Summer 2013

Direction of the Play: Phantom Tollbooth

Angela Chement
Central Washington University

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Direction of the Play/Musical: The Phantom Tollbooth

A Project Report
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

by
Angela Chiment
July, 2013
We hereby approve the project report of

Angela Chiment

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts:

Theatre Production

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

Date of Signature

Professor Christina Barrigan
Committee Chair

Date of Signature

Professor Brënda Hubbard

Date of Signature

Professor Scott Robinson

Please note:
The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Graduate Studies

Final Examination of
Angela Chiment
B.A. University of Alaska, Fairbanks 1999
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

Committee in Charge
Professor Christina Barrigan
Professor Brenda Hubbard
Professor Scott Robinson

McConnell Hall
Room 117
Wednesday, June 3, 2013
7:00 PM
PROJECT REPORT

The Phantom Tollbooth

BEN EIELSON JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

Directed by
Angela Chiment
April, 2013

This project consists of the selection, background research and documentation, casting, direction, and post-production analysis of Ben Eielson Junior/Senior High’s production of Susan Nanus’s adaptation of Norton Juster’s The Phantom Tollbooth. Documentation includes research and analysis of the play and an evaluation of the play as a production vehicle for the department of Theatre Arts at Central Washington University. The analysis also includes a discussion as to the non-traditional directorial vision of this production.
Angela Chiment

Courses presented for the Master’s degree

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Total Credit Requirements - 56
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Angela Chiment

Undergraduate Study:
  University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 1995-1999

Graduate Study:
  University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 2004-2005 Teaching Certification
  Central Washington University, 2001-2003

Professional Experience:
  Junior/Senior High School Teacher
    Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High School: 2005-Present
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MASTER’S THESIS PROJECT
PLAYSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM
(PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE READ THE PLAY SELECTION CRITERIA SECTION IN YOUR
GRADUATE HANDBOOK)

SCRIPT TITLE __The Phantom Tollbooth__

PLAYWRIGHT(S) [If musical, list lyricist/composer]  __Susan Nanus, based on the book by Norton Juster__

NUMBER OF ACTS 2  APPROXIMATE TOTAL PLAYING TIME 1 HOURS 15 MIN.

CAST (fill in with the appropriate numbers)
MEN 3 (+ 1 boy)  WOMEN 33 (15 doubled, all but two are gender neutral but likely will be played by girls)
CHILDREN 1 boy (can be played by a girl)  OVER 40 0

ROLES REQUIRING PEOPLE OF COLOR 0  ROLES COULD DOUBLE the 37 roles can be played by 19 actors

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAST 19

OTHER CASTING CONCERNS: Some characters may be played by puppets

ARTISTIC STAFF (check those needed for this play or production idea)
MUSICAL DIRECTOR None  DANCE CHOREOGRAPHER None
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER None  DIALECT COACH None  SPECIALTY HIRE None (specify what kind) ORCHESTRA/BAND (specify what size) None
Will you be fulfilling any of the above? No  If so, which?

Will a guest artist be fulfilling any of the above? No  If so, which?

SCENERY/PROPS (check those needed for this play or your concept of the play)
UNIT SET? YES  NO  (CIRCLE ONE)  NUMBER OF SETTINGS  7
HISTORICAL PERIOD Milo’s room is today, other locations are fantasy  GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION North Pole, AK and The Land of Wisdom
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SET CONCERNS OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:
-The set will be a unit platform set with banners and set dressing to change locations
-Backstage space is limited, so set dressing must collapse/be easy to store
-The set must include a high platform that hides a gymnast pad behind so that actors can safely jump off the platform and disappear. If a safe way to do this cannot be found, creative staging must be used.

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PROPS 25-35  PERIOD Fantasy
DIFFICULT OR UNUSUAL PROPS? YES  NO  (CIRCLE ONE)  DESCRIBE:
- The car Milo drives around in must/may carry Tock & the Humbug. It will either be self-propelled or propelled by Milo (Flintstone style)
- Mathemagician’s giant pencil
-Words at the Word Market

-In the "Light Meal" the trays and plates have imbedded lights to look like plates of light. We have small LED battery units that are easy to install for this.

-Demons will be primarily puppets, as will Awful Dynne and the Spelling Bee

WEAPONS OR FIREARMS? HOW MANY _0_ DESCRIBE:

COSTUMES (CHECK THOSE NEEDED FOR THIS PLAY OR YOUR CONCEPT OF THE PLAY)
APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF COSTUMES PER CHARACTER _1_
HISTORICAL PERIOD None (Fantasy), Milo is modern SEASON Summer
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:
- Most actors will be doubling roles, so costumes must be easy to change and suggest character simply
- Three "identical" (similar) Mathemagician outfits are needed for when he makes three more of himself appear.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOICE OF SCRIPT
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS SCRIPT PRODUCED? YES NO (CIRCLE ONE)

I have never seen The Phantom Tollbooth produced live.

HAVE YOU DONE THIS PLAY BEFORE? BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION:

I have not been previously involved in any way with this production. The book is a favorite of mine from childhood.

WHY SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION PRODUCE THIS SCRIPT?

_The Phantom Tollbooth_ is a classic children's book in the style of _Alice in Wonderland_ emphasizing the importance of learning and wisdom. Milo is a young boy bored with life who learns through his travels in the Land of Wisdom that excitement and action are all around him. The lessons Milo learns are even more applicable in this age of computer screen lethargy. The story inspires imagination and creativity, and is a wonderful introduction to theatre for young audiences.

While other adaptations exist, including an MTI musical version, this adaptation is the most true to the book, including actual dialogue right from the pages. This particular adaptation is preferable to the MTI musical versions for a number of reasons. First, the full length musical is too long for children's audiences. However, the Junior version cuts too much, including many of the more interesting scenes and characters. In particular, it fails to include the Humbug, who is the Id to Tock's Superego. The adventuring party of Milo, Tock, and the Humbug is important structurally to the piece, and his loss is inappropriate. He is also one of the most fun acting roles and a nice challenge for one of my more advanced students.

The acting requirements are well within the ability range for my students. Our productions include 6-12th grade. There are challenging roles for the upperclassmen and more simple, physical roles for the elementary and middle school students. The show allows for both a fun introduction to theatre for new students and some creative interpretation for the more advanced.

The technical requirements for the show are appropriate for my students' abilities. The only real challenge is Milo's car, and my students have had several opportunities to experiment with various methods of staging moving vehicles in previous productions.
The production is appropriate for our audiences and community. As we are located on a military base, we have a large population of families with small children. Part of our goal is to expose younger children to theatre. The show is family friendly, with enough action to keep small children interested and enough clever dialogue to engage older students and parents.

WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS (IF ANY) TO DOING THIS PRODUCTION AT YOUR SCHOOL?

- We have done a lot of children's theatre in the last couple of seasons.
- The script, as it is based on the book, can be wordy at times and will need careful staging.

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SCRIPT ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER AND ATTACH.

PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF THE SCRIPT FOR THE THESIS COMMITTEE TO REVIEW.

SUBMITTED BY: (Printed Name) Angela Chiment Date Submitted: ________________

(Signature) ________________

Thesis Chair Approval: ________________ Date Approved: ________________

Thesis Committee Members Approval: ________________ Date Approved: 6/26/2013

Graduate Coordinator Approval: ________________ Date Approved: ________________

Please note:
The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Synopsis

Act One, Scene 1:

The scene begins with an introduction by The Clock (also played by Tock) about Milo and his boredom. A mysterious package is delivered, and Milo is instructed by The Voice to open it and, consequently, how to use the Tollbooth. Milo gets into his toy car and decides to try it out.

Act One, Scene 2:

Milo suddenly finds himself driving along an unknown road. He stops and meets The Whether Man, who welcomes him to the Land of Expectations. Milo continues driving until his car slows down and stops in the Doldrums. Here he meets The Lethargarians, who do nothing all day. They advise him to enjoy the boredom and warn him of the watchdog, Tock, who quickly makes an appearance. Tock helps him leave the Doldrums and explains the loss of Princesses Rhyme and Reason. There is a flashback to the argument between the two kings, King Azaz and The Mathemagician, that leads to the banishment of the princesses.

Tock and Milo continue on their way to Dictionopolis, where they meet The Gatekeeper, who cannot let them in without a reason. Settling on “Why Not” as serviceable grounds, Tock and Milo enter the Word Market. After tasting a few of the merchant's wares, they meet The Spelling Bee, who promptly gets in a furious argument with The Humbug. The argument is interrupted by the arrival of the king's six ministers, who invite everyone to a royal banquet. The banquet seems to come to the characters, as the king calls for everyone to make a speech before dinner. Milo speaks briefly and is cut off, as others call out what they would like to eat. Milo is horrified when he realizes that he must eat his words.
Azaz complains about the state of his kingdom and Milo suggests the return of Rhyme and Reason. Azaz interprets this as Milo volunteering for the task, saying that The Mathemagician must also agree—and that there is one thing he cannot tell Milo until the quest is over. Azaz gives Milo a box containing all the letters of the alphabet and sends him on his way with Tock and the reluctant Humbug as guides.

**Act Two, Scene 1:**

The three adventurers are on the road to Digitopolis to find The Mathemagician. They hear an awful noise and meet Kakafonous A. Discord, Doctor of Dissonance, and his assistant, the Awful Dynne. Discord offers to ameliorate their lack of noise, which the trio declines. Instead, Discord gives Milo a box of laughter—which Discord personally finds unpleasant—and sends them on their way.

A fork in the road appears in front of them with a sign giving the distance to Digitopolis in several different units. While they try to figure out which way to go, the Dodecahedron appears. He explains why he has so many faces (twelve), riddles them about which road is fastest (they are all equal), and passionately defends why numbers are important. Then he takes them to see The Mathemagician in the number mines. Miners work around them as The Mathemagician offers them something to eat. Terribly hungry, the three accept—only to find that the more they eat, the hungrier they are. The Mathemagician explains that they are eating subtraction stew, and that, in Digitopolis, one eats when one is full until one is hungry again.

Using his magic staff (a giant pencil), The Mathemagician brings them to his workshop, where Milo tries to convince him to free Rhyme and Reason. He refuses until Milo uses logic to prove that the two kings really agree. The Mathemagician gives Milo his
own smaller magic wand (pencil) and his blessing—adding that there is one great obstacle that they cannot discuss until the party returns. The three leave.

**Act Two, Scene 2:**

Rhyme and Reason are in the Castle in the Air, where they are imprisoned, and discuss Milo's attempt at their rescue. The party drives along in the Land of Ignorance and meets several demons, including The Everpresent Wordsnatcher, who misrepresents everything they say; The Terrible Trivium, who tricks them into doing time wasting tasks; and The Demon of Insincerity, who leads them into a trap. They escape all three only to find themselves chased by all of the demons as they run for the Castle in the Air. The friends are stopped at the door by The Senses Taker, who distracts them with sensory delights. The box of laughter falls out of Milo's pocket and the sound breaks the spell. Milo uses the box of letters to spell out “ENTRANCE” and they enter the tower and meet the princesses.

Running out of time, the group jumps out the window and runs away, chased by demons until the armies of the two kings meet them and drive off the demons. The kings welcome back Rhyme and Reason and congratulate Milo, confiding that the one thing they could not tell him before was that the task was completely impossible. Milo, Tock, and The Humbug are made heroes of the realm, and Milo drives home again to find that he has so much to do and so little time.
GRADUATE COMMITTEE AND OPTION APPROVAL FORM
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
(Submit the original)

Note: This form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option from the list below. Submit original to the Office of Graduate Studies in Barge 305.

Name: Angela Chiment Birth Date: ____________
Address: ________________________ Student ID: ____________
Email: ________________________

Check option: [ ] Written Exam* [ ] Project [ ] Creative Project
[ ] Studio Project [ ] Portfolio Review [ ] Thesis (standard)
[ ] Thesis (journal-ready)
[ ] Provide journal guidelines plus a recent article from that journal in student's field of study.

*Students taking written exam option may omit items 1-5 below.

1. Proposed Title (and title of targeted journal if appropriate):
   Direction of the production The Phantom Tollbooth

2. Purpose of Study:
   The direction of the children's theatre production The Phantom Tollbooth serves as the culminating experience in theatre arts graduate studies.

3. Scope of Study:
   Documentation based upon the preparation of pre-production research, post-production evaluation, the direction of the production (including casting and rehearsal of actors, preparation of the Director's Production Book, and oral examination) shall benefit both the student and theatre arts department.

4. Procedure to be used:
   Three phases of study shall be included: 1) Pre-Production Research and Thesis Documentation in MLA style, 2) Rehearsal and direction of production, 3) Post-Production Evaluation and Documentation.

5. Does the procedure involve collection of data obtained from
   Human Subjects (including use of surveys)? ...Yes**[ ] No [ ]
   Use of Animals? ...Yes**[ ] No [ ]

**If yes, your procedures must be approved in writing by the Human Subjects Committee or the Animal Care and Use Committee before you initiate your research.

Committee Chair (typed or printed) ________________________
Brenda Hubbard

Committee Member (typed or printed) ________________________

Approved by: ________________________
Dept Chair/Designee* (signature) ________________________
Dean of Graduate Studies ________________________

Please note: The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.

*In the case of interdisciplinary programs, this form should be signed by the relevant Program Director/Co-Director AND relevant Dept chair. In cases where they cannot agree to sign for approval, the approval will be made or denied by the relevant interdisciplinary program advisory
April 21, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

Angela Chiment is a teacher at Ben Eielson High School and has my permission to produce The Phantom Tollbooth by Susan Nanus as her Master's thesis project in April of 2013.

Sincerely,

Mario Gatto
Principal

Please note:
This signature has been redacted due to security reasons.
The production of *The Phantom Tollbooth* is scheduled for April 19th, 20th, 26th, and 27th, 2013 at Ben Eielson Junior/Senior High School. This will be the spring play and these are the traditional dates so as not to conflict with other school activities. The performances will take place in the Ben Eielson High Theatre.

Eielson’s theatre is small—approximately twenty feet both across and deep—and seats 140 people. The stage has a small arched apron that is edged by stairs leading down to the house. There is no pit. Wing space is very limited and curtains are hung from static battens. One classroom space attached to the theatre is used for all construction, sewing, and storage. The room is two stories tall, but the door to the stage is a normal height and width, so set pieces going from the shop to the stage must fit through a regular set of double doors. Due to space constraints, most large painting is done in the hallway after school. Sound is run from the light booth through a small box mixer that is usually used for assemblies. There are four microphone jacks backstage and a poorly working monitor speaker in the booth. The speakers for the theatre have a constant hum that is noticeable when sound is running; for these reasons, we have instead been using a laptop, borrowed computer speakers, and a baby monitor. There is no wiring for headsets from booth to backstage—and wireless on a military base is problematic at best—so we have to run microphone cable up the aisle of the theatre for headsets. The light booth is in the back of the house at audience level and looks out onto a small shelf balcony, from which the followspots are usually manned. Lighting instrumentation is a major challenge in the space: there are approximately twenty ERS, ten Fresnel, and four colored strip-light units hung over the audience and stage, but we do not have the equipment to focus them, and they have not been maintained by our school district
in some time. Lamps have burned out, there are no gel frames or gel for them, and some units are simply unplugged. Lighting will have to be addressed this year as part of the thesis project.

In the past I have been the primary designer. We have had an occasional student designer for one area, but never all the areas. This year we plan to have student designers for all technical areas. Set, prop, and costume construction is handled by students and a few parent volunteers. Some costume sewing can be sent out with staff or parent volunteers. We have four-hour work calls every Saturday during the rehearsal process. We also have work calls during parent-teacher conferences and during testing days, and students in my drama class also work on the show. This year we will be holding a parent meeting to find more volunteers and clarify student responsibilities.

