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*  
1904 *The Marvelous Land of Oz*  
1907 *Ozma of Oz*  
1908 *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz*  
1909 *The Road to Oz*  
1910 *The Emerald City of Oz*  
1913 *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*  
1914 *Little Wizard Stories of Oz*  
1914 *Tik-Tok of Oz*  
1915 *The Scarecrow of Oz*  
1916 *Rinkitink in Oz*  
1917 *The Lost Princess of Oz*  
1918 *The Tin Woodman of Oz*  
1919 *The Magic of Oz*  
1920 *Glinda of Oz*

## RUTH PLUMLY THOMPSON

Ruth Plumly Thompson was born in Philadelphia in 1891. At seventeen, she was selling verse and fairy tales to the fondly remembered *St. Nicholas* magazine. One year later, she was a staff member of *St. Nicholas*, and editor and writer of a weekly page for children for the *Philadelphia Ledger*.

When L. Frank Baum died in 1919, the publishers of the Oz books hired Thompson to continue the Oz stories. Her first book for the series, *The Royal Book of Oz*, appeared in 1921. From then until 1940, she wrote an Oz book a year – 19 total – then two more in the 1970s for a total of 21 in all. She gave up adventuring in Oz to write other children's books and articles, and to devote her time to television and radio projects.

In addition to the Oz books, Ruth Plumly Thompson is widely known as the author of ten fairy tale volumes, scores of verses, series for juvenile magazines, syndicate features, magazine fiction and articles, radio and television scripts, and teen-age fiction. She lived her final years in Ardmore on the Philadelphia Main Line until her death in 1976.

### Oz Books by Ruth Plumly Thompson

1921 *The Royal Book of Oz*  
 1922 *Kabumpo in Oz*  
 1923 *The Cowardly Lion of Oz*  
 1924 *Grampa in Oz*  
 1925 *The Lost King of Oz*  
 1926 *The Hungry Tiger of Oz*  
 1927 *The Gnome King of Oz*  
 1928 *The Giant Horse of Oz*  
 1929 *Jack Pumpkinhead of Oz*  
 1930 *The Yellow Knight of Oz*  
 1931 *Pirates in Oz*  
 1932 *The Purple Prince of Oz*  
 1933 *Ojo in Oz*  
 1934 *Speedy in Oz*  
 1935 *The Wishing Horse of Oz*  
 1936 *Captain Salt in Oz*  
 1937 *Handy Mandy in Oz*  
 1938 *The Silver Princess in Oz*  
 1939 *Ozoplaning with the Wizard of Oz*  
 1970 *Yankee in Oz*  
 1976 *The Enchanted Island of Oz*

## **W. W. DENSLOW: Original Oz Illustrator**

William Wallace Denslow was born in Philadelphia in 1856 and grew up in Manhattan. In the early 1870s, Denslow studied art in New York City at the Cooper Union Institute and the National Academy of Design before becoming an office boy for the Orange Judd Company, a magazine publisher. Denslow also took odd jobs to supplement his income: painted ads on barns, illustrated county atlases, drew prints of local landmarks, and lectured on art history.

In 1882 Denslow married his first wife, Annie McCartney and opened a studio in New York where he drew magazine illustrations and designed theater costumes. Two years later, he separated from his wife and moved to Chicago where he worked for the *Chicago Herald* and illustrated books, including *Dollars and Sense* by P. T. Barnum. After a brief stint in Colorado, Denslow moved to San Francisco where his style was influenced by the Japanese Tokumgawa (or Floating World) print, which was then an international fad. In 1893, Denslow returned to Chicago where he quickly became one of the most important Midwestern illustrators of the day.

In 1886, Denslow married Ann Waters Holden. He also met and began working with L. Frank Baum at this time. By 1899 Denslow and Baum had collaborated on their first book, which was an instant success. The next year Denslow illustrated Baum's soon-to-be-famous *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and collaborated on a stage version of the *Wizard* and another Baum book. Soon after, however, personal differences between Denslow and Baum drove them to seek other partners.

