



L. FRANK BAUM'S

The Wizard of Oz





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What Are Fantasy Stories? L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* is considered a fantasy. Fantasy stories consists of:

- a heroic character who must complete a mission;
- a struggle between good and evil; and
- a setting where magical events are believable.

Keep Reading: Want to read more of *The Wizard of Oz*?

- Visit [Project Gutenberg](#).

If you like *The Wizard of Oz*, then you might also like to read these fantasy texts:

- *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill
- *When You Trap a Tiger* by Tae Keller
- *Amari and the Night Brothers* by B.B. Alston

Start Writing: Inspired to write your own fantasy? Consider this prompt to get started:

"The moment I stepped through the door, I knew I wasn't in my neighborhood anymore . . ."

TextProject's StoryLabs presents:

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*

This is the story of Dorothy, a farm girl from Kansas, who gets swept up in a tornado and finds herself in a magical land called Oz.

When Dorothy's house crashes down in Oz, it accidentally kills a wicked witch. But Glinda, a good witch, gives Dorothy special shoes and tells her to follow the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City. There, the Wizard of Oz might be able to get her home.

On her journey, Dorothy makes three friends who join her quest. First, she meets the Scarecrow who thinks he



In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her dog Toto meet friends and foes along the Yellow Brick Road.

black and white (inside) to bright color (outside). In 1939, technicolor was a new technology; for many, it was the first time they saw a film in color. Even today, that shift from gray Kansas to the wild colors of Oz can give you chills.

The story is universally likeable: Dorothy's journey is everyone's journey. The phrase "Follow the Yellow Brick Road" has become shorthand for following a clear path to your goal. People use it in business, sports, and life advice.

It is a musical, and the songs are pure gold. "Over the Rainbow," for example, isn't just catchy. It's about wanting something better, dreaming of a place where your problems "melt like lemon drops." Similarly, "We're Off to See the Wizard" is about putting your faith in someone who claims they can solve everything.

The movie's message rings true. Dorothy realizes even paradise has its problems. The Wizard turns out to be a fake and her new friends have their own issues. Dorothy learns she has to face her own problems. But she also discovers she's stronger than she thought.

Plus, the flying monkeys are still terrifying. The Wicked Witch is iconic. The whole thing is just weird enough to stay interesting. There is adventure and magic mixed with deeper stuff about finding yourself and dealing with disappointment. And who hasn't clicked their heels together and said "There's no place like home" at least once?

TEXT REFLECTION

Why *The Wizard of Oz* Movie Is Still Popular



The Wizard of Oz (1939) was the most expensive film to date because color movies were still new.

The *Wizard of Oz* has inspired many movie, television, and stage adaptations. One of the oldest adaptations, the 1939 movie, remains the most watched movie of all time. Why does this old film keep pulling people in when most movies from that time feel outdated?

First, there's the magical moment after Dorothy survives the tornado. She opens the door and her world goes from

lacks smarts. Next, Dorothy and the Scarecrow meet the Tin Woodman. The Tin Woodman believes he lacks a heart. Then, the trio meets a lion who calls himself cowardly.

Dorothy's friends hope the Wizard can grant them what they need: brains, a heart, and courage.

The group face many challenges along the way. At one point, they must cross a dangerous river. So, the Scarecrow comes up with a plan to build a raft. Later, they are attacked by flying monkeys. The Tin Woodman protects the group by using his axe to fight the monkeys. When the group gets trapped in a wicked witch's castle, the Cowardly Lion leads them in an escape.

Finally, they reach the Emerald City and meet the "Great and Powerful" Wizard of Oz. But they discover he's not really a wizard; he is just a man hiding behind special effects. Nonetheless, the Wizard does help Dorothy's friends realize they already have the qualities they thought they were missing.

The Wizard tries to take Dorothy home in a hot air balloon, but he flies away without her. Glinda reappears and tells Dorothy her shoes are magical. All Dorothy has to do is click her heels three times and say where she wants to go. Dorothy asks to go back home, and she returns to Kansas.

AN EXCERPT FROM *THE WIZARD OF OZ*

"I can help you," Glinda said with a warm smile. "But first, I need that Golden Cap you're carrying."

Dorothy didn't hesitate. She handed over the magical hat that could command flying monkeys. She didn't care about its power anymore—she just wanted to see Aunt Em again.