The Drama Club has an account that maintains around $5000. We usually try to spend around $2000 per show with the intention of making it back—as we are fully self-supporting. We also traditionally do a coffee-sales fundraiser that earns $300 to $400. This show could cost up to $3000, though, since it will be our largest show for the year.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Project Schedules

This rehearsal schedule is built in Google Calendar and posted online at http://www.behsdrama2.blogspot.com/ to be accessed by students. What follows are two printouts of that live electronic calendar:

1. **Student Rehearsal Schedule**: The schedule of rehearsals and performances that is distributed to the students. It does not include thesis project dates.

2. **Project Calendar**: A calendar of all dates related to the thesis project, including due dates.
Student Rehearsal Schedule

Mon Feb 4, 2013
All day No School: PD
Mon Feb 4, 2013 - Tue Feb 5, 2013
Description: Professional Development

Wed Feb 13, 2013
3pm - 4:30pm Auditions

Thu Feb 14, 2013
3pm - 4:30pm Auditions

Fri Feb 15, 2013
3pm - 4:30pm Callbacks

Mon Feb 18, 2013
All day Cast List Posted
Mon Feb 18, 2013 - Tue Feb 19, 2013
6pm - 7pm Parent Meeting
Where: Theatre

Tue Feb 19, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 4:30pm ALL CALL (Tech & Acting)

Wed Feb 20, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 4:30pm Read Thru Act 1

Thu Feb 21, 2013
All day Parent Teacher Conferences
Thu Feb 21, 2013 - Fri Feb 22, 2013
Description: No School
10am - 5pm Work Call - Optional

Fri Feb 22, 2013
All day Parent Teacher Conferences
Fri Feb 22, 2013 - Sat Feb 23, 2013
Description: No School
8am - 4:30pm Work Call - Optional

Sat Feb 23, 2013
2pm - 6pm Work Call
Student Rehearsal Schedule

Mon Feb 25, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 3:45pm  Milo & Whether Man
3:45pm - 4:30pm  Milo, Lethargians

Tue Feb 26, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 3:45pm  Milo, Tock, Gatekeeper
3:45pm - 5:15pm  Milo, Tock, Humbug, Bee

Wed Feb 27, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 4pm  Milo, Tock, Voice

Thu Feb 28, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 3:45pm  Milo, Tock, Kings & Princesses

Fri Mar 1, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 4:30pm  Word Market/Banquet

Sat Mar 2, 2013
2pm - 6pm  Work Call

Mon Mar 4, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 4:30pm  3 friends, Dr, Dynne

Tue Mar 5, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 4:30pm  Digitopolis

Wed Mar 6, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 4:30pm  Demons

| Description: Demons: puppet rehearsal Word Market: working and puppet rehearsal with Bee
Student Rehearsal Schedule

Thu Mar 7, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 4:30pm  3 friends, princesses

Fri Mar 8, 2013
All day  End of Quarter
Fri Mar 8, 2013 - Sat Mar 9, 2013
Description: Early Out
3pm - 4:30pm  Final Battle

Sat Mar 9, 2013
2pm - 6pm  Work Call
Description: This is a BIG construction day. Please bring people who know how to use powertools! If you are a puppeteer, you are STRONGLY encouraged to come and work on your puppet.

Mon Mar 11, 2013
All day  NO rehearsal
Mon Mar 11, 2013 - Tue Mar 12, 2013
Description: Rehearsals will be scheduled based on need and conflicts
All day  Spring Break
Mon Mar 11, 2013 - Tue Mar 12, 2013
Description: No School

Tue Mar 12, 2013
All day  Spring Break
Tue Mar 12, 2013 - Wed Mar 13, 2013
Description: No School
3pm - 4pm  Milo, Tock, Humbug, Word Snatcher
Description: Rehearsals will be scheduled based on need and conflicts
4pm - 5pm  Milo, Tock, Humbug, Trivium

Wed Mar 13, 2013
All day  Spring Break
Description: No School
3pm - 4pm  Milo, Tock, Humbug, Insincerity
Description: Rehearsals will be scheduled based on need and conflicts
4pm - 5pm  Milo, Tock, Humbug, Senses Taker
Student Rehearsal Schedule

Thu Mar 14, 2013

All day  Spring Break

Thu Mar 14, 2013 - Fri Mar 15, 2013
Description: No School

3pm - 4pm  Milo, Tock, Lethargians
Description: Rehearsals will be scheduled based on need and conflicts

4pm - 5pm  Milo, Tock, Gatekeeper, Kings, Princesses

5pm - 6pm  Milo, Tock, Humbug, Dodecahedron, Mathemagician

Fri Mar 15, 2013

All day  NO rehearsal

Fri Mar 15, 2013 - Sat Mar 16, 2013
Description: Rehearsals will be scheduled based on need and conflicts

All day  Spring Break

Fri Mar 15, 2013 - Sat Mar 16, 2013
Description: No School

Sat Mar 16, 2013

2pm - 6pm  Work Call

Mon Mar 18, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall

3pm - 5pm  Dictionopolis/Demons
Description: Demons: puppet practice

Tue Mar 19, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall

3pm - 5pm  Milo, Whether, Lethargians

Wed Mar 20, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall

3pm - 5pm  3 friends, Dr, Dynne

Thu Mar 21, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall

3pm - 5pm  Digitopolis

Fri Mar 22, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall

3pm - 5pm  Mts. of Ignorance
Student Rehearsal Schedule

Sat Mar 23, 2013
2pm - 6pm Work Call

Mon Mar 25, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 5pm Milo & Tock/Puppets
   Description: Milo & Tock: Work scenes Puppeteers: practice with puppets

Tue Mar 26, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 5pm Run Act 1

Wed Mar 27, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 5pm Dictionopolis
   Description: Milo, Tock, Lethargians, Whether man

Thu Mar 28, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 5pm Run Act 2

Fri Mar 29, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 5pm Digitopolis

Sat Mar 30, 2013
2pm - 6pm Work Call

Mon Apr 1, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 5:30pm Demons, Friends

Tue Apr 2, 2013
All day Silent Work Call
   Tue Apr 2, 2013 - Wed Apr 3, 2013
All day Testing Day
   Tue Apr 2, 2013 - Wed Apr 3, 2013
   Description: Early Out
2:40pm - 3pm Study Hall
3pm - 5:30pm Act 1 Run
Student Rehearsal Schedule

Wed Apr 3, 2013

All day  Silent Work Call  

All day  Testing Day  
Description: Early Out

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 5:30pm  Digitopolis

Thu Apr 4, 2013

All day  Silent Work Call  
Thu Apr 4, 2013 - Fri Apr 5, 2013

All day  Testing Day  
Thu Apr 4, 2013 - Fri Apr 5, 2013  
Description: Early Out

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 5:30pm  Run Act 2

Fri Apr 5, 2013

All day  NOT a testing day - regular school  
Fri Apr 5, 2013 - Sat Apr 6, 2013  
Description: Early Out

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 5:30pm  Run Act 1

Sat Apr 6, 2013

2pm - 6pm  Work Call

Mon Apr 8, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 6pm  Run Act 2

Tue Apr 9, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 6pm  Act 1 Run

Wed Apr 10, 2013

2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 6pm  Act II Run
Student Rehearsal Schedule

Thu Apr 11, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 6pm  Full Run  
Description: Costume Parade

Fri Apr 12, 2013
2:40pm - 3pm  Study Hall
3pm - 6pm  Full Run  
Description: Dress, no makeup

Sat Apr 13, 2013
2pm - 8pm  Dry Tech / Work Call

Mon Apr 15, 2013
3pm - 6:30pm  Wet Tech

Tue Apr 16, 2013
3pm - 6:30pm  Full Dress

Wed Apr 17, 2013
3pm - 8pm  Full Dress

Thu Apr 18, 2013
8am - 4:30pm  In School Dress Rehearsal
Description: Actual rehearsal is from 1:45 to 2:30 and from 2:35 to finish. Daytime is for last minute fixes, rehearsal, and repairs.

Fri Apr 19, 2013
7pm - 8:30pm  Performance

Sat Apr 20, 2013
7pm - 8:30pm  Performance

Wed Apr 24, 2013
3pm - 5pm  Pickup Rehearsal  
Description: Full Run in Costume - here until done

Fri Apr 26, 2013
7pm - 8:30pm  Performance

Sat Apr 27, 2013
7pm - 8:30pm  Performance
9pm - 12am  Strike & Party
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End of Quarter

Parent/Teacher

Parent/Teacher
Dec 2012 (Alaska Time)

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- **Tue**: 27
- **Wed**: 28
- **Thu**: 29
- **Fri**: 30
- **Sat**: 1

- **Sun**: 2
- **Mon**: 3
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- **Fri**: 7
- **Sat**: 8

- **Sun**: 9
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- **Sat**: 15

- **Sun**: 16
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- **Sun**: 23
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- **Thu**: 27
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- **Sat**: 29

- **Sun**: 30
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- **Thu**: 3
- **Fri**: 4
- **Sat**: 5

- **Section 2 draft 3 to**
- **Final Section 1 & 2**
- **Baby Due**
- **Finals**
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- **First Day Back**
- **Early Out**
- **No School**
- **3 pm - Cast Meeting**
- **Early Out**
- **Cast List Posted**
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The Phantom Tollbooth: Evaluation as a Production Vehicle

The Phantom Tollbooth is a classic children's book in the style of Alice in Wonderland emphasizing the importance of learning and wisdom. Milo is a young boy bored with life who, through his travels in the Land of Wisdom, learns that excitement and action are all around him. This show is perfect for a modern day audience in that the lessons that Milo learns are even more applicable in this age of computer-screen lethargy. The story inspires imagination and creativity and is a wonderful introduction to theatre for young audiences. It is a strong choice for Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High School's spring show.

While other adaptations of the book exist, including an MTI musical version, Susan Nanus's adaptation is the most true to the book—she even incorporates actual dialogue right from the pages. This particular adaptation is preferable to the MTI musical versions for a number of reasons: for example, the full length musical is too long for children's audiences; however, the MTI JR. version cuts too much, including many of the more interesting scenes and characters. In particular, it fails to include the Humbug, who is the Id to Tock's Superego. The adventuring party of Milo, Tock, and the Humbug is structurally important to the piece, and his exclusion is inappropriate. He is also one of the most fun acting roles and a nice challenge for one of my more advanced students.

Additionally, the acting requirements are well within the ability range for my students. We include sixth- through twelfth-grade performers in our productions; this script provides challenging roles for the upperclassmen and more simple, physical roles for the elementary and middle school students. The show allows for both a fun introduction to theatre for new students and some creative interpretation for the more advanced. The
doubling of roles and the inclusion of puppetry for some characters further broadens the opportunities for a wide range of students.

The technical requirements for the show are also appropriate for my students' abilities. The only real challenge is Milo's car, and my students have had several opportunities to experiment with various methods of staging moving vehicles in previous productions. The sets and costumes can be simple and rely merely on suggestion to emphasize the imaginative qualities of the show, but we have the facilities to create more specificity if necessary.

Finally, the production is perfectly suitable for our audiences and community. As we are located on a military base, we have a large population of families with small children. Part of our goal is to expose younger children to theatre and to hopefully encourage them to get involved when they get older. The show is family friendly: it includes enough action to keep small children interested and enough clever dialogue to engage older students and parents.

*The Phantom Tollbooth* is both apt and challenging for my students, within our technical abilities, and a strong choice for our audiences. It can be done at our budget, with our students, and in our space, while still providing the educational opportunity necessary for a junior/senior high school show.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Concept Statement

In simplest terms, Susan Nanus's theatrical adaptation of Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth* is a tale of ignorance vs. wisdom. It is the story of one boy's journey through his imagination to develop wisdom—all the while fighting off the demons of ignorance. The story is deceptively child-like but is full of more adult concepts including many verbal and visual puns. The production must, then, keep the childish quality while still acknowledging the cleverness of the script. The concept for this production is a journey through the imagination, and the landscape is Milo's mind.

The show will contrast the realism of Milo's room—the outside world—with the fantasy setting of Milo's imagination—his inner world. The difference between the two should be as clear as the difference between Kansas and Oz. Milo's mind is creative, but it is disorderly and chaotic, and the design should reflect this; only upon the return of Rhyme and Reason can it return to some kind of order. Because Milo's mind is lacking in structure, large pieces of fabric will make up most of the set and costumes instead of more permanent pieces. The habit of children to turn a blanket into a cape will allow us to have fabric represent any number of things in the spirit of "imaginative play."

The Land of Expectations, including the Lethargians, should be extremely organic and consist of excessively smooth curves. Dictionopolis should be a more structured organic shape, while Digitopolis should be more geometrical in design. The Mountains of Ignorance, which is the landscape of Milo's fear and doubt, should be jagged and severe, with the Castle in the Air made entirely of sharp straight lines.

The color palette for the show will be bright, chaotic, and jewel-toned. I have no desire to recreate the Kansas-to-Oz effect, so the colors will remain the same in the outer and
inner worlds—though in Milo’s room they will be more muted.

Locations may resemble “forts” built by children, and many locations can be suggested by rearranging the same elements. The set will be a platform unit set consisting of large banners, flags, and other swatches of cloth. Smaller units may move in and out for furniture. Pacing is even more important in children’s shows, as the break of a set change will lose the audience; consequently, the actors in the scenes will do set changes.

There are many props in the show, and while “realistic” is an inappropriate term for this production, the props must clearly and immediately represent the object indicated; for example, the giant pencil should look like a giant pencil. However, anything is possible in the landscape of a mind, and we will use that to our advantage with some of the more imaginative props.

Costumes must be flexible, as students will be doubling roles. Their design must allow for the changing of a small piece—or the way the costumes are worn—to indicate a new character. Ideally, the fabric of the set will be echoed in the costume pieces: drapes of fabric may be used to represent characters. A few key characters will not need this flexibility, but their costumes should still be designed the same way for unity. The only character exempt from this is Milo, as he should stick out from the rest of the characters and should not seem to belong in the imaginative landscapes.

Puppets will represent several of the characters; these are parts of Milo’s brain that he is unwilling to recognize as such, so “real” actors cannot play them. Puppets allow us to exaggerate the fantastical elements of these characters, such as the Demons of Ignorance, the Spelling Bee, the Awful Dynne, and possibly other characters. Hand and rod puppets, marionettes, and larger rod/backpack/body puppets will be used to represent a variety of
creatures. These puppets should be fantastical but not cartoonish. The illustrations in the original book should serve as inspiration for them.

Sound is very important in this production. While it is not a musical, it is very important to create a detailed soundscape to reinforce the imaginative quality of the scene and staging. The show will have a soundscape and musical design that flows through the entire play, and many scenes will be blocked to the music as if it were a musical.

The lighting for the production will help to create the imagined locations in the set. The lighting can be intensely colorful and will require the purchase of gel. Some specialty chromatics would be ideal but may not be within the budget. The lighting should reinforce the idea that we are in an alternate world—which is actually inside of Milo’s brain—and that things are different here. Lighting may come from odd angles, may be the “wrong” color for a source, or otherwise seem “not right.”

I plan to invite sixth-grade students from Crawford Elementary to audition, which will allow us to have students from sixth- through twelfth-grade in the production; this will make it possible to cast the varied ages appropriately and also give a good range of heights with which to work.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Initial Conflict and Event Framing Analysis

Protagonist:

Milo is the protagonist of the story. He is the driving force behind the action; while he seems, at first, to be along for the ride, he is the one who decides to enter the Tollbooth, it is his thinking that gets the car moving out of the Doldrums, and he is the one who suggests the return of the princesses to King Azaz. He is literally—and figuratively—behind the wheel.