Denslow continued to illustrate books such as *Denslow's Mother Goose* and *Denslow's Night Before Christmas*, but by 1910 he had fallen on bad times and had to take a job with a small salary at a New York art agency. He occasionally sold poems and sketches to a children's magazine during the years before his death in 1915.

Denslow is credited with being the first American to create picture books in the aesthetic tradition of English illustrators Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway and Randolph Caldecott, and the first to combine color with a sense of design. During his lifetime, Denslow wrote and illustrated four books, one of which was a series of 18 booklets called *Denslow's Picture Books*. He also wrote and illustrated a series of newspaper stories and illustrated six works by other authors. His trademark was a Japanese-inspired, stylized seahorse monogram that he appended to his work. In 1968, *The Wizard of Oz*, won the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award.

## JOHN R. NEILL: Major Oz Illustrator

John Rea Neill was born in Philadelphia on November 12, 1877, of Irish, Scottish, and Holland-Dutch ancestry. After completing high school, he attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where he received his only formal art training.

Upon leaving the academy, he entered the field of newspaper illustrating, working for the *New York Evening Journal*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *Philadelphia North American*. While on the staff of the latter paper, when he was but twenty-five, Neill illustrated his first Oz book, *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, a sequel to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, which had been published four years before, in 1900. The second Oz book was an immediate success; even today, as *The Land of Oz*, it is a "best seller" among Oz titles.

There were many who mourned the passing of the Baum-Denslow partnership, which had resulted in such delightful books as *Dot and Tot in Merryland*; *Father Goose: His Book*; and of course, *The Wizard*. But it took only a few Oz books to establish Neill as admirably talented for depicting the famous Baum characters. While Neill worked on his superb drawings and painting for *The Road to Oz* and *The Emerald City of Oz*, he also illustrated *Evangeline*, *Snowbound*, and other classics.

At this time, Neill was undoubtedly strongly influenced by the great English illustrator, Arthur Rackman, as were many other artists of the period. The Neill style is one which combines rare beauty with great charm and a captivating sense of humor.

In all, Neill illustrated thirty-five Oz books, of which he also wrote three; he also illustrated other Baum books: *Sky Island*, *The Sea Fairies*, *John Dough and the Cherub*, as well as a series of six small books known as *The Little Wizard Stories of Oz*.

Neill once remarked that he considered the Oz books merely a pleasant, annual chore, and that he had no idea of the books' importance to their readers until he wrote *The Wonder City of Oz*. During all these years, Neill was also illustrating magazine stories for the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Ladies Home Journal*, and other national magazines.

His home, in the early part of his career, was at Devil's Acre, bordering the upper Delaware. Later, he built a home on Long Island which included a studio for himself and a small theater. Here his four daughters staged plays for which he devised and painted the scenery. The latter years of his life were spent at his country home near Flanders, New Jersey, which bore the "Neillish" name of Endolane.

His daughters, now grown women, were models for many of the children who still adventure in the "Never-Never-Grow-Older" Land of Oz. It is typical of John R. Neill,

who reflected the beauty of the world in pictures, that he often made a small design even of his name, with John contracted to the now quaint "Jon."

John R. Neill died on September 13, 1943, just after turning in the first draft of what would have been the 37th Oz book, *The Runaway in Oz*. This title has since been edited, illustrated (by Eric Shanower) and published in 1995 by *Books of Wonder*.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL WIZARD OF OZ CLUB**

The International Wizard of Oz Club was founded in 1957 to bring together at those interested in L. Frank Baum and Oz. During succeeding decades, the club has grown until today it has over 1300 members. Its magazine, *The Baum Bugle*, first appeared in June 1957 and has been published continuously ever since. The Bugle, which is issued three times each year, specializes in popular and scholarly articles about Oz and its creators, with biographical and critical studies, and first edition checklists. Research into the people and places within the Oz books appears frequently. There are also features on Oz films and stage shows, reviews of new editions of books about Oz or its authors, and current Oz (or associated) news. The magazine is illustrated with rare photographs and drawings, and the covers are usually in full color.