Glinda turned to Dorothy's friends, making plans for their futures. The Scarecrow would rule the Emerald City. The Tin Woodman would lead the Winkies in the west. The Lion would become king of the forest beasts. Each friend would get exactly what they'd always wanted.

But Dorothy? She already had what she needed.

"Look down at your feet," Glinda said mysteriously.

Dorothy looked at her silver shoes—the ones she'd been wearing since she arrived in Oz. They'd seemed pretty but ordinary.

"Those shoes are magic," Glinda explained. "They can take you anywhere in just three steps. All you have to do is click your heels together three times and say where you want to go."

Dorothy's heart raced. She'd had the power to go home this whole time! But then she realized something important: if she'd left right away, she never would have helped her friends find their courage, heart, and brains.

She hugged each friend goodbye, tears streaming down her face. They'd been through everything together.

Finally, Dorothy picked up her little dog Toto, clicked her heels three times, and shouted, "Take me home to Aunt Em!"



Wicked is the fourth-longest running show in Broadway history.

"Broadway" is a term used to describe New York City's theater district.

Meanwhile, Glinda the "Good Witch" isn't as perfect as she seems. She chooses being liked and having power over doing what's right. She knows Elphaba is telling the truth. But she plays it safe while her best friend becomes an outcast.

The musical shows how history gets rewritten by those in power. They decide who's the hero and who's the villain. Elphaba becomes "wicked" not because she's evil, but because she threatened the system.

Wicked is powerful because it asks: What if standing up for what's right makes you the enemy? It's a story for anyone who's ever been punished for refusing to stay silent.

TEXT CONNECTION

How the Broadway Musical *Wicked* Flips *The Wizard of Oz*

What if everything you thought you knew about *The Wizard of Oz* was wrong? What if the “Wicked Witch of the West” was really the good witch? That’s exactly what the musical *Wicked* claims. Loosely based on the book *Wicked* by Gregory Maguire, the musical flips Baum’s story on its head.

Wicked tells the story of Elphaba, the green-skinned girl who becomes the so-called “Wicked Witch.” But here’s the twist: she’s not evil at all. She’s just different, outspoken, and misunderstood. Elphaba gets bullied for being green by her classmates. Even her teachers label her as a troublemaker.

Who’s the real villain? The Wizard himself. In this version, he’s a corrupt leader who puts down certain groups of people and spreads lies to stay in power. When Elphaba finds out what he’s really doing, she refuses to go along with it. So he brands her as “wicked” and makes her an outsider.

One of the most popular songs from *Wicked* is “Defying Gravity.” In this number, Elphaba makes the decision to break away from the Wizard’s corrupt system. The song marks the moment she fully embraces who she is, even if it means being called “wicked.”



The world spun around her like a tornado. Wind rushed past her ears as she flew through the air faster than lightning. In just three magical steps, she landed with a thud on familiar ground.

She opened her eyes and gasped. There was Uncle Henry milking cows. There was their new farmhouse. She was back in Kansas, back where she belonged.

The silver shoes had disappeared forever, but Dorothy didn’t mind. She was finally home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

L. Frank Baum

L Frank Baum was a late-in-life success story. Before he wrote *The Wizard of Oz*, he had tried—and failed—at almost everything. He raised chickens and failed. Opened a store; it closed. Bought a newspaper; it folded. Sold stuff door-to-door, but couldn't pay the bills. He was basically the poster child for “not living up to your potential.”



L. Frank Baum

All those failures, however, were building toward something. Every job taught him something new. When he raised chickens, he learned about working hard with your hands. After his store went under, he saw how mean people could be when money got tight. When his newspaper failed because the town never grew like he'd been promised,

he learned not to trust every sales pitch. As a traveling salesman, he met all kinds of people and heard their stories.

Baum was different in other ways too. In the 1890s, most men thought women should not vote. But Baum supported women's rights. He also thought children deserved better stories. The fairy tales back then were dark and scary. Baum wanted to write something fun that wouldn't give kids nightmares.

When he finally sat down to write *The Wizard of Oz* in 1900, he was 44 years old. Most people would have given up by then. But all those “failed” years had given him something special. He knew what it felt like to be broke, to have dreams crushed, to be the odd one out. He put all of that into Dorothy's story.

The Wizard of Oz made Baum rich and famous. He wrote 13 more Oz books and even made movies. But he never forgot what it was like to struggle.

Baum proved that being a “failure” doesn't mean you're out of luck. Sometimes it means you're just warming up. So keep following your Yellow Brick Road until you reach your Emerald City.