Opposing Forces:

Milo’s opposing forces include The Demons of Ignorance, the stubbornness of the two kings, and Milo’s own insecurity and ignorance.

Climax:

The climax of the play occurs when Milo has freed the princesses from the Castle in the Air, but they have not yet escaped from the chasing Demons:

HUMBUG. I’m exhausted! I can’t run another step.

MILO. We can’t stop now . . .

TOCK. Milo! Look out there! (Nanus 63)

It is at this moment that The Armies of Wisdom, the combined armies of King Azaz and The Mathemagician, arrive to fight off the demons and protect the heroes. The moment of climax is in between Milo’s and Tock’s lines: at the moment of desperation but before the cavalry arrives. The following battle is then little more than a cleanup, the conclusion a forgone one.

Major Dramatic Question:

Will Milo learn to appreciate knowledge and time in order to rescue the Princesses Rhyme and Reason and restore wisdom to the land?

Introductory Incident:
The introductory incident occurs when Milo discovers the Tollbooth in his room:

CLOCK. So what’s left? Another long, boring afternoon. Unless he bothers to notice a very large package that happened to arrive today.

MILO. “For Milo, who has plenty of time.” Well, that’s true. No. Well . . .

A VOICE. One genuine turnpike tollbooth, easily assembled at home for use by those who have never traveled in lands beyond. (Nanus 10)

**Moment of Engagement:**

Milo is committed to the adventure once he drives through the tollbooth and discovers himself in Expectations.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Given Circumstances

**Environmental Facts:**

1. Geographical Location

Milo’s bedroom is not given any exterior location; it could exist in any English-speaking country.

The inside world is the Kingdom of Wisdom, which is made up of several areas. Milo travels to the Land of Expectations, a place to which everyone must go before they get where they are going; the Doldrums, where thinking, laughing, and action of any kind are outlawed; the sister cities of Dictionopolis and Digitopolis; and the Mountains of Ignorance.

Dictionopolis is the city of words, ruled by King Azaz. According to the gatekeeper:

“This is Dictionopolis, a happy kingdom, advantageously located in the foothills of Confusion and caressed by gentle breezes from the Sea of Knowledge” (Nanus 20). The book describes a “heavy iron gate” guarding the city and the Word Market inside “crowded with long lines of stalls heaped with merchandise and decorated in gay-colored bunting” (Juster 38). The royal palace is located “up a broad marble stairway [...] exactly like an enormous book, standing on end, with its front door in the lower part of the binding just where they usually place the publisher’s name,” while the banquet room is “down a long hallway, which glittered with crystal chandeliers [...] The walls and ceiling were covered with mirrors [...] a vast room [...] The long table was carefully set with gold plates and linen napkins [...] a throne covered in crimson cloth. Directly behind, on the wall, was the royal coat of arms, flanked by the flags of Dictionopolis” (Juster 80-81).

Digitopolis, by contrast, is a barren place at the base of the Mountains of Ignorance; “It doesn’t look very inviting,” complains the Humbug (Nanus 43). The surface of the town
is up above the tree line: “they climbed higher and higher, not a tree or blade of grass could
be seen anywhere. Only the rocks remained” (Juster 176); however, the characters end up
descending into the dark number mine. The book describes “a vast cavern lit only by a soft,
eerie glow from the great stalactites which hung ominously from the ceiling. Passages and
corridors honeycombed the walls and wound their way from floor to ceiling, up and down the
sides of the cave” (Juster 178).

The company leaves Digitopolis for the foreboding wasteland of the Mountains of
Ignorance. When the company enters the Mountains of Ignorance, Milo remarks: “So this is
the Land of Ignorance. It’s so dark. I can hardly see a thing” (Nanus 54). Adding to
adjectives such as dizzying, sheer, brutal, limitless, and bottomless to describe the peaks and
caverns, Juster’s original description of the mountain and its surroundings states: “The higher
they went, the darker it became, though it wasn’t the darkness of night, but rather more like a
mixture of lurking shadows and evil intentions which oozed from the slimy moss-covered
cliffs and blotted out the light. A cruel wind shrieked through the rocks and the air was thick
and heavy, as if it had been used several times before” (Juster 203).

2. Date

No set date is given; the implication is present day. “The time now? Oh, a little after
four,” the Clock says at the beginning of the play (Nanus 9). Nanus also gives the action of
the play an immediate feel by describing Milo in the present tense: “And then of course there
is Milo. Who never knows what to do with himself – not just sometimes but always” (10).

Once in the Land of Wisdom, the date becomes irrelevant as time operates differently there;
upon returning home Milo discovers that “I’ve only been gone for an hour!” (65).
Season is not implicated for the real world in the play either. Once in the Land of Wisdom, the text does rule out winter—in Wisdom, Milo is driving around without a coat and it begins to rain on the Whether man (Nanus 13), which our audience would not expect it to do in winter—although that does not necessarily mean anything to the world of Milo’s bedroom.

It is not indicated by the play, but in the book Milo walks home from school right before he discovers the Tollbooth (Norton 9). This would indicate that the play takes place sometime during the school year.

3. Economic Environment

The play gives little indication of Milo’s economic status other than to indicate that he is not poor. He has books, games, TV, and a working toy car but is uninterested by them (Nanus 10). The book indicates that Milo is from a middle to upper-middle class family, as evidenced by the description of the aforementioned toys in Milo’s bedroom: “The books that were too much trouble to read, the tools he’d never learned to use, the small electric automobile he hadn’t driven in months— or was it years?— and the hundreds of other games and toys, and bats and balls, and bits and pieces scattered around him” (Norton 11). The amount of toys, and his indifference to them, indicates an economically stable family where Milo has the opportunity to be bored. Chores are not referenced, Milo does not appear to have a job, and no siblings are mentioned.

4. Political Environment

The play indicates little about the political environment of the outside world. The Land of Wisdom, however, is divided into smaller areas, and the two largest cities, Dictionopolis and Digitopolis, are ruled by fraternal kings. King Azaz, ruler of Dictionopolis,
and The Mathemagician, ruler of Digitopolis, are in a bitter feud over the relative importance of words and numbers; the brothers are so consumed by their rivalry that they have refused to agree on anything ever again. Disputes between the brothers used to be mediated by two sisters, Princess Rhyme and Princess Reason.

Each monarchy is accepted and unchallenged by its denizens in both the play and the book—even Milo seems unsurprised to find a monarchy rather than a democratic government. The kings seem to genuinely care about their people and kingdoms and are very human in their insecurities and foibles; the respect for the kings is far from fanatical, though. Citizens of Dictionopolis are perfectly content to leave the king’s banquet moments before his speech to go eat dinner somewhere else. King Azaz is chagrined but his solution is to order everyone to eat before they come. It is very clear that he rules by the consent of his people.

The deep ideological feud between the two kings trickles down into their subjects, as illustrated by the Dodecahedron’s rant: “NOT IMPORTANT! Could you have tea for two without the 2? Or three blind mice without the 3? And how would you sail the seven seas without the seven?” (Nanus 43). Both groups are convinced of the superiority of their nation’s chief export.

5. Social Environment

Nanus tries very hard to make Milo an “EveryChild” and his home an “EveryWhere.” As such, his home environment is vague at best. The book indicates little more than to infer Milo’s less-than-involved parents: “And since no one bothered to explain otherwise, he regarded the process of seeking knowledge as the greatest waste of time of all [emphasis added]” (Juster 9). Milo’s parents are never seen, never referenced, and even when Milo
returns from his long adventure, he simply and generally states: “I hope no one’s been worried [...] I’ve never been away this long before” (Juster 253). This seems to point to an autonomous existence. As such, the mores at home are primarily Milo’s; he is unimpressed with everything, finding “almost everything to be a waste of time” (9)—especially learning—and seems a little bit spoiled.

In the Lands Beyond, most social customs vary with location—with the exception of the treatment of women. Women hold no positions of authority and are rarely seen except when imprisoned. In the play and the book, the princesses Rhyme and Reason were the mediators and arbitrators between the kingdoms. When they gave a very wise and fair decree claiming that words and numbers were equal in worth, the kings grew so angry that the princesses were banished to the Castle in the Air (Nanus 19). In the book, Faintly Macabre was the Official Which in Dictionopolis, in charge of choosing which words were appropriate to be used when. When she grew too miserly and chose too few words, the economy of Dictionopolis was negatively impacted and she was imprisoned. She has learned her lesson and cautions Milo about the dangers of using too many or too few words (Juster 68). In the Lands Beyond, women are respected for their wisdom but locked up for exercising it. They are not main characters, but they represent pinnacles of wisdom to be achieved: Aunt Faintly is the first wise person Milo meets in Dictionopolis, and his quest ends when he finds the princesses in the Castle in the Air—the pedestal on which they have been confined. Nanus and Juster seem to be saying that women are a great source of wisdom, that we must seek them out, and that removing them from the equation or ignoring their opinion leads to the disruption of everything we value—as the princesses’ banishment is pointed to as the chief cause of all problems in the kingdom; by removing Aunt Faintly from
the story, Nanus is reinforcing this idea, and, in the play, the princesses are the only female characters—and the wisest overall.

Other than its treatment of women, the social mores of the Lands Beyond vary by location. In the Doldrums, to do nothing all day, to expend as little energy as possible, and to refrain from thinking or laughing are expected and legal; the Watchdog, Tock, shocks and horrifies them because he refuses to follow these rules.

The denizens of Dictionopolis are enamored with words, the more the better. In the book, the story of Faintly Macabre illumines the current need in the city to use as many words as possible—necessary or not. Aunt Faintly’s story is one of many examples of disorder caused by the banishment of Rhyme and Reason: “ [...] and that explains why today people use as many words as they can and think themselves very wise for doing so. For always remember that while it is wrong to use too few, it is often far worse to use too many” (Juster 68). The Ministers are exceptionally bad about this tendency:

MILO. Do all those words mean the same thing?

MINISTER 1. Of course.

MINISTER 2. Certainly.

MINISTER 3. Precisely.

MINISTER 4. Exactly.

MINISTER 5. Yes.

MILO. Then why don’t you use just one? Wouldn’t that make a lot more sense?

MINISTER 1. Nonsense!

MINISTER 2. Ridiculous!
MINISTER 1. We’re not interested in making sense. It’s not our job.
MINISTER 2. Besides, one word is as good as another, so why not use them all?
MINISTER 3. Then you don’t have to choose which one is right.
MINISTER 4. Besides, if one is right, then ten are ten times as right. (Nanus 26)

On the other end of the spectrum, Digitopolis is a very logical, efficient place ruled by the Mathemagician. Their chief export is numbers from the number mines; The Dodecahedron exclaims: “Why numbers are the most beautiful and valuable things in the world” (Nanus 43).

Citizens of Digitopolis are so efficient that it affects even their meals. The Mathemagician explains: “Here in Digitopolis, we have our meals when we’re full and eat until we’re hungry. That way, when you don’t have anything at all, you have more than enough. It’s a very economical system” (Nanus 46). Despite their dissimilarities, the people of both Digitopolis and Dictionopolis value wisdom and admit that things were better when Rhyme and Reason were free.

The demons that live in the Mountains of Ignorance exhibit values opposite to those of the two cities: ignorance is a virtue, deception a valued tactic, inaction a goal. While the inhabitants of the Doldrums advocate lethargy, they are not the evil force of Ignorance that the demons are. The demons try to derail, distract, and deceive Milo and his friends to
prevent the rescue of Rhyme and Reason. One demon exclaims: “I am the Terrible Trivium, demon of petty tasks and worthless jobs, ogre of wasted effort and monster of habit […] Don’t try to leave, there’s so much to do, and you still have 837 years to go on the first job” (Nanus 56). The demons do everything in their power to stop Milo from succeeding, and are halted only by the combined armies of Wisdom.

6. Religious Environment

Formal religion is not discussed by the play or the book, but there are systems of belief inherent in both. The primary duality of the land is that of Wisdom vs. Ignorance, with the citizens of Wisdom on one side and the demons of Ignorance on the other. Normally this would be a political or social dichotomy, but Ignorance’s minions as demons elevate it to a religious conflict. Many citizens of Wisdom wish for the “return of Rhyme and Reason” which they believe will cure the nation’s ills. It is this quest Milo eventually undertakes.

There is also a conflict over the relative importance of parts of Wisdom, much like the argument between two splinter groups of the same religion. King Azaz and his citizens believe in the superiority of words, while the Mathemagician and his subjects believe in the primacy of numbers. Both men revere Wisdom, but differ in how—just as two Christian groups might differ over the importance of confession. It is the return of Rhyme and Reason that unifies the groups again and balance is restored.

The importance of Wisdom in the culture is unsurprising given the religious background of both authors. Norton Juster and Susan Nanus are both Jewish (“Norton Juster Bio”), a faith that puts strong emphasis on education and scholarship. It makes sense that they would structure a fantasy world where learning is of prime importance.

**Previous Action:**
• “I know a girl who yawned and missed a whole summer vacation. And what about that caveman who took a nap one afternoon, and work up to find himself completely alone. You see, while he was sleeping, someone had invented the wheel and everyone had moved to the suburbs” (Nanus 10).

• A large package arrived for Milo (10).

• They don’t get many travelers in Expectations (12).

• The Whether Man lost his way years ago (13).

• The Lethargians were going to go on vacation to do nothing (16).

• Dictionopolis “used to be a marvelous place, but ever since Rhyme and Reason left, it hasn’t been the same” (18).

• The princesses used to solve all disputes between the kings, until one day there was a terrible argument (18).

• “And ever since then there has been neither Rhyme nor Reason in this kingdom. Words are misused and numbers are mismanaged. The argument between the two kings has divided everyone and the real value of both words and numbers has been forgotten” (20).

• The Princesses were banished to the Castle in the Air, which is far away and guarded by demons (20).

• The Spelling Bee used to be an ordinary bee but one day realized he would never amount to anything without an education and learned to spell (24).

• The Spelling Bee knows and does not like the Humbug (24).

• People used to like pleasant noises, but then cities were built and everyone needed unpleasant sounds (36).
Dynne’s grandfather was the Dreadful Rauw who perished in the great silence epidemic of 1712 (37).

Dynne heard a beautiful explosion last week (38).

Dynne collected a box of laughter by mistake (39).

It took three miners to dig out the giant 3 (48).

It took three carts to carry the giant 8 out of the mine (49).

Last month, The Mathemagician sent Azaz a letter written in numbers to which he never responded (50).

The kings have never agreed on anything since the banishment (51).

**Polar Attitudes:**

1. Milo

Beginning: “Well, it doesn’t matter anyway” (Nanus 11).

End: “But there’s so much to learn!” (65).

Milo begins the show bored, apathetic, and totally uninterested in everything. He has “plenty of time” and nothing to do with it (11). After his adventure, he is enthusiastic, excited, and desperate to learn more, saying: “Oh, oh, I hope they don’t start all over again. Because I don’t think I’ll have much time in the near future to help them out” (65). Milo now cares about the world around him, about learning, and about making every minute count.

2. Tock

Beginning: “You’ve got to help yourself” (Nanus 17).

End: “We’ll soon find out. Ready or not, here we go!” (62).

Tock begins the show gruff and independent. He yells at Milo for “KILLING TIME!” (9) and tells Milo he must help himself. By the end of the show Tock is a member of the
team, willing to support the others and help to achieve their goals. He “flies” everyone down from the Castle in the Air at Milo’s suggestion—something he would not have done at the beginning.