The Oz club also publishes *Bibliographia Oziana*, a book describing the first editions of the entire Oz series, with 83 photographs; new Oz books by Ruth Plumly Thompson and by Eloise Jarvis McGraw and Lauren Lynn McGraw; full-color maps of Oz, with places from the forty books; *Unexplored Territory In Oz*, a collection of Ozian essays; *Oziana*, an annual of original Oz stories; and *The Oz Trading Post*, infrequently issued in print, but more currently accessible on the Club's Web Page.

The club sponsors conventions in different areas of the country each year. These gatherings feature scholarly presentations (lectures, talks, and papers for reading) about different Oz subjects; displays of rare Oz and Baum material; an Oz quiz; a showing of Oz films (including three Baum produced in 1914); an auction of hard to find Baum and Oz items; and much conversation about Oz in all its aspects. Recent conventions have been held in Illinois, California, Oklahoma, and Delaware. *The International Wizard of Oz Club* appeals both to the serious student of Oz and to all readers interested in America's own fairyland.

**The International Wizard of Oz Club  
1407 A Street, Suite D  
Antioch, California 94509**

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## INTERNET RESOURCES & LINKS

### **The Wonder Behind the Wizard of Oz**

<http://www.cis.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1995/2/95.02.02.x.html>

### **Lyman Frank Baum, Royal Historian of Oz**

[http://www.alexlibris.com/bio\\_baum.asp](http://www.alexlibris.com/bio_baum.asp)

### **L. Frank Baum Web Portal (website links)**

[http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/child\\_lit/authors/baum/](http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/child_lit/authors/baum/)

### **The Wizard of Oz History & Study Guide**

<http://www.globetheatrelive.com/20012002season/wizardstudyguide.htm>

### **Wendy's Wonderful Wizard of Oz**

<http://www.westol.com/~wizaroz/convenold.htm>

### **The Wizard of Oz, The Movie**

<http://www.zianet.com/jjohnson/oz.htm>

### **L. Frank Baum Teacher Resource Page**

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/baum.htm>

**Warner Bros. Wizard of Oz Website**

<http://thewizardofoz.warnerbros.com/cmp/munch.htm>

**The Wonderful Wizard of Oz Website**

<http://www.eskimo.com/~tiktok/>

**To See The Wizard – Oz on Stage and Film**

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/oz/tya>

## CLASSROOM EXERCISES & ACTIVITIES

### BACKGROUND ARTICLE: Wizard of Oz Helps Students

By Josh Funk, The Wichita Eagle

Characters from "The Wizard of Oz" are helping lead students down the path to better behavior at Wichita's Spaght Elementary.

Using the example of the Scarecrow's need for a brain, the Tin Man's need for a heart and the Lion's need for courage, counselor Virginia Fitzpatrick explained good decision-making to Spaght kindergartners this past week.

"What do we use a brain for?" she asked the 20 children seated cross-legged in the front of the room.

We have to think about what we say, the group answered.

The Tin Man's heart reminds us to think of being kind, Fitzpatrick said.

"Why do we need courage?"

So we don't get scared, the kids answered.

"Yeah, so we don't get scared, and have courage to do the right thing," Fitzpatrick said.

At least twice a month, students at Spaght Accelerated Magnet Academy get lessons like this as part of their character education.

All Wichita schools have a character program emphasizing respect, caring, integrity, responsibility and self-discipline, but the programs differ from school to school.

In her recent meeting with the kindergartners, Fitzpatrick showed off her 2-foot-tall robot. It has a human upper body and tank treads for legs -- but without a brain, heart or courage of his own, the robot can be easily controlled by others, Fitzpatrick told the students.

"I don't want you to be like my robot and let people push your buttons," she said.

She then moved on to some real-world examples and strategies for dealing with good and bad behaviors.

"Once my brother put up his middle finger, and I told him 'don't do that,' " Shaun Ring said.

Fitzpatrick then reminded the kindergartners that they have to make good decisions at home, too.

Cody Kirkendall said others in his family sometimes watch "mean shows" or play "mean games."

