

UVU THEATRE PRESENTS

# OZMA of OZ



Written by Susan Zeder

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## WHO WROTE THE OZ BOOKS?

L Frank Baum wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in 1900 with a single pencil and then typed it all up with two fingers. It was one of five children's books that he published that year and it was the one he knew that children would love.

Frank's publisher wasn't convinced that the book would make money. When Frank insisted that the book be published with color illustrations, which were expensive and unheard of in a children's book, the editor agreed to publish it only if Frank paid the printing costs himself. The gamble paid off: *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was an instant hit, with more than a hundred thousand copies sold its first year. It has become one of the most beloved children's books ever written.

Frank failed at a number of jobs before he found success as a children's book author. He worked as a professional actor, managed one of his father's theatres, and wrote and directed his own plays and musicals. Frank sold "Baum's Castorine Oil" for his father, ran his own store in South Dakota, and bought and sold china in Illinois. He edited a small-town newspaper, worked as a journalist in Chicago, and published his own magazine about display windows in stores. Despite his many failures, Frank's wife Maud and four sons supported and encouraged him, respecting his imagination, compassion, and determination—his brains, heart, and courage.

Frank soon wrote a sequel to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* called *The Marvelous Land of Oz*. In that book, the Scarecrow, who the Wizard left in charge of the Emerald City, is driven from his throne by an army of self-centered girls. With the help of the Sorceress Glinda, the Scarecrow and his companions find the lost Princess Ozma of Oz, who rules her people wisely.



## WHO ADAPTED OZMA OF OZ INTO A PLAY?



Many books are adapted into scripts by playwrights so the stories can be presented on stage for an audience. Most books written in the last hundred years are protected by copyright, which ensures that the writer is paid for their work. A playwright who wants to adapt someone else's book into a play has to get permission from the author and publisher. The playwright usually agrees to share with them some of the money people pay for tickets.

Books that were published over a hundred years ago are no longer protected by copyright, so anyone can adapt them. The 14 books that L Frank Baum wrote about Oz were published between 1900 and 1920 and are now in what is called the "public domain." Plays that are adapted from these books can be produced, published, and even copyrighted.

Playwright Suzan Zeder adapted *Ozma of Oz* for the Seattle Children's Theatre in 1979, and it was one of the first scripts the theatre presented to its audiences. In 1999, Suzan re-adapted the book as a musical, called *Time Again in Oz*, which was presented by the Seattle Children's Theatre to celebrate its 20th Anniversary.

When Suzan adapted the book into a play, the book was already in public domain, since books were protected by copyright for a shorter time during the 1900s. Suzan could take liberties with the story and tell it in different ways without needing permission from the publisher and the author's family.

In the book, Dorothy is going to Australia with her Uncle Henry on a ship, but it was Suzan's idea to have Uncle Henry go with Dorothy on her adventure in Oz. The mechanical man TikTok, who is considered the first robot in literature, is an important character in the book and joins Dorothy and Billina the Hen on their journey. It was also Suzan's idea to make TikTok a time machine. In Frank's book, Ozma of Oz comes from the Emerald City to confront the Nome King with the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, the Cowardly Lion, and an army of twenty-six officers who command one private. To reduce the number of actors, Suzan reduced Ozma's company to a General and one soldier, called "The Army."

## HOW ARE DOROTHY AND OZMA UNUSUAL?



DOROTHY AND OZMA.

In 1900, when *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was written, it was unusual for girls to have adventures in children's books. When he crossed Lake Michigan with his family, on his way from his home in Chicago to his summer cottage in Michigan, Frank told adventure stories to a girl named Dorothy Hall. This Dorothy stayed with her family in a cottage that was up a path of yellow sand from Frank's cottage. Frank promised her that if he ever wrote a story about a girl adventurer, he'd name the girl Dorothy.

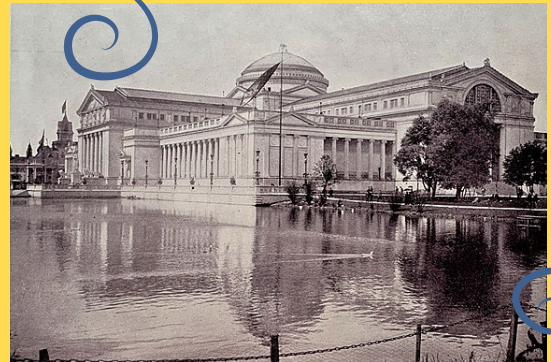
It was also unusual in his time to have female leaders in books. Frank's mother-in-law, Matilda Gage, was a major leader of the "Suffragists" who fought for women's right to vote. Frank supported his mother-in-law's campaign to make South Dakota the first state to let women vote by writing editorials in the newspaper that he ran. Having Oz ruled by female Princess Ozma, instead of the male Wizard or Scarecrow, seemed unusual to many readers in that day. Most of the soldiers in the Land of Oz are female, as Frank looked to a time when women would serve beside men in the army and navy. Frank hoped the wise Princess Ozma might help children imagine a future in which a woman could be a political leader—and might even be president.