3. Humbug

Beginning: “BALDERDASH!” (Nanus 24).

End: “Do you mean [...] Oh, I think I need to sit down” (64).

The Humbug starts the show as an arrogant fool who contradicts anyone below him and agrees with anyone of higher station. He is brash, opinionated, and convinced of his intellectual superiority. The company’s travels—and the discovery that their mission was impossible—shakes up the Humbug and opens his eyes to the idea that maybe he does not know everything.

4. King Azaz

Beginning: “Everyone knows that words are more important than numbers any day of the week” (Nanus 18).

End: “Now, don’t tell me you think numbers are as important as words?” (65).

Azaz begins the show in the flashback arguing with The Mathemagician about words vs. numbers. After reaching an accord, coming jointly to Milo’s rescue, and congratulating him on his impossible victory, he goes right back into the argument. Azaz may be more amenable to compromise, but his feud with his brother runs deep.

5: Mathemagician

Beginning: “Face it Azaz. It’s numbers that count” (Nanus 19).

End: “Is that so? Why I’ll have you know [...]” (65).
The Mathemagician makes a journey similar to his brother’s. He begins arguing the superiority of numbers, comes around to a compromise, and ends up arguing again at the end.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Analysis of Dialogue

Choice of Words:

One of the early complaints about *The Phantom Tollbooth* as a book was the inclusion of difficult vocabulary: it is “definitely for the sophisticated, special reader,” opinioned one early review (Mathes 84). At the time, it was expected practice to limit the language of a children’s book to a list of words known by the particular age group. Children were never supposed to encounter in a book a term that they did not already know. Juster challenged that.

Susan Nanus took most of the dialogue and stage directions for the play directly from the book—and kept the challenging vocabulary in place. Words like *discord, hubbub, clamor, chaotic, fiends, magnitude*, and even the *dodecahedron* are used in conversation in the play, but are hardly normal children’s fare. One of the word vendors yells, “Enrich your vocabulary and expand your speech with such elegant items as ‘quagmire,’ ‘flabbergast,’ or ‘upholstery’” (Nanus 22). Juster does not seem to mind challenging kids—and kids love it. The book is now fifty years old and still printed, loved, and handed down.

Choice of Phrases:

The phrase “Rhyme and Reason” appears over and over again in the script. A reference to Princess Rhyme and Princess Reason, it is also a reference to sense and wisdom lacking in the kingdom since the two were banished. It is a play on our usual use of the phrase, but is always capitalized to indicate a reference to the princesses.

Sentence Structure:

The sentence structure in *Phantom Tollbooth* is complex and formal—and wordier than usual for a children’s play. Again, because the script began as a book, the dialogue is
... an effortless climb up a two thousand foot stairway without railings in a high wind at night to the Castle-in-the-Air. After a pleasant chat with the Princesses, all that remains is a leisurely ride back through those chaotic crags where the frightening fiends have sworn to tear any intruder from limb to limb and devour him down to his belt buckle. And finally after doing all that, a triumphal parade! (Nanus 32)

The Humbug’s fear, contrasted with his desire to make Azaz happy, creates a wonderfully conflicted speech full of dreadful imagery.

Juster—and, by extension, Nanus—use words to paint vivid pictures. One of the benefits of this play being birthed from a book is that the imagery is clear, specific, and intense. There is a rich, sensory exploration in the pages that has happily translated to the script.

**Language Peculiarities:**

Juster has an inordinate fondness for puns. His father was a terrible punster (Homing 41), and punning is evident in many of Juster’s works, including *The Dot and the Line: A Romance in Lower Mathematics*, and *Otter Nonsense*, which is an entire book of animal puns. *Phantom Tollbooth* is rife with puns and features wordplay from start to finish.

Characters like The Spelling Bee, a bee who spells, and The Humbug, a bug with an attitude reminiscent of W.C. Fields’ (Homing 40-41), are walking puns. The Everpresent Wordsnatcher, who deliberately misinterprets everything Milo says, uses puns against the party. The Awful Dynne, an awful din, is a creature from cacophony.

The wordplay in the script is not limited to character names and behaviors; everything in the story is a play on language or logic. The Land of Expectations is “the place you must
always go before you get to where you are going” and is where Milo first travels before he heads off on the rest of his adventure (Nanus 13). The Doldrums are inhabited by The Lethargians, whose inactivity borders on atrophy. The word market in Dictionopolis sells words and even letters for use, and each letter tastes exactly like one would imagine: I is icy, C is crunchy, X is terrible tasting—which is why hardly anyone ever uses it (22). Numbers in Digitopolis are mined, and the broken ones are used for fractions (45). Subtraction stew makes the feaster hungrier the more he or she eats, so that “when you don’t have anything at all, you have more than enough” (46). Virtually every line and concept in the play is a pun, joke, or play on words.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Unit Titles and Dramatic Action

Unit 1: “Tick Tock”
- Clock confides in audience

Unit 2: “Milo and the Tollbooth”
- Clock judges Milo
- Milo rejects Voice
- Voice sells to Milo
- Milo accepts Voice

Unit 3: “Welcome to Expectations!”
- Whether astonishes Milo
- Milo humors Whether

Unit 4: “The Doldrums”
- Lethargarians chastise Milo
- Milo rebuffs Lethargarians
- Lethargarians seduce Milo

Unit 5: “Wake up!”
- Tock challenges Milo
- Milo appeases Tock

Unit 6: “Flashback”
- Azaz confides in audience
- Mathemagician attacks Azaz
- Azaz and Mathemagician reject each other
- Azaz and Mathemagician cajole audience
Unit 7: “The Decision”

- Rhyme and Reason reconcile Azaz and Mathemagician
- Azaz and Mathemagician reject Rhyme and Reason

Unit 8: “No Fair!”

- Azaz and Mathemagician renounce Rhyme and Reason
- Rhyme and Reason mourn Azaz and Mathemagician

Unit 9: “Why Not?”

- Tock instructs Milo
- Milo prompts Tock
- Gatekeeper challenges Milo
- Milo denies Gatekeeper
- Gatekeeper adorns Milo
- Milo thanks Gatekeeper

Unit 10: “Words for Sale!”

- Merchants pitch Milo and Tock
- Milo praises Merchants
- Tock diminishes Merchants

Unit 11: “Buzz Buzz”

- Spelling Bee startles Milo
- Milo and Tock push Bee
- Bee mollifies Milo
- Milo challenges Bee
- Bee entertains crowd
• Crowd applauds Bee

Unit 12: “Bullies”
  • Humbug smashes Spelling Bee
  • Bee scorns Humbug
  • Humbug mesmerizes Milo
  • Bee denounces Humbug
  • Humbug threatens Bee

Unit 13: “Minister, Duke, Count, oh my!”
  • Ministers greet Milo
  • Milo accuses Ministers
  • Ministers flabbergast Milo
  • Bee and Humbug irritate each other

Unit 14: “Royal Protocol”
  • Page announces Azaz
  • Azaz welcomes all
  • Milo flatters Azaz
  • Ministers mock Milo
  • Azaz smashes Ministers

Unit 15: “Who are you?”
  • Azaz exhorts Milo
  • Milo reassures Azaz
  • Azaz disparages Milo

Unit 16: “... the banquet eats you!”
• Azaz honors Milo
• Milo obliges Azaz
• All spurn Milo
• Milo petitions All
• All upstage Milo
• Ministers encourage Milo
• Azaz treats All
• Milo probes Azaz
• All disregard Azaz.
• Azaz surrenders to All

Unit 17: “The Plan”
• Azaz commands All
• All disobey Azaz
• Milo supports Azaz
• Azaz mourns
• Humbug flatters Milo and Azaz
• Milo and Azaz trap Humbug
• Humbug steers Milo and Azaz
• Azaz delegates Milo and Tock
• Milo and Tock protest Azaz
• Azaz awards Milo
• Milo regrets Azaz
• Azaz nominates Humbug
• Humbug rejects Azaz
• Azaz flatters Humbug
• Humbug thanks Azaz
• Party (Milo, Tock, and Humbug) depart Azaz

Unit 18: “Anticipation”
• Azaz blesses party
• Milo begs Party
• Tock informs Party
• Humbug warns Party
The Phantom Tollbooth: Mood

Mood Adjectives and Images:

Adjectives are listed in the following order: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

- Unit 1: “Tick Tock”
  
dim, ticking, crisp, weak lemonade, smooth
  
  like a metronome in a cold room

- Unit 2: “Milo and the Tollbooth”
  
  flashing, bells, musty, stale popcorn, cardboard
  
  like an old game show

- Unit 3: “Welcome to Expectations!”
  
sunny, laughter, cut grass, spring water, warm
  
  like a bright summer day

- Unit 4: “The Doldrums”
  
  gray, yawn, dusty, bland, sticky
  
  like the underside of a bed on a Sunday afternoon

- Unit 5: “Wake up!”
  
dawn, chugging train, fresh breeze, mint, leather
  
  like a horse cart heading to town

- Unit 6: “Flashback”
  
  brilliant, cheering, dirt, salty, shoving
  
  like a pep rally

- Unit 7: “The Decision”
  
pastel, chimes, floral, sweet, silken
spotlight, echoing, electric, sour, crackling
like an underground interrogation

- Unit 16: “... the banquet eats you!”
bright, clanging, delicious, cardboard, velvet
like a delicious plastic meal

- Unit 17: “The Plan”
translucent, snapping, tea, blueberries, icy
like a game of ping pong with unknown rules

- Unit 18: “Anticipation”
darkness, jaws theme, pine, sour, prickly
like a scene from a horror movie
The Phantom Tollbooth: Unit Tempos

- Unit 1: “Tick Tock”—Adagio, slow and stately
- Unit 2: “Milo and the Tollbooth”—Andante, walking pace
- Unit 3: “Welcome to Expectations!”—Vivacissimo, very fast and lively
- Unit 4: “The Doldrums”—Larghissimo, very slow
- Unit 5: “Wake up!”—Accelerando, gradually accelerating
- Unit 6: “Flashback”—Moderato, medium speed
- Unit 7: “The Decision”—Andante, walking pace
- Unit 8: “No Fair!”—Allegretto, medium fast
- Unit 9: “Why Not?”—Allegro, quickly
- Unit 10: “Words for Sale!”—Moderato, medium
- Unit 11: “Buzz Buzz”—Vivace, lively and fast
- Unit 12: “Bullies”—Allegro, quickly
- Unit 13: “Minister, Duke, Count, oh my!”—Vivace, lively and fast
- Unit 14: “Royal Protocol”—Allegretto, medium fast
- Unit 15: “Who are you?”—Moderato, medium
- Unit 16: “... the banquet eats you!”—Andante, walking pace
- Unit 17: “The Plan”—Allegretto to Presto, medium fast to very fast
- Unit 18: “Anticipation”—Vivace, lively and fast
The Phantom Tollbooth: Character Analysis

**Milo:**

1. Desire

Milo is tired of being bored wants to discover something exciting. The problem is, at the beginning of the play, he does not believe that anything worthwhile exists.

2. Will

Milo has a strong will. He is able to petition the kings and question The Terrible Trivium—despite pressure to do neither. He continually pushes forward: “We can’t stop now…” (Nanus 63).

3. Moral Stance

Milo is a good kid: he is mostly honest, polite, and generally tries to do the right thing. He offers to help and tries to keep people from fighting.

4. Decorum

Milo is a kid. Early drafts of the book place him at nine or ten, but his age was removed later to make him less specific and to create a character with whom kids can easily identify (Marcus 105). There is little in the play that describes Milo’s physicality, but Feiffer’s famous illustrations paint a clear picture for lovers of the book: Milo is a skinny, awkward kid with sandy, stringy hair. He walks with a slouch, hands in his pockets, and takes up as little space as possible (Juster 10). Later in the show, as his character blooms, he stands up straighter, walks with more confidence, and takes up more space (251, 256).

5. Summary Adjectives

Milo is young, awkward, polite, curious, and helpful.

**Tock:**
1. Desire

Tock wants to protect Milo.

2. Will

Tock is strong-willed and practical.

3. Moral Stance

Tock is structured, moral, practical, and aloof. In the commonly used alignment chart, designed by Gary Gygax, Tock could be characterized as “lawful good” and is the voice of reason and wisdom on Milo’s journey. According to Gygax, “Creatures of lawful good alignment view the cosmos with varying degrees of lawfulness or desire for good. They are convinced that order and law are absolutely necessary to assure good, and that good is best defined as whatever brings the most benefit to the greater number of decent, thinking creatures and the least woe to the rest” (23).

4. Decorum

Tock is introduced as the Watchdog and is very authoritative and bossy at first. He is described in the stage directions—which are from the book—as a “large dog with the head, feet, and tail of a dog, and the body of a clock, having the same face as the character THE CLOCK” (Nanus 16). The clock is described in the book as a loudly ticking alarm clock (Juster 29). Tock moves like a natural dog, and for all his severity, loves to ride in cars. Tock loosens up considerably over the course of the journey.

5. Summary Adjectives

Tock is honest, practical, wise, and authoritative.

The Humbug:

1. Desire
The Humbug wants everyone to respect him but is unwilling to do what is really necessary for that to happen. He tries to impress everyone and often ends up making enemies instead. It is only by accident in the play that he ends up a hero.

2. Will

The Humbug is very weak willed. He is the quintessential sycophant and will go along with whatever his superiors think. He is cowardly, impulsive, and easily flattered.

3. Moral Stance

The Humbug is morally neutral. He is not good or bad—he just is. He will lie to improve his own position, and sees little point in helping others, but he does not try to hurt them either.

4. Decorum

Juster and Feiffer both have described the Humbug as W.C. Fields (Horning 401-41). He enters the scene yelling “BALDERDASH!” at the top of his lungs, severely irritating The Spelling Bee. The Bee introduces him to Milo, saying, “This is the Humbug. You can’t trust a word he says,” and later calls him an imposter. The stage directions have him in “a lavish coat, striped pants, checked vest, spats, and a derby hat,” and carrying a cane (Nanus 24). He brags about his family history, lies about knowing the king, and tries to ingratiate himself to Milo. In addition to what is in the script, in the book the Bee calls him “‘a very dislikable fellow’” and a fraud (Juster 54).

5. Summary Adjectives

The Humbug is cowardly, lazy, arrogant, malleable, and blustering.

**King Azaz the Unabridged:**

1. Desire
Azaz wants his kingdom to prosper. His argument with his brother gets in the way—and he knows it—but is often unable to stop himself.

2. Will

Azaz has a strong personality and tries to command, but he often gives up. He is frustrated that everyone leaves the banquet but does little about it. He seems unable to restrain himself when it comes to arguing with his brother.

3. Moral Stance

Azaz is a good man and a good king. He genuinely wants what is best for his kingdom and his people. He is gruff but caring. He is the first to set Milo on his way, and he even refuses to tell Milo the one thing that would keep him from going (that the rescue is impossible).

4. Decorum

Azaz is a gentleman with rough edges. He presides over a fine banquet, has impeccable manners, and is chagrined when everyone leaves right before his speech. He orders his dinner in French and seems refined. However, he also shouts at his ministers, is abrupt with Milo, and grows angry at the mention of numbers. The book describes the king’s “great bulk” and that “He was the largest man Milo had ever seen, with a great stomach, large piercing eyes, a gray beard that reached to his waist, and a silver signet ring on the little finger of his left hand. He also wore a small crown and a robe with the letters of the alphabet beautifully embroidered all over it” (Juster 82). Feiffer’s illustration shows a large man with a great beard and moustache, in an ermine trimmed robe and hose, sitting on his throne and leaning on a fancy cane (83).