"I watch good cartoons all the time, like 'Ed, Edd n Eddy.' "

The payoff of character education at Spaght and other schools has been fewer suspensions and trancies and higher attendance, school district officials said.

Spaght students are encouraged to make good decisions. Teachers document any behavior problems or successes and send a report home to parents daily.

"Usually when kids get in trouble it's just a lack of social skills or losing their temper" that causes it, Fitzpatrick said.

Students who make it a month without getting in trouble are allowed to choose a fun activity such as dancing, cooking or playing with computers as a reward.

"It's academic-based, but it's so much fun they don't realize they're getting a lesson," assistant principal Kathy Stybr said last week while 13 students played Christmas games on computers.

Students who don't make it into the reward clubs are given an extra dose of character education while the well-behaved students enjoy the fun activity.

This fall at Spaght, only eight students have been suspended, and officials say character education is a big reason.

"The younger you get kids into preventative behavior, the better you are," Fitzpatrick said. "It takes practice."

## **COURAGE: A Lesson in Character**

**Objective:** Help students understand that although courage lies within each of us, we must cultivate it. Develop students' understanding of courage as it relates to coping with various situations.

**Strategy / Focus:** To use prior knowledge skills. To analyze the plot .

**Integration of Content / Subject Areas:** Language Arts. Critical-thinking Skills.

**Activities:** Have the class reflect on the familiar story of *The Wizard of Oz*. Ask students to write a summary of the story (50-100 words). Allow students to read their summaries to the class so that everyone will be familiar with the plot. Ask students to write the names of the four travelers who are on the way to see the Wizard (Dorothy, the Lion, the Tin Man, and the Scarecrow), and list what each would like to receive from the Wizard (Dorothy - wants to get home; Lion - courage; Scarecrow - a brain; Tin Man - a heart).

**Discussion / Questions:** Have a class discussion about the Lion's search for courage. The following questions could be addressed:

*Why do you think the Lion felt that he needed courage?*

(Lions are known as the King of the Jungle. The Lion felt that he did not have enough courage to live up to the expectations of others)

*How important is it to live up to the expectations of others, such as parents, friends, and acquaintances?*

*Do you feel that there are times when you do not have enough courage?*

*What do you do in these situations?*

*What would you like to do?*

*What is the best thing for you to do?*

*Was the Wizard able to give the Lion courage at the end of the story?*

(No, he discovered that courage must come from within. As various challenging situations arose on the journey, the Lion unconsciously responded courageously because of his desire to help others)

Ask students to reflect upon a time they exhibited courage when they thought that they lacked it. Have students think about ways they can develop courage.

**Writing Exercise:** Have students write a commercial or jingle that tells/shows the audience: How to Cultivate the Courage that Lies Within Us. Some ideas that can be incorporated are: Believe in yourself. Don't be afraid to say no. Telling the truth is always the best policy. Don't feel that you must follow the crowd in order to survive. It is more important to think for yourself.

**Materials:** Children's Theatre Plays.com's script, *The Wizard of Oz* Optional: videotape of the movies, *The Wizard of Oz / The Wiz*.

## General Discussion / Questions

1. Why does Dorothy want to be in some other place than Kansas?
2. Do you ever feel like Dorothy did?
3. Dorothy is taken to Oz by a "twister", what is another name for a twister?
4. Oz is a very beautiful and colorful world, but Dorothy still finds problems there. Do you think there is any place where there are no problems?
5. Do you think the Scarecrow really needed a brain? The Tinman a heart? The Lion his courage?
6. The Wizard, at the end of the play, turns out not to be a Wizard. Though he didn't have the magic powers of a wizard, do you think he helped Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Lion?
7. It is interesting that Dorothy had the power to return home to Kansas anytime she wanted to but she wasn't aware of it. Do you think we often have the power to do what we want but we may not know it?
8. How many books have been written about the Land of Oz? (hundreds) Have you heard of any others besides *The (Wonderful) Wizard of Oz*?

## Drawing & Art Activities

You saw the Wicked Witch' s castle, what do you think Glinda's castle looks like?

Draw a picture of your favorite part of the show; of your favorite character.