## WHERE DID FRANK BAUM GET HIS IDEAS?

*The Wizard of Oz* is often described as "The Great American Fairy Tale." It reflects many things that author L. Frank Baum experienced during his lifetime.

As a boy, Frank used to have nightmares about a scarecrow coming to life and chasing him. In his book, he changed the thing that scared him into something friendly. For his magazine about store window displays, Frank photographed a display man he made with a pot boiler for a belly, stove pipes for arms and legs, and a funnel for a hat. When Frank was forced to go to military school, he often looked out at the path of yellow bricks that would someday lead him back home. Frank and his family enjoyed the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago where the fairground, known as "White City," looked like an emerald city when people looked at it through their green sunglasses. As a reporter, Frank interviewed "The Wizard of Menlo Park," inventor Thomas Edison, and he was fascinated by the "Prince of Humbug," Circus Master P.T. Barnum.

Most of Frank's later Oz books were inspired by ideas from children. Frank often told stories in his parlor to his sons and neighborhood children, before he wrote them down as books. He received hundreds of letters from children, which he answered personally, and he used many of the children's suggestions. In the preface of his Oz books, Frank always thanked the children who he called his "collaborators."

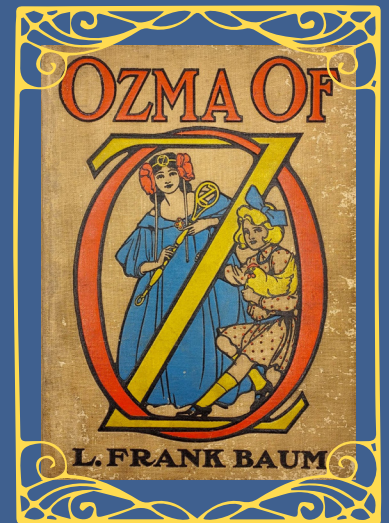


## WHAT BOOKS COULD WE READ ABOUT OZ?

Here are four books that elementary and middle school students may enjoy reading.

- L. Frank Baum: *Royal Historian of Oz* by Angelica Shirley Carpenter & Jean Shirley (Lerner Publications, 1992)
- *The Wizard of Oz* (originally *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*) by L. Frank Baum [various versions available]
- *The Land of Oz* (originally *Marvelous Land of Oz*) by L. Frank Baum [various versions available]
- *Ozma of Oz* by L. Frank Baum [various versions available]

You may also enjoy the Marvel graphic novel versions of the first six Oz books by Eric Shandower and Skottie Young.



## COULD WE WRITE OUR OWN STORIES ABOUT OZ?

Since all of L. Frank Baum's Oz books are now in public domain, you are free to adapt the books into plays or write other stories about the characters he created. You could act out or even publish the stories you write. Here are some ideas you could write about, based on the characters in *Ozma Of Oz*.

- Did Dorothy try to remember her adventures as she grew up in Kansas, or did she try to forget them?
- What adventures did Uncle Henry have in Australia?
- Did Dorothy decide to do something different with her life after seeing Princess Ozma as a leader, or after seeing how girls could be soldiers?
- What happened to Billina when she, as a country chicken, went to live in the Emerald City?
- Where did Princess Langwidere get her other heads?
- Did Ozma ever decide to start time in Oz and let her people grow older and wiser? If so, what changed her mind?
- What might happen if TikTok met the Tin Woodman? How could they work together?
- Once they were free from the Nome King, how did the Wheelers get along as a people?

## THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Dr. John Newman, who directed *Ozma of Oz*, will perform his solo play, *The Man Behind the Curtain*, about L. Frank Baum on Monday, September 30 at 7:30 p.m. in NC 785, the upper studio in The Noorda Center for the Performing Arts. No tickets or reservations required. Dr. Newman is willing to perform the play for free at schools this fall. If you are interested email [John.Newman@uvu.edu](mailto:John.Newman@uvu.edu).



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### SOURCES CITED AND CONSULTED:

Information about L. Frank Baum and the Oz Books was drawn from biographies of Baum, including *To Please a Child: A Biography of L. Frank Baum* by Frank Josslyn Baum [Frank's oldest son] and Russel P. McFall (Reilly & Lee, 1961); *L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz* by Katherine M. Rogers (Da Capo Press, 2002); *The Real Wizard of Oz* (Gotham Books, 2009); and *Finding Oz* by Evan I. Schwartz (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009). The headshot of Suzan Zeder was taken by photographer Danile Quat. Other photos are taken from public sources such as Wiki Commons.