5. Summary Adjectives
Azaz is kingly, declarative, gentle, argumentative, and cultured.

**The Mathemagician:**

1. Desire

   The Mathemagician wants everyone to value numbers. He is perplexed and angry when others do not understand, and like his brother, he has a difficult time seeing other points of view. Unlike his brother—who values the kingdom over the words—to The Mathemagician, the numbers come first.

2. Will

   The Mathemagician is strong-willed to the point of being stubborn. Once he makes a decision he refuses to budge—unless beaten with logic.

3. Moral Stance

   He is a good king but flawed in his stubbornness and arrogance. He what he thinks is best for the kingdom and thinks numbers can solve any problem.

4. Decorum

   The play states that The Mathemagician carries a large magic staff, and the stage directions indicate that it looks like a giant pencil. The book adds that he is “dressed in a long flowing robe covered entirely with complex mathematical equations and a tall pointed cap that [makes] him look very wise” (Juster 179). Feiffer’s illustration shows him with crows’ feet and jowls, a beard, and sandals that show his toes (Juster 183). He is exactly what one would think of as a mixture of magic and math. One gets the impression that The Mathemagician would be very comfortable in Birkenstocks. His voice goes from a thundering roar to a whisper, and there is the impression of great height. He is imposing, proud, and fills the room with his presence.
5. Summary Adjectives

The Mathemagician is logical, mysterious, unhinged, passionate, and critical.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Previous Reviews

When The Phantom Tollbooth, by Norton Juster, was first published in 1961, reviews of the book were split. Some extol its delightfulness, likening it to other children’s classics, lauding it as a charming and joyful tome. Critics, such as Emily Maxwell, compare the book to Alice in Wonderland and Pilgrim’s Progress. Maxwell adds in her review in The New Yorker: “I am holding in my hands a newborn classic” and that she finds the book “lucid, humorous, full of warmth and real invention” (222). Ann McGovern’s often-quoted critique in The New York Times is a rousing endorsement; she begins by stating: “Most books advertised for ‘readers of all ages’ fail to keep their promise. But Norton Juster’s amazing fantasy has something wonderful for anybody old enough to relish the allegorical wisdom of Alice in Wonderland and the pointed whimsy of The Wizard of Oz” (35).

Other reviewers, however, found the book excessively wordy and too immersed with its own cleverness to appeal to children. Miriam Mathes opines, “The ironies, the subtle play on words will be completely lost on all but the most precocious children” (84). There were concerns that the book was geared more for adults than for children: the vocabulary and puns were too difficult, too mature for the intended audience. Norton recalls:

When the book first came out in the early ’60s, the revealed wisdom was that you could not give kids anything to read beyond what they knew already. There were vocabulary lists. Lord help you if you put words in a book for ages 6 to 8, or 8 to 10 that they felt a child of that age couldn’t understand. They also thought that fantasy was very bad for children because it disoriented them. It’s changed somewhat for the better. The publishers told me that they
had great misgivings because they thought that the book was too far beyond children. (Miller)

McGovern addresses this concern in her review: "To those who might wonder whether children will grasp Mr. Juster’s subtleties, I can only quote one well-read 11-year-old who reported it ‘the cleverest book I’ve ever read.’ Youngsters who drive through the tollbooth with Milo will probably, in the midst of their laughter, digest some important truth of life. And so will parents" (35).

Luckily, McGovern was right and, five decades later, reviews for the fiftieth anniversary edition are glowing. Phantom Tollbooth “still holds up as a classic adventure” (“Literature Links” 18), and the National Education Association lists it as one of “Teachers’ Top 100 Books For Children” (“Teachers’ Top 100 Books For Children”), while Scholastic lists it in their “100 Greatest Books for Kids” (“100 Greatest Books for Kids”). Michael Chabon, in his introduction to the new edition, reprinted in The New York Review of Books, describes his long love affair with Phantom Tollbooth; he writes, “The Phantom Tollbooth understood me” and that the book helped him develop his “crush on English”: “it was not just the puns and wordplay that gave me a bad case of loving English. It was the words themselves: the vocabulary of the book.” The very words and idioms denounced by early reviewers are a large part of what endears The Phantom Tollbooth to its readers—and it offers something different to each age group. Said Juster in an interview:

I’ll get a letter from say a kid who’s 9-years-old, and he’ll talk to me about the story and mention some of his favorite parts, or whatever. And then five or six years later I’ll get a letter that says, "I wrote you when I was 9. I reread the book." And they’ll talk to me about a whole different book, normally. But now
they've got a lot more of the words right. A lot more of the fun kind of crazy 
references—things that go on in there. But I've gotten a few letters where 
someone in college writes to me. And it's very exciting when that happens 
[....] Some kids are very attuned to word play and puns and things like that, so 
they get a lot of it early on. Other kids don't, and they just go with the story. 
And that's fine too. There is no one way you should ever be able to read 
anything. (Stone)

*Tollbooth* is a different book to each different reader. Juster’s refusal to talk down to 
children, and his joy in the English language, contribute to an unassuming—but terrific—
classic. Juster recalls a conversation with a child, which began with the question: “‘Did you 
know that this book would be around 40 years after you wrote it?’ And I said to him in a kind 
of facetious way, ‘I didn't know it was going to be around 40 minutes after I wrote it.’ And 
that's really true. It didn't occur to me” (Stone). That forty minutes has stretched out to over 
fifty years—with no end in sight.

Susan Nanus’s stage adaptation of *Phantom Tollbooth* has been performed around the 
country for over thirty years, to generally positive reviews. Most articles focus on the fun 
and the cuteness and lack much serious feedback. What criticisms exist are typical of 
children’s theatre, or echo those of the early book reviews: the play is wordy and gets bogged 
down in the puns and jokes. The *Weekly Volcano* reviewed a production last year: “It’s an 
all-kids show, with the pros and cons that generally implies. The staging suffers from a 
sameness of tone, but it benefits from the irresistibly cute factor of tykes hamming it up for 
Mom and Dad” (Carvajal). Productions combat the wordiness with a fast pace and Marx 
Brothers-like energy. The *Columbus Dispatch* calls it “one nutty word play” and advises,
“Children younger than 6 probably won’t catch the puns, homonym humor and literal larceny, but they’ll ride along with the wacky characters, bizarre costumes and frantic pace. Older children and adults will appreciate the language games” (Gilson). Thank you, Juster and Nanus, for your one-size-fits-all production.
Susan Nanus:

Susan Nanus has had several careers over her lifetime. She has worked as a playwright, a screenwriter, an actor, an educator, and as a Rabbi. She earned a Masters in Fine Arts from the Yale School of Drama in 1974 ("Lost Alumni" 73).

- *The Phantom Tollbooth* was written in 1977 (Nanus 2).
- *Five in One Holiday Plays for Jewish Children* was published in 1981 by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations ("Five in One Holiday Plays for Jewish Children").
- *The Survivors*, based on the memoirs of Jack Eisner’s Holocaust experiences, was written and performed on Broadway in 1981. It was panned by critics and closed after eight performances (Simon 44).
- She then moved to the west coast and began working in television. Her production company, Bluestocking Productions, was registered in 1993 ("BLUESTOCKING PRODUCTIONS, INC.").
- She is credited with twelve screenplays, for TV movies including *Harvest of Fire, If These Walls Could Talk, Go Toward the Light*, and *A Child’s Wish* ("Susan Nanus").
- She was nominated for a Humanitas prize for *Heart of a Child* (1994) and won a Writers Guild of America award for *Harvest of Fire* (1996) ("Awards for Susan Nanus").
- She has production credits on five of these screenplays, and acted in one ("Susan Nanus").
• She is studying to become a rabbi at the Academy of Jewish Religion and has done several years of rabbinical internship at temples in the area (“Rabbi Susan Leigh Nanus”).

• She is now the Coordinator of Senior Programs at the Westside Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles, California (“Rabbi Susan Leigh Nanus”).

Nanus’s career outside of television has focused primarily on telling stories for Jewish youth. She worked many years in Jewish education, running a school in New York for eight years, working with several children’s camps, and teaching Hebrew and religious classes on both coasts (“Rabbi Susan Leigh Nanus”). Her Broadway play, The Survivors, is also based on a book, the Holocaust memoirs of Jack Eisner; it was unfortunately panned and only played for eight performances. Years later, her sister, Sasha Nanus, an actor and director, was teaching at a Jewish summer camp and edited the script for the students to perform. Sasha Nanus called her sister and encouraged her to rewrite the play, removing almost all of the adult characters, which led to a much more successful restaging in 1992 at the Hudson Theatre in Hollywood (McCulloh).

Susan Nanus also wrote Five in One Holiday Plays for Jewish Children, collaborated on songs and song recordings for Jewish children with renowned Cantor Jeff Klepper, and wrote a “choose your adventure”-style book titled Mission to World War II - Time Machine book 11 (“Bio”; “Five in One Holiday Plays for Jewish Children”; “Susan Nanus”). While her television career focused on women’s stories, outside of TV, she focused on children and her faith. The Phantom Tollbooth fits the theme of literature for children, and it aligns closely with her spiritual beliefs about Judaism, although not explicitly—like most of her other works. Nanus writes in The Jewish Post & Opinion: “The purpose of each soul while on
earth is twofold. First is to improve the world through the soul’s own particular gift, talent or ability. This means to use what is best within us to help repair what is broken in society, whether that be at home, in our community or across the globe” (Nanus, “Editorial” 2). Milo’s quest to rescue Rhyme and Reason and thereby discover his “gift, talent, or ability” certainly will help to “repair what is broken in society.” Nanus continues:

The second purpose of the soul is to lift itself to a higher spiritual level. What does this mean? Our sages teach us that to be spiritual is:

1. To view the world as an ultimate mystery rather than as a mechanized machine.
2. To view life as meaningful rather than meaningless.
3. To view life as a lesson in gratitude.
4. To acknowledge life’s mysteries, even the questions that have no answers.
5. To trust in the goodness of life and all the potential this implies.
6. To perceive that every person carries within her or him the special signature of God. (Nanus, “Editorial” 2)

Each of these spiritual tasks is echoed in Tollbooth. Milo’s journey can be summed up by these six challenges; his growth can be measured by his success with each. While Tollbooth seems, at first, not to fit Nanus’ repertoire, with deeper inspection it becomes clear that the play is exactly the kind of piece she would write.

**Norton Juster:**

Norton Juster was born on June 2, 1929, in Brooklyn, New York (“Norton Juster Bio”). He grew up in Brooklyn and describes himself as a “schlumpy kid.” Juster continues, “when I started writing The Phantom Tollbooth [...] it was somewhat autobiographical [...]
The first line, ‘There was a boy named Milo who didn’t know what do with himself, not just sometimes, but always,’ was exactly me” (Horning 40).

Juster trained in architecture at University of Pennsylvania and spent a year in England on a Fulbright scholarship. He served in the United States Navy for three years, and then started his own architectural company (“Norton Juster Bio”). His brother was already a successful architect, and the transition from the Navy to the professional business world with so much pressure was a bit disorienting for Juster. His friend, and Tollbooth’s illustrator, Jules Feiffer, states: “[...] it may well be that Milo and his adventures are essentially a fantasy documentary for Norton’s state of mind at the time.” Juster received a Ford Foundation grant to write a children’s book about cities, and while avoiding writing it, found himself penning The Phantom Tollbooth instead. His then roommate, Jules Feiffer, was a cartoonist for the Village Voice and began to do the illustrations for the story. The two artists shared ideas back and forth until the illustrations influenced the story as much as the story influenced the drawings (Horning 40-41).

Norton never did write the book on cities, but he did write a number of other children’s books including The Dot and the Line; a Romance in Lower Mathematics and Otter Nonsense. Hello, Goodbye Window is a book about his wife and granddaughter, for which he won a Caldecott medal. He also won a National Academy of Arts and Sciences award for outstanding achievement and a Guggenheim fellowship (Johnson). He and Feiffer collaborated again in 2010 on The Odious Ogre, almost fifty years after Tollbooth. His books are frequently full of the puns and wordplay seen in Tollbooth, and his love for language comes through in every text. Juster believes that he inherited his passion for puns from his father: “My father was a great punster and loved wordplay” (Horning 41). The
fiftieth anniversary edition of *The Phantom Tollbooth* was met with much celebration and a new edition.

Juster continued his architectural work and was a professor of design at Hampshire College, in Amherst, Massachusetts. Juster retired from design and teaching but still writes, living in Amherst with his wife, Jeanne (Johnson). He collaborated with Sheldon Harnick (*Fiddler on the Roof*) and composer Arnold Black on a recent musical version of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, which premiered at the Kennedy Center in 2007 ("MTI: The Phantom Tollbooth"; "Phantom Tollbooth"). Throughout all of his success, Juster is still best known for Milo’s adventures through the tollbooth.
**The Phantom Tollbooth: Student Learning Goals**

1. **Self-Discipline and Commitment:** Students will learn to dedicate themselves to a project and follow through. They will attend rehearsals and meetings when required, learn their lines or cues, produce design renderings and materials when due, and understand the commitment they have made to the production and to each other.

2. **Appreciation for Theatre:** Many students have never seen a live play before. Students involved in the play will learn about the parts of the theater, the roles available, and the production process. Students will have fun and learn that theatre is an enjoyable activity in which to participate and to watch.

3. **Confidence:** Many of these students have never acted or designed before. Orchestrating a successful artistic endeavor helps students to learn confidence in themselves and their talents and abilities. Students will demonstrate more poise when speaking in front of others, will contribute their own ideas, and will support each other.

4. **Acting and/or Technical Skill:** Students acting in the production will improve their acting skills, including: projection, diction, and awareness of breath, levels, and stage position. Students involved in the technical side of the production will develop the skills appropriate to their position, including: calling or performing cues, creating renderings, communicating a design, using the principles and elements of design, or building sets and costumes.

5. **Puppetry:** This production will include puppetry. Students will learn to build and operate several types of puppets.
Auditions for *Phantom Tollbooth* were held Wednesday and Thursday. Students could attend either day with callbacks following on Friday. Auditions at Ben Eielson have two parts: in the first segment, the students line up and one by one go to center stage, introduce themselves, and give us one interesting fact about themselves. It is amazing how much you can tell about a performer from a five second introduction. My stage manager takes their pictures as they come off stage, which is useful for casting and for later publicity. Then students are encouraged to join groups, usually of two or three, and pick a scene to read from the sides provided. Kids can go out in the hallway to practice the piece a few times before coming in to read. I will frequently make students switch roles half way through the scene. As people come down from their first scene, I assign them to new groups and new scenes.

This time I tried to have everyone read the Everpresent Wordsnatcher scene. The numbers didn’t work out quite perfectly, so we had a couple of other things as well. Turnout was good; over thirty students showed up. There were many of the usual suspects, several repeats back from *Radium Girls* (which I was happy to see), and a good selection of new kids.

When I picked this show several years ago, I was worried about finding a Milo. Well, we have a few potential Milos. Who knew? There are three boys and three girls who could do the role. I will likely go with a boy, as it works better with my feminist thoughts on the play, and it is more true to the book.

Josh was in *Radium Girls*. He had a hard time learning his lines (read: not off book when he was supposed to be) and has a speech issue, but at the end of *Radium Girls* he really
stepped up and we got some wonderfully real and in-the-moment acting from him, particularly in the romance scenes. (He was playing Grace’s boyfriend and Grace, was now being played by 12th grade Kenzie after the original dropped the show. It was awkward, but he handled it well.)

