



# AlphaBet Soup Productions

*Entertaining & Educating Children of All Ages Since 1987!*

PO Box 85 Lombard, IL 60148 | (630) 932-1555 | [www.absproductions.com](http://www.absproductions.com)

## STUDY GUIDE



**Dear Educator,**

As an organization that values the arts and education, we have created this Study Guide as a resource for teachers. Our Study Guides are designed to be a valuable tool for teachers in two ways: helping you to prepare your students before the show, and enriching and extending their experience after.

Our goal is to serve principals, teachers and students in their pursuit of Illinois State Standards and to integrate the arts with your core curricular subjects.

-- The ABS Team

### ***Mission Statement:***

AlphaBet Soup Productions exists to provide Chicago area youth, teachers, and their families a unique theatrical experience that will entertain, inspire, and educate through our professional theatre company.

### ***About Us:***

- Winner of the 2008 Illinois Theatre Association Award for Excellence in Theatre for Young Audiences
- Winner of two National Children's Theatre Awards for the scripts *Beauty and the Beast* & *The Jungle Book*

# Pre-Performance Questions

1. **How many of you have experienced a live theater performance? What performance did you see?**
2. **What are some of the differences between going to the theater and watching television or going to a movie?**

- Theater features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times.
- The theater is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear clothing and make-up to help create the different characters they play.
- There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

3. **Introduce your students to the following theatrical terms:**

Play • Acts & Scenes • Producer • Program • Spotlights

Costumes • Props • Director • Stage • Curtain Call • Stagehand • Lobby • Usher

Musical Theater • Orchestra Pit • Proscenium Arch • Playwright • Scenery • Makeup • Actor

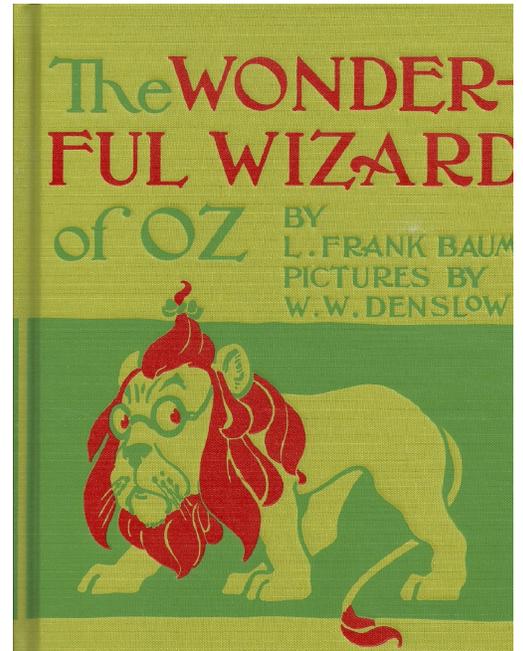
4. **Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.**

- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything, and so that you will not disturb the audience.
- It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully.
- In long performances, there will be an intermission. There is no intermission in our production. Each AlphaBet Soup Production runs approximately one hour in length.
- Sing or participate **if** and **only if** you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important.
- Listen to how the music sets the moods and affects your own feelings.
- Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song or dance or joke, and of course at the end of the show!
- Most importantly... **have fun!**

# About *The Wizard of Oz*

## History:

- *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is an American children's novel written by author L. Frank Baum and illustrated by W.W. Denslow, originally published by the George M. Hill Company in Chicago on May 17, 1900
- The book is one of the best-known stories in American literature and has been widely translated in various languages.
- The Library of Congress has declared it "America's greatest and best-loved homegrown fairytale." Its groundbreaking success led Baum to write thirteen additional Oz books that serve as official sequels to the first story.



## Our Show:

Young Dorothy Gale and her dog Toto find themselves whisked away to the magical Land of Oz by a Kansas cyclone. It's a magical place where Munchkins sing, animals speak and the Wicked Witch of the West lurks in the shadows. How will Dorothy ever find her way home? Wearing the magic ruby slippers, and under the kindly protection of Glinda the Good Witch of the North, Dorothy heads down the yellow brick road to ask the Wonderful Wizard for advice.

Along the way, she finds both adventure and friends; the Cowardly Lion who thinks he needs courage, the Scarecrow who thinks he needs brains, and the sentimental Tin Woodsman who desperately yearns for a warm heart. The plot thickens when Dorothy and her three friends agree to help the Wizard destroy the Wicked Witch of the West in exchange for brains, courage, a new heart, and a trip home to Kansas.

After another long journey and further adventures, Dorothy and her new friends boldly and bravely succeed in their mission by drawing upon their own resources. In doing so they triumphantly find the courage, the brains, the heart and the home for which they have been searching. Filled with songs, dance and audience participation- this original musical reminds audiences of all ages that there's no place like home.

## About the Author - L. Frank Baum

Lyman Frank Baum was born in Chittenango, N.Y. in 1856. When he was five his father became quite wealthy as a result of his business dealings in the oil industry. The family moved to a large country home called 'Rose Lawn Estate' where Baum spent the majority of his time as a child since he was home-schooled there until the age of 12. Early on, Baum showed an interest in creative writing and storytelling. At age 15, he began



producing his own newspaper called 'The Rose Lawn Journal' which is said to have been popular with the residents of his neighbourhood. After dabbling in a number of other professions, including raising chickens, Baum discovered a love of the theatre. He began acting and managing professional theatres — some of which his father owned. In 1882, Baum married Maud Gage and the couple later relocated to the Dakota Territories (North and South Dakota) where Baum owned and operated, among a number of business ventures, a store called "Baum's Bazaar."