Draw a picture of yourself with characters in the play. Where would you be? What would you be doing?

## Famous *Wizard of Oz* Quotes

Discuss what meaning these sayings have for us in our everyday lives. Can you give an example that illustrates the meaning?

*"Never question the truth of what you fail to understand, for the world is full of wonders."* -- L. Frank Baum

*"..Remember, my friend, a heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others..." -- Wizard*

*"...if I ever go looking for my hearts desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard... Because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with."  
-- Dorothy*

## ***The Wizard of Oz*** **PERFORMANCE GUIDE**

### **It's More Than Just a Play**

Some teachers may think that performing a play is just something that requires extra time and work – an extracurricular activity beyond the normal process of education; something outside the classroom; something “nice to do for the parents.” They often don’t realize that preparation and rehearsal, and ultimately, the performance itself – whether for the class, for the entire school, or for parents and the public – all can be incorporated into the day-to-day teaching and learning process. There are many educational benefits in staging a play and in adding creative drama to the curriculum.

### **Imagination**

Making believe is completely natural for children. It enhances their creativity, builds self esteem, and teaches them to deal with others in a cooperative manner. Mary may be quiet and shy as Mary, but when she gets to play a fictional character like Dorothy, Cinderella or Snow White, she has the freedom to become a whole new, much more confident person. She interacts with the other children – also characters in the play – not as Mary might (or might not), but as the character would.

### **Working together for a common goal**

Producing a play involves many different activities: memorizing lines, learning stage movement, and creating costumes, props and set pieces. Students get to experience the process of taking a project from inception to completion. By its very nature, drama is a collaborative art: students learn to cooperate in a group activity and enjoy the camaraderie of the experience.

### **Ability to Focus**

When a child performs in a play there is the added element of being observed. Often, when you first begin rehearsals, the children will not concentrate on their roles. They may seem fidgety, interrupt, or not pay attention. Don’t be too concerned about this. In time, they will understand that they must concentrate on their part when others are watching and waiting for them to speak or perform an action. By the time the play is ready, you will notice a vast improvement in their

ability to focus – not only on their parts, but on the other roles and the play in general.

## **Performance – The Joy of Learning**

On the day or evening of the performance, as the audience enters and the play is about to begin, the children will sense the excitement that it's show time. They may be a bit nervous, but they know that now all their diligent work will come together in something new and special. They rise to the occasion, create a whole new world of make-believe, take their bows, and beam in the applause that tells them they did a great job. They are proud to be there, they have a sense of accomplishment, and they are joyful that they learned and performed the play.

## **STAGING NOTES**

This play has been written especially for you and your students. All aspects of the production have been kept simple so that you can concentrate on the fun part – performance! If you have the time and resources to build elaborate sets and costumes, please don't hesitate to do so! But always remember that the play may be performed without traditional scenery. Pantomime and imagination can help simplify set, props and costumes. Here are some suggestions for a fun, stress-free production.

### **Open Concept**

The play has been adapted to require the fewest props, costumes and set pieces as possible. It does not include a "backstage" area, all performers may sit or stand in full view of the audience. The script refers to a "playing area" rather than a stage. There will be times in the play when the performers who are not "on stage" can contribute (such as providing sound and visual effects – wind, trees, sunshine...). This takes a little of the fear of public performance away as well as lending a sense of teamwork and "ensemble."

### **Set Pieces**

Instead of a backdrop, consider building or using small pieces that stand alone, such as trees or doors that can be used in more than one scene. You will probably need some furniture pieces in the playing area. You may use ordinary chairs and stools (anything that you have available) to create "levels and scenes."

If you have the resources, a backless bench and sturdy wooden boxes can be built and painted fancifully to complement your costumes and other set pieces. If you

can't build pieces, be innovative – large plastic flower pots make great stools, students can bring colorful toys from home, etc. Have the students move these as needed (ie, a bench can be used to elevate important characters above the others).

The pieces can be moved around the area by CHORUS members or even by the characters themselves. Often, just moving one piece to another area of the playing area is enough to signal to the audience that there is a change of scene.