Matt was Jojo in *Seussical Jr*, but didn’t audition in the fall so he could play sports. He’s a nice kid, learns his lines on time, and is eager to please. Maybe he’s a little too eager. The problem is that I don’t know if he is dynamic enough to watch through the entire show. This show is a little like *Alice in Wonderland* and Alice needs to be strong; she needs to carry the show. I’m not sure Matt can do that.

Other options include Colton, who is new to us, and three girls. Colton is young, very inexperienced, and not natural. He’ll be great in a larger role next year. Jayden will be a perfect princess along with Hailey, Lydzie is cute but I’m thinking of her for Humbug, and Brianna is wonderful but I’ve never worked with her before and I’m nervous using a newbie on my thesis.

Jayden and Hailey read together as the princesses and blew everybody away. They even look alike, and managed to read in unison beautifully. I think we have a winner.

Mathemagician and Azaz are not going to be guys. That’s going to mess with my feminist perspective (men seeking female wisdom, nothing goes right until females return, females imprisoned in a phallic tower, etc.). I just don’t have enough men to pull it off. I was hoping Missy and Josh’s older brother would audition, but he’s too busy with cheerleading (he’s the mascot), JROTC, and graduating. I had five high school guys audition but three of them don’t have grades. Grrrr. The two left just don’t work for either king. I think it is more important that the actor fit the role and have the skills than what gender they are. I will have
them played as guys, but I’m not going to stress it. Paloma (PJ) and Kristen are both really good in the roles, and a bonus is they look alike. PJ is quirky enough for the Mathemagician, and Kristen has the regal bearing and integrity I see in Azaz. (Note: I’m adding this later-just found out/realized that Kristen is the one that’s good at math and PJ is the English Nerd. Both girls are laughing that I cross-cast them.)

So that’s Milo, the kings, princesses, who’s left? I’d like to cast JD as the Humbug. I think he’d be hysterical, but he was very honest on his audition form, which I appreciate, and said that drama comes after DECA and his weekly Magic, the Gathering game. He’s a senior, and although he’s been in class he’s never done a show before. I get the impression that he doesn’t really get the commitment he’s making, and I’m not sure I can count on him. He would be a really funny Gatekeeper. Lyndzie, who had a tiny role in Radium, really shined at auditions and I think she may end up Humbug. It’s funny to have Humbug shorter than Milo.

Other deliberations: Tock isn’t really a question. Everybody saw Kenzie at auditions and immediately identified her as Tock, and she’s the only one I even asked to read the opening monologue. I can’t ever tell Kindall this but if she wasn’t stage-managing I’d have considered her for Tock. Kenzie and Josh have better chemistry, though, and have worked together before.

Spencer is my other high school guy and I’d like to make him the Spelling Bee. I had the kids play with Eddie, my muppet from class, and spell a word. Spencer was one of the better performers. Cearra was really good, as was Katie Daigle, my substitute’s daughter. (Katie’s mom was my sub while I was out with Liam.) Katie is apparently new and has been adopted by the theatre kids. I think she’ll do fine.
I don’t really know what to do with Sara. She hasn’t made drama a focus in a while, and unless she has a lead, she tends to be less reliable. She doesn’t have time to do a larger role, and actually asked for a small role. She has said all year that she wanted to design the sets, and that will be a larger time commitment than she realizes. I promised her in the fall that Cearra could design *Radium Girls* and she could do *Tollbooth*. I had to remind her that she needed to get her design proposal in to me on time. It was late. We’ll see.

The cast list needs to be up on Monday so parents can come to the meeting that night and the kids know to come Tuesday to rehearsal. I’ll sleep on it and come up with something in the eleventh hour.

I’m doing something new with the designers. I had all student designers in the fall, but it wasn’t perfectly successful because I think some didn’t really know what they were getting into. So I have put together design proposals. Students have to do a “homework” assignment related to their area and turn it in to be considered for a design or management role. Costumers have to turn in a couple of renderings, props people have to design and price out a prop, stage managers have to watch a YouTube video and record the blocking (I used *Mousetrap* because we had the scripts and there were no good clips of *Tollbooth* on YouTube.), etc. I think it will help me find people who are genuinely interested in putting in the work and who can adhere to a deadline. Proposals are due Monday.

2/18:

Ah, my favorite/least favorite part of a show. I love the excitement the kids show about the cast list, but I hate the heartbreak. I saw Matt crying after school. He really wanted
Milo. He wouldn't make eye contact, so I didn't approach him. I hope he'll still do the show. He ended up with a couple of smaller parts throughout the show.

This is the second time we've done a parent meeting, and it went fine. I felt really awkward, and John said later that I sounded like I was talking to the kids. I think I'm so used to going over the rules/schedule/details with the students that I slipped into teacher voice. It is not a good choice for parents. I need to figure out what information is vital and come up with a better way to present it at these parent meetings. We went over the contract, the coffee fundraiser, t-shirts, makeup, and the schedule.

We only had four or five sets of parents come, but most of them were new to drama and I got several people signing up for volunteer spots. There were signups for meals on the last three nights of rehearsal (we go to 6:30, 6:30, and 8pm respectively), snacks for work calls, and help with construction, sewing, and publicity. We didn't get anyone for sewing, but I know there are staff members in the building who will help with that.

I got proposals from several people—stage managers, a costumer, a props designer, a junior high girl even submitted stuff for sound. Katie Daigle is new but her stuff looks promising and she did a great job. The kids seem to vouch for her, and she is Julie's daughter (my maternity sub). Kindall and Gary turned in stage management stuff. They switched roles for this show—Kindall wanted to act so she suckered Gary into being stage manager to her ASM. I always envisioned Colby stage-managing, but he doesn't have the time with all his other commitments, and his brother is getting married the second weekend of the show. He was absent Friday so I gave him a lighting packet and he will turn in a proposal for that. I ran into Sara in the bathroom. I had promised her last fall that she could design the sets, but I
had to remind her that the packets were due today. She obviously didn’t have anything done. Argh. I don’t know what I’m going to do for a set designer.

2/19:

First rehearsal and already I have kids begging out. Sigh. It’s ok, it’s just frustrating, but it is a part of teaching at a small school. Kids are involved in everything. Ariana begged out of rehearsal because ROTC drill state competition is this weekend and she needed to go practice. August is just missing. I had one girl need to miss for cheerleading, and someone else had a doctor’s appointment. And so it begins.

Other than that, the first rehearsal went really well. Usually we spend the whole time going over details/rules/schedule and then play a couple of games. We got all that done and then actually got to read through the entire first act! That never happens! It’s a really good bunch, but it will be a young show.

At the beginning of the year I was working on the Jump Start program. Jump Start is a junior high version of Ignition, which for the junior high is a first-day-of-school, get to know everyone, learn your schedule, play games, figure out the lunch line, find your locker, do fun activities, welcome-to-junior-high day. Why am I mentioning this? Well, one of the breakout sessions was on activities and sports available to kids. I handed a synopsis of Radium Girls and a stack of audition forms to the teacher running the activities side of the session. She gave out all of the forms, and as a result, we had more seventh graders audition this year than ever before. We had several kids come back after Radium, and several kids who wanted to do Radium but couldn’t came back to audition this semester. Where we usually have a predominately high school program, this year is predominately junior high,
which is an interesting switch. The high school students we do have tend to be older, and we have a large group of seniors graduating this year, so it’s good that we are getting young blood.

Colby brought in his lighting proposal, and I found a set proposal from Sara on my desk today. I guess that’s that.

2/20:

I’m not fond of the days when I have a staff meeting before rehearsal. They always run long, and my stage-managers always have to start without me. School gets out at 2:30; by 2:40 students should be in the theatre working on homework or memorizing lines. Rehearsal begins at 3:00, even if I’m not there. I’ve been really lucky that I have had great stage managers who can start rehearsal without me.

Last semester I had to fly back East for a family emergency, and Kindall and Gary ran rehearsals without me for two weeks. It was amazing. So I know I can count on them when I’m not there. They got the kids up to play a few games while waiting for me to get there today.

We went ahead and read Act II today, since we got Act I read yesterday. I think it’s important for the kids to have a sense of where their parts fit into the entire piece, which they often don’t get if they only rehearse their scenes. There are some cast members they won’t see again until we are into full run-throughs, and I’d like them to know each other by sight at least.

We also had a production meeting today since there’s no school on Friday and we have work calls the next three days. I still don’t have much from people. Kyrie had to be
tracked down and reminded, Sara had to be tracked down and didn’t have much at all, Colby is waiting on Sara’s stuff, and Katie is waiting on all of them. I went ahead and showed my Pinterest board for *Tollbooth* with paintings and source images to inspire them. We talked about my concept some more. I think Shaylee and Kyrie will be okay, especially with Shaylee consistently reminding Kyrie to get stuff done. Colby will be fine as soon as I can get him real specifics about the set. I should have done all this last December, but there was no way I could have. Sigh.

On an up note, Zoë, our sound designer, showed up to her production meeting during junior high lunch and had all sorts of sounds to show off. She’s really excited and I have high hopes for our sound design. I’m finding with every rehearsal how much more important sound is to this show that I had originally realized. The sound designer on *Radium* never really brought me anything and I ended up having to cut her sounds because they were last minute, poor quality, inappropriate, or all of the above. I don’t think I’ll have that problem this time.

2/21, 22, & 23:

Thursday and Friday were parent-teacher conferences. There’s no school, and I’m stuck at my table in the gym, so there’s no rehearsals either. We do have a full-day work call both days, though, and traditionally get a lot done. It’s nice to have three work calls in a row, but you do get far fewer kids on the Saturday. We didn’t get as much done as I’d like this time. We usually have a set design by now (granted, in my head), and so we usually have a list of stuff to do. Luckily there is plenty that needs doing, including cleaning the shop, organizing our materials, and base painting stuff that will need paint later. The kids actually
got a lot done. When I say kids, I mostly mean Kindall (ASM) & Gary (SM). They, and Katie (props), have been amazing and came all three days. We also had a few junior high kids come, so they had a work force to manage. Every fall we do a design and construction project in class where groups design and built the set for *The Crucible* for our English classes to use when reading the play. This time small teams each designed an act and supervised the work calls to have it constructed. They kept coming to me wild-eyed, saying: “I don’t know how you do it!” “Now you know what work call is like for me,” I replied. The experience has really paid off with my upper classmen this semester. Gary and Kindall both learned a lot from the experience, and it has really helped production.

We know the tower fronts will be eight-feet tall and four-feet wide so the kids have started cutting out Tyvek panels for the drops. A couple of years ago we found a huge role of Tyvek house wrap in the theatre left over from the renovation fifteen years ago. It makes wonderful banner/sign material, is impossible to tear, and paints easily. The Tyvek drops all need base coats of white before we do anything else with them. (When we say white, we always mean our giant bucket of off-white called Tailored Linen.) We painted the backdrop white in preparation for drawing the map.

Katie is still frustrated that she doesn’t have more from the set and costume designers. She says, rightly, that she needs to see what they are doing so her props will match. I’ve tried to help her and point out projects she can start on now.

2/25:

Today we rehearsed the Whether Man and the Lethargian scene. Since Katie had to go to cheer and no one objected, I switched the order of the rehearsal and did the Lethargians
first. Whether Man comes first in the script, but being able to let those kids go early was worth the backwards order.

I started formal warm-ups today, and helped Gary run them so he can do them even when I’m stuck in a meeting. It’s a fun group with great physicality, and rehearsal was enjoyable and productive.

We don’t know the details for the car yet, but we will need to make a decision soon. We ran the rehearsal today as if he was wearing a “Flintstone” car. The Lethargians all automatically found different levels and planes, and are already 80% there for commitment. (I taught the levels game from Teri’s class to the Radium cast last semester and most remembered it.) We started rehearsal with some super slow Butoh-style movement, but it became clear that while the feeling was right, the speed was too slow for the show. We shifted from slow to sleepy, and all of a sudden the scene was hysterical. They were dragging themselves into place, falling asleep in the middle of lines, yawing involuntarily, and generally having a great time with it. Katie did a great job, but we will have to work on her volume. She had provided the foam stones as stone pillows, but I think they will be too uncomfortable to use for long. We’ll have to design something else to go with the set.

After I released the Lethargians, I worked with Milo and the Whether Man. Whether was having a really hard time managing the script and the umbrella. Hopefully another benefit to using the props early will be to encourage them to get off-book as soon as possible. I think it will motivate Milo. Whether is a young actor but enthusiastic and fun to watch. I can’t wait to get her all the trappings so she can go nuts. We’ve discussed making a storm cloud puppet to rain down only on the Whether Man. I really like the idea.
Before she left, Katie expressed concerns again that she needs to see what the set and costume designers want to do, since her stuff needs to match. We had an impromptu production meeting today at lunch, and Sara shared her early ideas for the set. I really like her ideas of the two towers and staircases. I am a little afraid that she might have designed with a much larger space in mind, but I think we can make it work. It will depend on what she brings to the meeting on Friday. I emphasized to everyone, especially Kyrie, that I consider the book the final authority, and that Fieffer’s illustrations should inform design decisions. Kyrie is used to shows like Wind in the Willows, where animals were dressed in suits and were suggestions of their species, and Radium Girls, where all the costumes were regular-period clothing we pulled from stock. I don’t think she’s wrapped her head around the idea yet that most of this show will need to be built. Her initial Tock design was of a guy in a pinstripe suit with a pocket watch. I had to explain that we wanted something closer to the illustration; that Tock was an actual dog. It will be a good stretch for her.

2/26:

This is a record. We lost our first actor. JD decided he can’t do the show because he is going to move out of his parents’ house and get a job. I feel badly for him, but I can’t help being a little frustrated, and very sad that my instincts were right. It’s too bad; I think he would have had a really good time. I don’t know who I am going to cast as the Gatekeeper, but I’m glad I didn’t cast him as the Humbug.

Today we rehearsed the word market scene with Milo, Tock, Bee, and Humbug. Spencer cracks me up. He is freaking out because he says he can’t spell, but he’s hysterical as the Bee. Lyndzie practically eats up the stage as Humbug. She needs very explicit
direction, but adds her own little zings and is ridiculously cute. She and Spencer shouting at each other is really funny.

Having a really on-the-ball prop master helps. Katie pulling all the rehearsal props this early has inspired us to rehearse all the scenes with as many stand-in items as possible. Lyndzie was in a bowler hat with cane and we put Spencer in a fish hat from *Seussical* so he could practice wearing something like the Bee. We plan on the Bee being a head worn puppet. It also helped the other actors practice talking to the Bee, and not to Spencer.

At 3:45 I released Bee and Humbug and worked with Milo & Tock on their first scene together in the Doldrums. We got Kenzie to start out more harshly with Milo and the scene is more dynamic now. Since JD is no longer the Gatekeeper, Spencer agreed to read the part for today so we could rehearse that scene too. Unfortunately he can’t be the Gatekeeper since he’s in the next scene.

**2/27:**

Today’s rehearsal was with Milo, Tock, and the “Voice” of the Tollbooth. I asked Gary to start without me, since I had an IEP meeting to go to, and they usually keep us late. When I got there at five after they’d already done physical warm-ups and had moved on to tongue twisters.

We began to block the first scene of the play, and quickly discovered that the scene is even more heavily set and prop driven than we’d realized. Katie had managed to provide many of the rehearsal props, but either she missed some or we didn’t see them, because we pulled several more. We will need to pull music stands to use for the “precautionary signs.” Today we just used water bottles and it didn’t really work. It became painfully clear that we
desperately need to spike the set and figure out how we are going to do the car. Kenzie is going to call Safeway and ask if we can borrow an electric motorized cart. We could build an amazing car around that, but I’m not going to hold my breath. Sara should have floor plans to me Friday. I’m not used to being only the director. Production meetings used to happen in my head, and now I’m having to wait for designers. It’s good for me, and it is really good for the kids. I’m so glad I started having student designers. They are worth their weight in gold, even if they miss deadlines.

