

Kennedy Center
Theater for
Young Audiences

ON TOUR



Illustration by Scott Bushnell

Based on the book by Norton Juster

Music by Arnold Black

Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick

Adapted for the stage by Norton Juster and Sheldon Harnick

Directed by Tim McDonald

The Kennedy Center



Plot Summary

Even surrounded by dozens of toys, Milo is bored. Nothing interests him at all. The Demons of Ignorance are certain he will be their next victim, telling him "If you get the urge to do anything—don't. It could be dangerous." To the rescue comes the Phantom Tollbooth! Norton Juster's beloved children's book is given full musical treatment in this acclaimed stage version of the modern tale of a boy who must save the princesses Rhyme and Reason and reunite the brother Kings who rule over the cities of Dictionopolis and Digitopolis.

Aided by a trusty time-keeping dog, Tock, Milo successfully brings harmony to the Land of Wisdom and learns many things about words and numbers along his journey. Perhaps the most important lesson he takes with him, however, is that everything we learn has a purpose and whatever we do affects everything and everyone. When he returns home, he realizes there is never a reason to be bored in a world full of so many things to discover.



This study guide is adapted from the Cuesheet published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. It is available online at http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/phantomtollbooth/pt_cuesheet.pdf

About the Author

Norton Juster was born in 1929 and trained as an architect. His first children's book, *The Dot and the Line: A Romance in Lower Mathematics*, was adapted by famed animator Chuck Jones and MGM and won the 1965 Academy Award® for Animated Short Film. His next and last book, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, won the George C. Stone Centre for Children's Books Award and continues to be read by young adults worldwide. Juster served as a professor of architecture and environmental design at Hampshire College from its first semester in 1970 until his retirement in 1992. He currently lives in Connecticut with his wife and continues to write.

About the Playwright/Lyricist

Sheldon Harnick's musical career began in the 1950s with songs (e.g. "The Boston Beguine," "Merry Little Minuet") in revues on and Off Broadway. In 1957, he teamed with Jerry Bock to create the scores for a number of memorable musicals including *Fiorello* (Tony®, Pulitzer Prize), *She Loves Me* (Grammy®), *Fiddler on the Roof* (Tony®), *The Rothschilds*, and *The Apple Tree*. Other musicals include *Rex* (Richard Rodgers), *A Wonderful Life* (Joe Raposo), *A Christmas Carol* (Michel Legrand), *The Phantom Tollbooth* (Arnold Black and co-librettist Norton Juster), and *Dragons* (for which he wrote book, lyrics, and music). He has contributed songs to the films *The Heartbreak Kid*, *Blame It on Rio* (Cy Coleman), and *Aaron's Magic Village* (Legrand). In the world of opera, he has provided librettos for Jack Beeson's *Cyrano*, Dr. Heidegger's *Fountain of Youth* and *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, Henry Mollicone's *Coyote Tales*, and Thomas Z. Shepard's *Love in Two Countries*. Mr. Harnick has won two Tonys® and two Grammys®, has three gold records and a platinum record. He and his wife Margery have two children, Beth and Matthew. He is a longtime member of the Dramatists Guild and Songwriters Guild.

About the Composer

Arnold Black was born May 2, 1923 in Philadelphia. After graduating from Juilliard with majors in violin and composition, Mr. Black performed in the Casals Festival and the NBC Symphony before becoming Assistant Concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra. He was composer in residence at the Circle in the Square Theater in the early 1950s where he worked with director Jose Quintero and wrote scores for such acclaimed productions as *Ulysses in Nightgown*. Mr. Black composed music for National Shakespeare Company productions of *Oedipus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Trojan Horse*, and the Eugene O'Neill Theater production of *Oblomov*. He and longtime collaborator William Bolcom worked together on many projects and in 1999 developed the film scores for John Turturro's *Illuminata*. Mr. Black worked on several projects with Bertolt Brecht, including *Edward II*, *La Ronda*, *Wansee*, *Woyzek*, *Leonce and Lena*, and *The Exception and the Rule*, and wrote music for films and advertisements. He founded the Mohawk Trail Concerts in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts where he served as director for 30 years. Mr. Black died in June 2000 at his home in Charlemont, Massachusetts.

Main Characters

Milo – a boy too bored to have fun

Tock – a dog with an unusual alarm clock

Demons – evil spirits

Whether Man – the character who welcomes people to the Land of Expectations

Lethargians – creatures who live in the Doldrums

Princess of Sweet Rhyme – a princess who likes to rhyme

Princess of Pure Reason – a wise princess

Azaz – king of Dictionopolis, a land where words rule

Mathemagician – king of Digitopolis, a land where numbers rule

Word Vendors – people who sell words in Dictionopolis

Miners – workers in the Numbers Mine in Digitopolis



The cast of *The Phantom Tollbooth* is made up of seven actors who play more than 40 different characters. During the performance, watch how the actors portray these many roles.