### **Performance Space**

If the play is to take place in a classroom, move all the desks to the back of the room. If this does not allow sufficient space for the performance, push them against 3 sides and let the center of the room be part of the playing area (with the audience, if any, seated around). For a bigger audience, a larger room would be appropriate. The gym or cafeteria will probably give you more space than needed. In that case use just half of the room and arrange audience chairs in a horseshoe shape around the playing area.

### **Percussion Instruments**

Raid the music room! Gather as many simple percussion instruments as you can find (chimes, xylophones, kazoos, whistles, rhythm sticks, jingle bells, etc.) Create a “percussion stand” by arranging the instruments on a table or a narrow ledge. Some instruments will need to be held up to be played (triangle, chimes, gong). The music room might have a stand for these instruments. If not, you could build a simple one (think “large cardboard box”) or simply have the children hold those up when they are played.

CHORUS members (usually identified by different colors) could be seated around the percussion stand. They can act as narrators and orchestra in the tradition of a Greek Chorus. (Occasionally, CHORUS members are given short on-stage tasks to do.) Your percussion stand can be placed in the corner of the playing area.

### **Costumes**

There is a Japanese theatrical tradition of dressing actors all in black and using masks or costume pieces to indicate character. What a great idea! Have your young performers wear all black or dark blue – or dark purple, green, have them choose! They then add costume pieces such as hats, crowns and capes to identify their characters.

Keep it simple. Remember it's more important (and more fun!) for your students to convey their character's personality through acting rather than costume. CHORUS members can wear different color tee-shirts to match their color-name or they can

bring a piece of clothing from home (ball cap, scarf, a towel used as a cape) that is their color.

### **Costume Rack**

In one corner will be a hat stand, or several hat stands. Any object with clothes hooks will allow you to hang costume pieces (see below) that will be put on by the children as they assume their roles. Some props, such as the flowers for the flower field may be kept at their chairs where they are sitting.

## **REHEARSAL NOTES**

The rehearsal (practice) process is often the most rewarding part of doing a play, especially for a school play where the major objective is the learning experience, not producing a brilliant Broadway hit. Whether or not you work on the play during regular class sessions or after school, always try to involve as many students as possible so that everyone feels they are sharing equally in the experience – while some practice lines, others rehearse a scene, others paint sets, others make costume pieces, etc.

### **Play Reading**

You should read the play first to get a general idea of the story, characters, action, and staging. There's no need to figure out everything right away – that will come, and it will be a lot easier than you think.

Next, it's a good idea to read the play to the students so they can become familiar with the story ("what happens"), the different characters ("who"), the action ("stuff that happens"), the settings ("where stuff happens"), and the dialogue ("lines", "words", "things they say"). While reading, pause here and there to explain the play and to answer any questions about the story (many of them may already know it).

Finally, distribute copies to the whole class and have everyone read, one line at a time, around a circle (show them where the "lines" are). Don't assign roles at this point – it will be a lot more fun (hilarious, in fact) to have different students be Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion, Tin Man, etc., all using different voices, expressions, sounds and gestures. With all the children reading several parts, those who naturally fit certain roles will become apparent – to you, to them, and to the entire class.

## **Assigning Roles**

Help! Every girl wants to be Dorothy, every boy wants to be the Lion! Calm down, this will not be the case. Most likely, during the play reading other roles will become popular once the students get a chance to act out different parts.

Find out who wants to be what (get several choices from each child), work with the entire class to figure out who plays who, help them make choices, and, what the heck, if you end up with three students who **MUST** be Dorothy, use all three! It's been done many times.

Most importantly, try to make sure that all students participate in the production and that they're comfortable with the role(s) they will play, whatever they are. The play is written especially for many performers, with varying roles for a wide range of personalities, talents, and abilities.

## **Memorizing Lines**

Don't worry too much about your students getting every line, every word exactly right. It probably won't happen, yet everything will be fine. Always work with individual scenes rather than trying to run through the entire play. They can practice lines at school with classmates and/or at home with family and friends. Everyone gets involved.