Zoë came to rehearsal again (I think she’s mostly there to be near Josh.) but it worked out really well. She’d already come up with some music and sound effects and played them during the scene. Kenzie was able to rehearse the thirty seconds of ticking, which needed to happen if she is going to figure out what to do on stage silent for that time. Zoë is really stoked about being sound designer, but she keeps interrupting rehearsal to ask about sounds, and I’ve had to gently remind her that rehearsals are for actors. She’s supposed to bring me all her stuff on Friday at lunch. She gets her own private production meeting, since she’s the only junior high designer. I hadn’t anticipated having young designers and planned meetings to be Fridays at high school lunch. Junior high lunch is during my prep, so I can still make it work. I have no idea how I will handle it next year. I may have to go to meetings after school.

2/28:

Rehearsal today was the Kings, Princesses, Milo and Tock. The schedule had an error (we were listed to end at 3:45) so I rehearsed until then, and anyone who had to go could leave. Then we rehearsed with anyone who could stay until 4:30. Azaz had to go,
Mathemagician planned on staying until 4:30, and I only kept the Princesses until 4:00. We ran the flashback scene, and then ran the beginning of the numbers mine. We ended by running the princess rescue, and then the beginning of the show, since we had all three here.

I had another meeting, so Gary ran warm-ups again. I always seem to get there just in time for diction warm-ups. Rehearsal went well. We discussed diction and hitting the consonants, and we talked about keeping your mouth open. Azaz is really good at this; Math and Tock need work; Milo has a serious speech issue with his r’s but we’re working on it. Josh (Milo) did really well during Radium Girls and I think he will continue to rise to the occasion.

There were more difficulties with not knowing the exact floorplan. I cannot wait until the production meeting tomorrow. I need to see what she has done. A brilliant director would have had designers start working in December, but I didn’t want them doing the whole design without my being there for input. (I left Dec. 4 for maternity leave.)

PJ (Math) had a great idea today. We talked about the numbers miners, and she suggested bringing minors up from the audience to be miners. So now I’m looking for cheap plastic hard hats we can hand out to kids when we bring them on stage. If we can make it work, it would be wonderful. I still remember being brought up on stage during a production of Peter Rabbit when I was four.

2/28:

I got a charming email today from the vice principal, with whom I have a strained relationship. The music concert is in the theatre on Monday, so in addition to cleaning the space and clearing the stage, the administration wants us to remove everything from the back
platform. They said it looks cluttered. One of the kids pointed out: “It was like that for the play. It’s ok for us but not for band?” I put a good face on it and we moved the—very heavy—platforms and set pieces off the back ledge. We’ll just have to put them back up there afterwards—there is nowhere else to store those things.

Today we had Milo, Tock, the kings, and the princesses. We blocked the flashback scene and then ran Tock’s scene through to the gates of Dictionopolis a couple of times. The scene will be cute—we really need to get the platforms done. It’s hard to block this stuff and have the kids have any idea what is going on without the set.

3/1:

Production meeting today went well. Sara had some great ideas for the set and we all threw around ideas until we came up with something cool. We’re going to do two towers and two staircases to a center platform that makes a giant M (for Milo!). We’ll do the map as the backdrop, maybe even use the followspot to highlight Milo traveling along the roads from place to place. The towers will have drops that roll down the front, similar to the book pages from *Wind in the Willows*. I like this far more than my “fabric tents” idea from the concept statement. I think the towers will be much more visually interesting, will provide needed levels, will allow us to stage the Castle-in-the-Air, and are a creative use of the space. I like the idea of the drops much more that the fabric. I said in the concept that things should actually be what they claim to be—giant pencil etc.—so having fabric stand-ins doesn’t really make sense. I brought up my *Tollbooth* Pinterest on the big screen and showed the paintings I’d found and some of the images I really liked. I naturally gravitated to absurdist images and impressionist works in jewel tones—which does go with the concept.
Dictionopolis will be made of books, maybe the trees made of book pages or the letter hedges. Digitopolis will be desolate, angular, and cold. We agreed that Dictionopolis will be warm colors and Digitopolis will be cool colors. That makes allegiances clear and makes design decisions easy. Expectations will be yellow, white, and blue; Doldrums will be gray. I don’t know what we are going to do for the floor yet. I have a vision of scumbling the floor with all the colors from everything else, but we sort of already did that for Willows. I’d like to do something different. Everyone wants the Tollbooth to look like the Tardis. I don’t know how long I can stall this idea. I’m not sure I want to.

3/2:

Today’s work call was productive. We started cartooning the backdrop map. Katie’s mom Julie, who was my sub for maternity leave, is now the art teacher sub for the rest of the year. She’s volunteered to help us with whatever we need, and she started by teaching the kids how to blow up an image using a grid (cartooning). They took the backdrop out in the hall, got the grid laid out, and a lot of the map drawn today.

In the theatre we were putting up the towers and agreeing to a height. They ended up shorter than I thought they’d be. The front was always going to be eight-feet tall, but the height of the platform behind was still in question. We ended up going with a four-foot tall platform in part because we already had legs that height from Seussical, and in part because it was the highest we could imagine putting 7th graders. Besides, much higher and we would start to lose actor’s heads. I learned how to build stairs in Dave’s class, but Gary (SM) says he does it all the time with his dad at work, so he’s going to lay them out for me and get me a cut list. We had to push the platforms out of the way for the band concert on Monday.
3/4:

Kenzie is out sick, so we did the Dischord scene without her. (Kenzie has been having drama with the choir class and teacher—some of those girls are really mean—it would not surprise me to find she skips the concert tonight. I don’t approve, but if her mom excuses it there’s nothing I can do.) We were in the band room instead of the stage because the band was set up for tonight’s concert. (It’s a fair trade—Ken lets me use his room when we do the in-school dress rehearsal and performances.) It was a fun rehearsal. August (Dr.) was having trouble with the goofiness and I asked her to make the sound effects as the words—treat the words like onomatopoeia. She (of all people: queen goofy) was simply too self-conscious to do it. Little Breanna—who is so cute as the Dynne—was helping out. We gave her the hand rods Victoria (minster) made during conferences work calls to practice with. They were made to be big on her, and they work great. She’s having fun with them.

I had them do the gibberish exercise, which worked really well and helped Auggie. Josh isn’t great at it—he just uses “Blah” but hopefully he’ll get better at the exercise. I’m hoping it will help him get off-book.

To solve the sound issue, I turned off the lights and we sat around and made sound effects for fifteen minutes. I would call out a category and we would all make noises. It was fun, silly, and helped Auggie get over her anxiety.

3/5:

Oh the soup. Oh the soup. I think the soup is gonna kill me. Just kidding. The subtraction stew scene is needlessly complicated. It’s no-one’s fault—the book clearly calls
for multiple servings of soup being passed out and eaten—but it is hard to block without someone going hungry or a lot of dead air on stage. We’ll keep working on it. PJ (Mathemagician) made the joke today that the Miners should be Minors. They’re getting into the spirit of the puns—I’m so proud. Actually it isn’t a bad idea and it might fill this dead air. Maybe we’ll try it.

We tried to run all of Digitopolis today but didn’t make it. We got Dodecahedron and the mine but didn’t get to all of the office. We’ll work more on it next time.

3/6:

Today was frustrating. We had the demon rehearsal and Sara (Wordsnatcher/Sets) didn’t show. We called her and she said she didn’t think she was a demon because it says in the script she isn’t. If this wasn’t the umpteenth excuse from her, I’d be more liable to cut her some slack. She’s already missed a production meeting, so this makes at least her second. (Policy is if you have two unexcused absences, you can be cut from the show.) As it is, she could have asked someone. When exactly did she think she was rehearsing? The description even said puppet rehearsal and included the Bee, and Spencer showed up. She better have something for us design-wise by Friday. I’m not the only one having issues with her—she’s having a lot of trouble with the Honors English teacher too (who has come to me to vent and brainstorm solutions—we have both dealt with Sara before). There tend to be a lot of excuses and hand-wringing with Sara. I should have known better when she turned her design proposal in late.

On the up side, this was our first rehearsal with the puppet characters. We don’t have their puppets built yet, so I started them off taking turns with the various styles of puppets
we'd built in drama class. We had a couple of hand and rod puppets, a marionette, a big rod puppet for one person, and a huge rod puppet for three people. The larger puppets we just MacGyvered together with fabric and pvc, but it let the students practice. We don’t have Spencer’s bee head yet either, so I had him working with the hand and rod. Eddie, my puppet from grad school, was very popular. I feel guilty that we don’t have the puppets built yet, but I’d hoped to do it over spring break and didn’t realize this rehearsal was before. Still, they were good work-arounds and the kids got some great experience. Katie (Senses Taker) is surprisingly good with the puppets; Cearra (Insincerity) and Spencer (Bee) have worked on them in class and are less surprisingly awesome as well.

3/7:

Well, Sara went to one of the counselors (not hers, but one who happens to be a friend of mine) and tried to drag her into the whole mess. Sara told the counselor that she’d have the designs done over break. I’ve explained to Sara (and the counselor) that we need those designs Friday so we can work over break. We don’t have time to wait. Part of this is my fault. I did not communicate deadlines clearly enough. Part of this is that Sara is a flake-o-saurus.

In rehearsal news—we blocked the rest of the scenes with the princesses. The ladies are off-book and rocking it. We ran through all of their scenes and started to get a really good feel for what goes where. We are really going to need those towers and stairs soon if we are going to block much more. I’m hoping that the princesses being off-book will inspire Josh (Milo) to do the same. He’s doing great otherwise. We really need to figure out a solution for the car. Gary, Kindall, et al actually spent time on their senior skip day looking
around town for options. They found a motorized car for too much money, a car bed that might work, and a little red car we might be able to borrow from Food Factory restaurant. Here’s hoping.

3/8:

Oy. I do not like blocking crowd scenes. Today was the final battle scene. The whole scene is one line of stage directions—but if it looks dumb the whole act suffers. Luckily we’ve taught the kids the level game and they are all developing good senses of stage placement. Blocking this sequence was complicated, especially since the two armies are supposed to be equal in size and we just don’t have the people. Azaz’s army must have the five ministers, the bee, and the page because all speak in the final scene. That means I need seven people for the Mathemagician—but almost all of the miners are also ministers. I’m putting Kindall over there, and Dischord, and will probably drag some techies into it too.

We are still rehearsing with the stand-in puppets. I hope to get them built over break.

Production meeting today—nothing from Sara. I spoke to her separately and explained that I needed to move on with the design, that we would still use her elements and her input, but that we would have to start making decisions without her. I reminded her she was still in the show and that she had rehearsal over break. Hopefully we can salvage this. Costumes has some great renderings and props is coming up with stuff left and right. Lights doesn’t have much yet, but he has been waiting for the set design.

3/9:
Today was a work call. I’m frustrated. Gary (SM) promised the stairs would be done soon, and I’ve seen very little. I’m getting a bad feeling and the numbers he’s showing me don’t make any sense. I know he does this for a living (with his dad) but I just hope it turns out okay and soon. We need to rehearse on them.

We got the platforms stabilized and braced to prevent their scooting around the stage. We had to leave the fronts open so we could use the front for a projection screen for shadow puppets. I’m not sure how that’s going to work yet. I had planned on having the shadow puppeteer under the platform but I’m not sure how to interface that with the drops hanging over the front. If Expectations is the face of the tower, we could have a cutout in that for the thought puppets after the Doldrums—but that would mean going back to Expectations and we don’t really have a plan for rolling a drop back up in front of the audience. Plus that doesn’t answer the question of how to project the heroes flying out of the Castle-in-the-Air. There will be several drops down by that point. Still thinking.

3/12:

Sara didn’t show again. The first half of today was supposed to be Wordsnatcher, but she didn’t come. Katie happened to be there working on props, so she read it again. She is so good, it’s too bad I didn’t cast her in the part instead. I can’t give her the role because the parts are too close together. I’m assuming Sara’s out at this point, which is awkward because she sold the most coffee.

Rehearsing the scene with Trivium went well. Kyrie will be good in the role, although she is having a hard time with the maniacal laugh. Josh really feels like Milo, and Lyndzie (Humbug) is doing great. Kenzie (Tock) always helps step up everyone’s game. She comes
on stage and everyone starts behaving a little more professionally. It’s really amazing. This is what she wants to do for a living—that skill will serve her well.

We are working with levels and positioning with these three. Humbug and Josh always need to be reminded “positions” when there is too much profile or one is blocking the other. Kenzie has pretty good instincts, although sometimes the other two box her in. We’ve discovered that she can “go dog” to fix almost any blocking weirdness. When she is on the floor it adds levels, keeps her from blocking anyone, and breaks up any chorus lines that might be developing. We also did gibberish again. It’s surprising how much of the scene still comes through, although they did get lost in the middle once.

3/13:

The Insincerity scene is going to be great. I am really excited to see Cearra’s final product. She is also in class, which helps her puppet performance, but she is also really cute in this scene. She’s been using her puppet from class—we are going to have to make her one that is more like the book, but just as cute.

Katie’s always here and reading for other people, so when it really is time for her to rehearse her own part it comes as a shock. She is having WAY too much fun with the creepy puppet thing. I think we should give her a Rowlf style puppet (live hands). She could do so much with that. She’s already figured out how to make the puppets do this really creepy smile that looks like the Grinch when he’s evil.

Props are looking great. She gets so much done it is scary. She and her dad are working on the mining picks, and the pencil is amazing! It even writes! The Daigle family and Nelson family are keepers! Katie and Victoria’s families are at every work call, helping
out, volunteering, working crazy hours. Katie’s dad is building crazy stuff at home, Katie’s mom is painting our drops, and the Nelsons are helping with everything else. Added benefit: they are actually cool people to hang out with.

3/14:

Today was Milo, Tock, and the Lethargians. Humbug wasn’t called but she showed up anyway. Some of the Lethargians couldn’t be here today—rehearsal was optional if you had a trip out of town/vacation or something. Spencer was on a trip for DECA and another kid was in Anchorage.

We had stand-in stairs in place of the real ones, and finally got to stage this scene on the set as intended. It was really good, and the kids came up with interesting places to “sleep.” We’ll have to catch a few people up when we get back, but very worth it.

The coffee order has been submitted to North Pole Coffee. It should be done in a week or so.

3/16:

This was the last work call of break. So we didn’t get the puppets done like I wanted, and the stairs are still not complete. I’m starting to stress a little. On the up side, we found a car!!! Ok, it was the expensive one the kids saw at the used kids store, but we had a full punchcard (15% coupon) and that dropped it to $170. The best part is that the store will buy it back (as long as the price sticker is still on it) for half the sticker price. So we are basically renting the car for $85. John (my husband) thinks we will decide to keep the car for the department. I don’t think we will. We have too much stuff already. It’s a red Cadillac
Escalade—totally over-the-top that anyone would buy this thing for a kid but totally appropriate for spoiled, bored Milo. Josh (Milo) fits in the car—barely—and we have managed to fit Lyndzie (Humbug) in the front seat. Kenzie (Tock) can only sit on the back, but as a dog that works. Unfortunately the engine isn’t strong enough to push all three (or even two), so in those scenes Kenzie will just push the car with her feet. It actually looks like she’s just dragging her feet along behind the car. The car has a 140 pound weight limit and we are so far over that, but the worst that will happen is the motor might burn out and we won’t be able to sell the car. As long as Kenzie is pushing when more than one kid is in it, we should be fine.