The store carried a number of household items as well as novelties including candy and ice cream. The store quickly became popular with children who would stop in for a treat and stay to hear Baum tell stories about faraway, magical places. Unfortunately, Baum had to close the store in 1888 due to a drought that hit the community hard. The Baum family moved around as Frank made his living as a journalist for a variety of

publications. Baum met William W. Denslow, an illustrator, through his friend, Opie Reade. By all accounts it seems as though the men could not have been more different; Baum was quiet and calm- spirited while Denslow was "serious and gruff" (McGovern). The partnership, however, was productive. In 1900, Baum and Denslow published *Father Goose, His Book* and it was a great commercial success.

Later that year, the pair published *The Wizard of Oz*. Baum and Denslow continued to work together until 1902 and published numerous other books about the world of Oz in that time. *The Wizard of Oz* had its first theatrical debut in 1902 and became the greatest success Broadway had ever seen up until that time. Since that success, the story has taken on a life of its own. Baum continued to write sequels to *The Wizard of Oz* as well as other books and articles in numerous publications. In the last years of his life, he also became a prize winning gardener. After suffering through many years of health issues related to childhood heart problems, Baum died in 1919. His last words are said to have been: "Now we can cross the Shifting Sands," a reference to the boundaries of Oz.

# Post-Performance Questions

## 1. MUSIC

- Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? How could you tell? When was the music used? Why? Did it help develop the plot? What types of music was used, or was different types used?
- Can you describe how different kinds of music would make you have different kinds of feelings?
- When a play is a musical, an actor must have additional skills. Can you name some?
- A musical costs much more to produce. Can you name some additional expenses? (i.e. orchestra members and director, a practice piano, a choreographer, etc.)

## 2. SETS

- Describe the sets used in the play you just saw. What props or details were used to suggest specific times or settings? How could lighting be changed to create a mood, season, time of day, etc.? What materials might have been used in building the sets? How were the sets and props moved on and off the stage? Describe a simple scene (a day in school, a trip to the mall, a ride in the car or on the bus), ask students to describe a basic set for the scene.

## 3. COSTUMES

- What would you need to know to create costumes for a play (Historical research, sewing, theatrical effects, etc.)?
- Why is the right costume important to the character in the play?

## 4. DANCE

- Describe the kind of dancing, if any, in the play. How is it different from the kinds of dancing that the class might know? What purposes could dance have in a play?

## 5. PRODUCTION

- Make a list of all the personnel needed for a play. (director, actors, musicians, author, designers-set, costumes, lights & sound, stagehands, choreographer, producer, etc.)

# Coloring Page for *The Wizard of Oz*



# Art & Writing Activity

Draw a picture of your favorite part of the story. Describe what is happening in your picture below.



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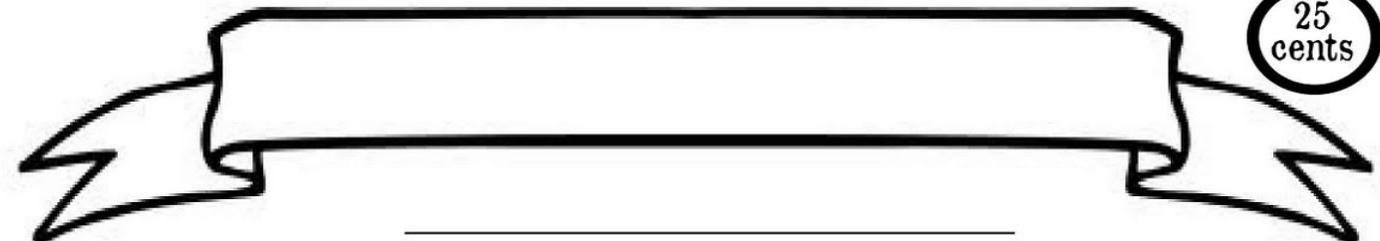
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# Your Review of *The Wizard of Oz!*

Often, plays and musicals will get reviewed by a critic. Now it's your turn! Write a review of *The Wizard of Oz*. Who was your favorite character? What did you like or dislike about the costumes or scenery? Did you like the songs? What was your favorite part?

25  
cents



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# Be an Actor Activity

Actors have to be good at remembering – remembering their lines and remembering their moves. They also have to be able to change the way they talk and move to play different roles – with lots of people watching too! Some of our actors in our show have to play multiple different parts! Actors must also be good at speaking and singing clearly so that the audience can always hear what they are saying – otherwise they won't be able to follow the story!

- **Choose a character** from *The Wizard of Oz* and make a list of words to describe them.
  - How do they talk? How do they walk?
  - Are they young or old?
  - Are they a human or an animal?
  - Are they smart? Silly? Friendly? Grumpy?
- **Try walking around the room** as each of these character types. How does playing a character make you walk differently? Now give them a voice – how do they talk?
- **Improvise** little scenes with each other, then see if you can swap characters and play the scenes again. How does it change?

Which character do you find it easier to be?

# Thinking of Themes

## Advanced Activity

**Objective:**

Using *The Wizard of Oz*, students become familiar with recognizing themes in a story.

**Materials:** *The Wizard of Oz* book

**Vocabulary:** Theme, Plot, Characters, Setting

**Lesson:**

Discuss the meaning of theme?

*A theme is an underlying message meaningfully created and connected to the story's plot, characters, and setting.*

Ask students to take five minutes to think about the theme of the story in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Think about what message the author was trying to send to the reader. Students can then share their opinions about the theme(s) of *The Wizard of Oz*. Themes will vary from student to student. Point out that sometimes a book is read for the first time and the reader forms an idea of the initial theme. Later, the same book is read again and a different theme emerges depending on the maturity of the reader.

Ask students to choose a particular theme and draw a picture of the scene in which the theme is best articulated to the reader.

Next, students should write a summary explaining the theme, how it is exemplified in the story, and what is drawn on the picture. Ask students to share their summaries and illustrations with the class.