Help the children become familiar with what **HAPPENS** in a scene rather than exactly what is **SAID**. That way, if they forget a line, they can at least know what should happen and it may help them remember the line or prompt them to say something similar to move the play along.

For those few who might find it too difficult to memorize their lines, simply let them carry and read from the script or a prompt book, but don't try to hide it, make it fun for everyone, make it a "Magic Scroll," a "Giant Storybook," an "Oz Treasure Map." Remember, it's the process, not perfection, that counts. "Holding the book" has been done many times before, to much success.

## **A Little Bit at a Time**

As mentioned, the best way to put the play together is to rehearse one scene at a time. You don't have to run through the entire play over and over hoping to get it all perfect – maybe just once or twice the day before the big show (see following). It's easier and less time-consuming for everyone to practice one scene on Monday, another on Tuesday, this week is Munchkin week, and so forth. When you're ready to run through the entire play, just do the scenes, one after another. Voila!

## **Movement and Action**

Don't be too concerned about getting all the entrances, exits, and movements exactly right or the same every time, and don't spend hours and hours trying to plot this all out beforehand – let it develop naturally during the rehearsals. The children will figure out things for themselves – everyone shares the experience, remember.

Keep in mind that using the open concept (as suggested) with all the performers seated around the playing area will eliminate the need to figure out details of who enters from where – they just stand and walk to the playing area. And there's no worry about losing Dorothy backstage before her big scene – she's right there, ready to go.

Note: even if your production is on a real stage with curtains, wings and a backstage area, the open seating concept still works great with this play.

## **Dress Rehearsal**

In the theatre business, the final rehearsal is called “dress rehearsal” because that's when all the performers dress up in their costumes and perform the play just like it will be done for the actual performance. The objective of your dress rehearsal(s) is not to get everything 100% perfect, but more importantly, to put all the scenes together and to give everyone a chance to work with their costume pieces, set pieces, and props so there are as few surprises as possible in the performance.

If possible, don't wait until your final rehearsals to use costume/set pieces and props. Let the children get used to working with them early on, especially if they help define their character in the play. The Lion's tail can be a great comical effect if the performer gets a chance to wear it and work with it from the beginning. The same holds true for a Munchkin's big floppy hat, a stool used by the Wizard, a triangle played at the percussion stand, and so forth.

## **PERFORMANCE NOTES**

### **Getting Ready**

Try to have most everything ready at least one or two days before the performance. And it's usually a good idea to give the children a day or two break from intense rehearsal before the show. If you work them too much right up to the big day, the novelty and excitement of performance might wear thin.

Spend the last day or two pulling together any loose ends, getting the room or performance space ready, final painting of set pieces, etc. Talk about how it's going to be fun and exciting – the children will agree. Let everyone relax and feel confident about their play, and don't worry too much about or spend a lot of time trying to get everything absolutely perfect. Stay cool, stay calm. It's a bit like taking a test the next day... often it's better to get a good night's sleep than to stay up all night studying.

### **The Audience**

Make sure your audience is comfortable and everyone can see and hear the play. If your performance space is a large room like the gym or cafeteria, it's usually best to seat children on the floor and adults in chairs behind them. That way, everyone can see the play, the kids will enjoy being on the floor, and the adults will be most comfortable in chairs. A horseshoe arrangement usually works best.

It's a nice touch to have some music (CDs, tapes) playing before the show while the audience is entering and being seated. It's fun and relaxing, it adds to the excitement of performance, and turning it off is a good way to signal that the show is about to begin.

### **Curtain Up!**

Once the play starts, your job is done...at least that's the best way to look at it. Now it's time to let the children take over, and if you have prepared them for it, don't worry, they will. Even if things go "wrong," the children will usually work it out for themselves, and more often than not, the result will be better, more spontaneous, more enriching, certainly more interesting. Remember, there is no "wrong" in the experience you and your students are creating.

A final note – always remember that it's best to let the children be the heroes of the play. Give them the wings to fly, to soar on their own, and when the play is over, you'll be the greatest hero of all.

***Have Fun!***

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