Vocabulary

adapt – to change or modify

dialogue – words spoken in conversation by the characters in a play

doldrums – feeling down in the dumps

improvising – performing without practicing first

musical – a play that tells a story through dialogue and songs

narrator – a person in a play who comments on the action of stage

outwit – outsmart someone by being clever

theme – subjects or topics of discussion that appear over and over again in literature and other works of art



Activities

Writing Your Journey

In the play, Milo travels to places he has never seen or heard before. Before he left for his journey, he didn't know what to expect. During his journey, he learns many new things.

Do you remember a time when you traveled to a new place you'd never been before? How did you feel on the way to the new place? What did you expect? Write one or two sentences describing how you felt as you were traveling, then draw yourself on the way to your destination. Next, write one or two sentences about what you learned on your journey.

It Takes Brains and Bravery

The Phantom Tollbooth explores several themes. To rescue the princesses, Milo must outwit the King of Digitopolis, face the demons who live in the Mountains of Ignorance, and climb up a dangerous 2,000-step stairway. Three themes in the musical are:

- the power of thinking
- overcoming fear
- heroism

Write a brief paragraph about a time when: a) you solved a problem by using your wit, b) you had to be brave even though you were scared, or c) you did something heroic, such as helping a stranger.

From Page to Musical Stage

The story of the musical comes from the book titled *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster. To adapt a book into a play, playwrights use dialogue and action to tell a story. They often have to add new characters and situations to make the story come alive on stage.

Try your hand at adaptation. Choose a scene in a favorite book and bring the scene to life by improvising with a couple of friends or classmates. Choose someone to be a narrator to tell parts of the story that couldn't be expressed in dialogue.

After you have improvised the scene, write down the dialogue you came up with.

Writing Lyrics

In a musical, playwrights work with people who compose music and write lyrics – words that are sung to music.

Try adding lyrics to the dialogue you wrote. You can think of lyrics as poetry set to music. Write four to six lines that rhyme. Next, tap a steady beat while you read your lines aloud. To be able to set lyrics to music, the words should have a consistent meter or rhythm.

Guess That Lyric

Read the song lyrics below and look over the list of characters. Before the performance, guess which character sings each of the lyrics. During the performance, listen for these lines and see if your guesses are right.

“From eight to nine we take our morning nap.
Then we lounge until half past.”

“Should I try to be a hero
when I know it’s do or die?
Can I really face a demon?
Am I brave enough to try?”

“It’s more important to know
whether there will be weather
than what the weather will be!”

So Much to See

At the end of the musical, the voice of the Tollbooth tells Milo, “There are many lands you’ve still to visit and wonderful things to see.” Draw or describe an imaginary land that you would like to visit. What does it look like? Who or what lives there? Anything is possible!

The Game of Dictionopolis and Digitopolis

You can print out your own full size game board and playing pieces from the Kennedy Center's website at <http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/phantomtollbooth>. Scroll to the lower right corner and click on the image of the Cuesheet.

Setup: To play the game, you'll need one die (student or teacher must provide), two players, paper and pencils, and the game board. Cut off the nine challenge cards and the three player pieces along the top of the board. No peeking at the challenge cards!

Choose one player piece: Milo, Tock, or Princesses Rhyme and Reason. After you cut these pieces from the game board, fold them in half so they stand upright.

Game play: With a partner, take turns rolling the die and moving forward along the path. There are six stop signs along the path where you must stop, regardless of the number you roll. When you land on a stop sign you must complete the challenge. The stop sign will instruct you to either draw a "Challenge Card" or compete against your opponent in a "Two-player Challenge" that is written on the board.

If you are instructed to draw a **Challenge Card**, your opponent will read the challenge question to you. If you answer correctly, you'll earn 1 point. If you answer incorrectly, you'll earn 0 points. Keep track of your score with paper and pencil.

In **Two-player Challenges**, both players try to complete the challenge at the same time. Whoever wins the challenge will receive 1 point. Once a Two-player Challenge is completed, it will not be repeated when the second player reaches that challenge. The second player should just stop and wait for his or her next turn to continue moving forward.

When both opponents reach the **Castle in the Air**, count your points. The player with the most points wins the game—and brings peace to Dictionopolis and Digitopolis.

After you see the performance, create new player pieces and Challenge Cards based on the characters and the plot!