It does mean we need to reblock some of the scenes to accommodate the car. It is a little bulky and turns much like its real life counterpart. (That is to say, like a tank.) But it is so worth the money having something that works, doesn’t need anything done to it, and is so perfect for the show.

3/18:

Back to school—we rehearsed Dictionopolis and demons today. Breanna (Dynne) didn’t come today. She apparently told her friends her parents pulled her from the show and told me. I’ve yet to hear anything. So we need a new Dynne. Wonderful. I still don’t have a Gatekeeper. Katie read it for today. I’ve got so many holes where students have left—it is so frustrating. What part of a signed contract did you people miss? I wish I knew how to fix the attrition. I think sometimes kids get in over their heads, they don’t realize the time commitment they are making, or they didn’t realize it would be work. Other times their parents use it as a punishment, which isn’t fair to the rest of the cast. In football if a student is
pulled, you put another kid in. It really doesn’t work that way in theatre. It’s like every kid is the quarterback.

3/19:

So a princess, a minister and the Humbug told me early on that they had an exchange program with a village school and would miss some rehearsal in early March. That’s fine, and early enough to not be an issue for rehearsal. Well, the plane was delayed and now they are finally doing the exchange. The minister’s mom just emailed me saying her daughter would miss all of next week. No...that’s not what I agreed to. Chris, the teacher in charge of the exchange, had been really cool and immediately emailed me to let me know that the kids would miss a couple of days but he thought the kids could bring their exchangees to rehearsals the other days. We’ll work something out. This is the down-side of a small school. Everyone is involved in everything, and it all overlaps. Luckily Humbug knows she needs to be here as much as possible and has promised to do just that.

Today we ran Expectations and Doldrums. It was good to get the timing right and judge exactly when the Lethargians should enter. It was also good to run these scenes with the car, as it required a few adjustments. It was fun, though, to add the parts where Milo checks the engine when the car dies, and we might have some neat interaction between the Lethargians and the car. We are using the back of the word stall as the Expectation booth—a la Lucy as psychiatrist—but it isn’t built yet. Whether is getting better with the umbrella, but she still isn’t off-book, which makes it hard. She gets upset when I give an empty part to another kid, but she can’t even learn the part she has. She’s a little odd.
3/20:

I recast Kindall as the Dynne, but now Auggie didn’t show up for rehearsal. She is absent so much it is ridiculous. She’s got a bad home situation—she’s been living with the school nurse—but she's since moved in with her boyfriend’s family and has zero transportation. If she misses the bus, she just stays home. Plus she’s “out sick” a lot. I wish she’d go back to the nurse’s. I’ve even offered her a place to stay myself, but she hasn’t taken me up on it.

Unfortunately this means that we have never actually rehearsed this scene with everyone who is actually playing the roles. It’s a little frustrating. It was good to have Kindall get used to the giant hands. We also used it as an opportunity to nail down exactly which sound effects we wanted to use in the scene—so the actor knows which bottles to open, the sound designer knows which ones to play, and the prop master knows how the labels should be combined. Katie read the doctor—she is becoming our ever-present understudy.

3/21:

North Pole Coffee says the coffee order is done. I’ll ask John to go pick it up for me since their hours conflict with school.

This morning we had a meeting about Colby (lighting). Turns out he’s been diagnosed with diabetes and has been in and out of the hospital. We all discussed how he can stay afloat in his classes and figure out what he needs to prioritize. Colby has a habit of spreading himself thin. He’s in Student Council, an Ignition mentor, on several committees, and is designing our lights. His dad, who thinks theatre is not masculine, would love to see him “spend less time on the show” but in reality Colby hasn’t spent much time with us. He
didn’t come to work calls because he’s been sick, so basically just one production meeting a
week. He does need to cut back though. I found him later and told him if he needed to quit
the show for his health I would totally understand. He was worried about my thesis, bless
him, but I told him a hospitalized designer was an okay excuse. Somebody had to make
the gesture. I just hope he doesn’t take me up on it.

Afterschool I had a meeting with Josh’s mom about one of her other kids, so
afterwards I spoke with her and the school speech therapist about Josh’s “r’s.” The therapist
said if he brought the script to sessions she’d use that to work with him, which is perfect for
us.

I finally got to rehearsal to find them in warm ups. Somewhere, some time, the
seniors started doing the Hokey Pokey as part of the warm up. This is not something I could
have gotten away with, but because they started it, it’s cool. Not everyone will do it, but it is
a fun and silly way to get jazzed up for rehearsal.

We tried to get all the way through Dictionopolis today. The banquet scene is
difficult. All those plates of food were a headache we didn’t want to deal with, but I found a
recipe (on Pinterest!) for homemade gluten-free playdough. (Katie is gluten sensitive, so she
can’t make cookies or work with flour.) The kids all have to pick dishes anyway, so they will
all make their own food out of the playdough. We can also use it for the letters that Milo
doesn’t actually eat. I’m all about cheap props.

The banquet scene is a props nightmare—all those dishes and cakes and square meals.
We’ll have to rehearse it to death to get it right. The word market is coming along nicely. I
put Shaylee (wardrobe) in for Sara as a word vendor. Spencer (Bee) is still really nervous
about all the spelling. I told him to memorize it just like his lines—no one is expecting him
to be able to spell these words quickly off the top of his head. I’ve got him using my yellow puppet from drama class and he’s really good with it. I think we might abandon the head puppet idea and just do hand and rod. It’s blank, so we could easily turn it into the bee. The word shoppers have some nice natural movement around the stage, but Matt always seems to cross at the worst time. I may have to restrict his movement some.

3/22:

Today we tried to run the entire Mountains of Ignorance. I found out later that Kyrie and others tried to get Sara to show up today. They know me well enough that if Sara had shown willingly that she could have still done the part. She didn’t show. So I need a new Wordsnatcher. Kindall read it today, but she just isn’t right for the part. Katie is perfect but I don’t like having her roles that close together. I don’t know what to do.

Running all the demon scenes back to back was good practice for transitions, and everyone is getting used to the platforms and stairs. The kids are getting better and better with the puppets. I made Katie a live hand puppet for the Senses Taker. He doesn’t have any features yet, but she can already make him incredibly creepy. She’s decided he needs to look like the kind of guy who has a van and hands out free candy. I’m pretty sure I can’t support that.

3/23:

Today’s work call was stressful. The stairs were going in today and we had the hinges so they could flip up and out of the way. Gary went to put the stairs up and the rises were uneven. There were three different heights! I told him it didn’t look right before and he
wouldn’t listen to me. Now it’s a safety hazard. I didn’t melt down—much—but I made it clear we had to fix it. This was supposed to be a set piece we could hold onto for years to come. Luckily Mr. Nelson (Victoria’s dad) and John were able to brainstorm ways to make it work. They cut down one tread, notched another into the matching platform, lifted the tread on the top step, and we ended up having to cut the hinges. There was no way to make them work, especially with the required changes. They got the stairs in place, and on Monday Gary is supposed to put in support legs for them.

Mrs. Nelson has been sewing costumes for us and Victoria has been working on the map backdrop. Kindall put together the first word market stand today. I pinned a tutorial for making a lemonade stand for kids out of PVC. It works really well. Now we just have to cover them with fabric. Oh, and make two more. I need to buy a lot more PVC.

3/25:

Gary MacGyvered supports on the stairs, and the support stairs aren’t attached to the ground so they move. I had to get him to fix both. Today was a tandem rehearsal—Milo and Tock with me while the puppeteers practiced with their puppets. I sent the puppeteers out in the hallway to play in the cafeteria (high ceilings) while I worked the beginning of the play. I told them to make up a skit with all the puppets. When they were done they came back in and performed for the other actors. They did a support group scene, and I have to admit, it was really funny.

Now that we have the car we had to make some adjustments to these scenes. The tollbooth has to be far enough back that Milo can drive past, and we discovered that Tock will have to turn the car around for Milo in the Doldrums. Kenzie (Tock) actually makes it
really cute, pausing at just the right moments for emphasis. She’s got good instincts. It will take some practice to get the turn right, and Josh has to park the car in just the right place. We’ll make it work. We also got to rehearse the scene where they meet. It was good to have the real stairs in place and be able to rehearse with the car. We had to clean the space before we left so National Honor Society could have their inductions tomorrow morning. They just need in front of the traveller, so that’s okay.

On a sad note, Colby took me up on my offer. I’m bummed, and heaven knows I don’t need more work, but he really does need to worry about his health. The last thing he needs is to pass out in the theatre during tech and I know stress plays havoc with your blood sugar. I’m a little torqued that none of his other sponsors made a similar offer, but maybe they just couldn’t spare him. I’ve had Colby since seventh grade. All those years ago I envisioned grooming him to stage-manage my thesis. Then he didn’t want to stage manage anymore. Now he won’t be working on it at all. Oh well, he’s got a year left. I know he’s really bummed about it; he loves lighting and was really excited about the possibility of using gels. Maybe next year.

3/26:

It never rains but it pours. Josh got in trouble and his mom removed him from the show. She sent a really nice, really reasonable email and I can’t fault her. Usually I’m torqued when a parent does this—it punishes the rest of the cast as much as their kid—but Josh really screwed up. He was caught cheating—off of Matt, so there goes my Milo backup—showed no remorse, gave his mom attitude, is failing a class, and generally is refusing to do schoolwork. His sister Missy will still be in the show, and mom offered to
send her oldest to me if I needed a replacement. (Sam is very talented and has stepped in for us in roles before. Unfortunately, he’s way too old to play Milo.) I have no idea what I’m going to do. I broke the news to the cast tonight, and had Spencer read Milo’s part. It just doesn’t work. I don’t know who I can use. Matt was the natural understudy—he’s done a large role with us before, I know I can count on him, he’s almost as good as Josh. I can’t use him now, though. He and Josh get in trouble and he gets rewarded by getting Josh’s part? I don’t think so. I spoke to him and explained why I couldn’t cast him. He understood and was really upset—he cries easily (I was the same way at his age)—but I think it was a good lesson and he’s still putting a 100% into his parts.

So we were supposed to run act one today. Spencer read Milo—except when the Bee was on stage—and we limped through the act. We got through it and had enough time to start again, so at least the show isn’t dragging.

3/27:

So today’s description with the rehearsal was wrong. It still said what it was supposed to be from the first draft of the schedule. The schedule said Dictionopolis, but the notes said Lethargians and Whether man. It was my fault, so we just rehearsed whoever was there.

I got there late—IEP meeting—but Gary had the kids warming up and I got there in time for the Hokey Pokey. I love that I can write that in my thesis project. “I got there in time for the Hokey Pokey.” We are missing the three girls on the exchange, which makes running the act challenging with no Humbug, princess, or minister.

We are running the banquet with plates and tables now, and still trying to figure out how best to do the waiters since they can’t enter under the stairs now. (Stairs don’t flip up
anymore.) I think we may have it figured. We ran the word market some, but mostly concentrated on the blocking and props in the banquet scene. We are going to have more benches made to match the four we already have. The woods teacher—whom we bought the last four from—doesn’t do that project anymore, so we will have to figure out the design ourselves.

I asked Colton to read Milo today, and he wasn’t bad at all. I think I may have found a solution. I emailed his teachers (he showed up on a recent D/F list) to find out more about him. They mostly responded that he could bring it up if he worked on it a little. I’ll give him a pep talk about it, and I think we’ve found our Milo.

I put out a call for sewing volunteers in the staff. The JROTC instructor’s wife (a friend of mine) and our security/hall monitor’s wife both volunteered. And Mrs. Daigle, of course. She’s been working gangbusters on all the backdrops, and then takes home costumes to sew. She’s amazing.

3/28:

Today we ran act two. We were still missing Nikki (minister/miner) but the other two came with their exchangees. I had an IEP again so Gary ran warm ups. I got there in time for tongue twisters.

Today I made Colton official—I think most of the cast had figured it out anyway. We spent the day blocking him into all the scenes and teaching him to drive. Oh my. He is a terrible driver. He is a seventh grader, so that’s okay, but it is really funny. He keeps driving into walls. August was absent, and I am losing it, so I had Victoria read the scene. I may make her August’s understudy.
3/29:

Today’s production meeting was good. I am starting to worry about costumes. I can’t seem to get a list of items needed or to be sewn, and I have a sneaking suspicion that we don’t have much at all. Kyrie can’t come to work calls, but when she does come in to the theatre she goofs off. Shaylee seems to be doing all the work. I reminded them that we have a costume parade coming up. We’ll see what happens.

Props is all over it. The mining picks are brilliant, the bottles for Dischord look great, the “light meal” will be so cute, the cakes look awesome, and she’s working on the jewel numbers. Sound brought in great music and sound effects. Everything else is me. I have put out requests and work orders to have our lights addressed; I’ve spoken to Mario (our principal) and he supports me—I just need the district to agree to handle it. I’ve been given the run-around for so many years. Our theatre isn’t part of the “theatre contract” that covers the other, larger theatres in town. They want us to buy the ladder to reach the front of house lights. They expect us to buy gel frames and lamps. It’s ridiculous.

We had a staff meeting after school, so the kids started rehearsal without me. They were partway into the dodecahedron when I got there. We ran from there to the end of the act. It was good for the kids to see how the scenes flow together. We are still ironing out the kinks in the soup scene. I have a couple of students sit in the audience to play the little kids—they behave far worse than real kids ever would but it is good practice for the actors. If they can handle Katie they can handle any kid. PJ (Math) still isn’t off-book. It becomes painfully clear during her office scene. I’ve told her we are going to write the equation on the pad for her—she cannot seem to remember it for anything. She won’t have time to write it out.
anyway. We’ll do the same thing with Dodecahedron’s word problem. (Although Jonilee already has it memorized.) There is no way she could write all that on stage.

3/30:

Work call today. We worked more on the backdrop, and Mrs. Daigle has most of the drops done. We figured out that we don’t have enough Tyvek to do all the drops, so we are going to have to do Act II on the backside and flip the roll at intermission. It required some careful planning, but I think we have it sorted.

We got the Gross Exaggeration’s body done, so now we just need to finish the head. I spent most of the work call trying to figure out patterns and what still needed sewing. I found an amazing tutorial on how to make an easy gown/robe. I’m going to teach it to the girls and we are going to use it for everything. The Lethargians—who the girls want to look like Hasbro Glow Worm dolls—can have big gathered sleeves and stocking caps. The Mathemagician and doppelgangers can have robes made with the pattern. Even the shirts for the ministers can be made this way.

4/1:

All of a sudden the monitor for our light board won’t display correctly. I’ve put in a work order. We’ll see if they show up.

Today we ran the friends and the demons. We ran from the Wordsnatcher to the Senses Taker and all the chase scenes. Colton is really coming along and trying to get off-book as soon as possible. He’s really working hard. The next three days are testing. Hopefully we will get a lot done.
4/2:

These three days are state testing days. Kids stay until they are done with the test, but most are released by 10:30. Kids come in the theatre after testing and work on the show. I usually don’t have rehearsals these days unless we really need them. Well, we really do.

Today we ran Act I. It’s frustrating to go back to scenes we’ve done before and have the kids not remember their blocking. They’ve been told to write it down—repeatedly—and even the stage managers don’t have a reliable copy. I need to work with next year’s managers on paperwork and how important it is. These guys were supposed to be keeping rehearsal notes every day for me, but I don’t think they have any.

The beginning of the show is looking really good. We are finally using the actual signs and the tollbooth, which required a rethinking of the scene a bit. We have to make sure the tollbooth is far enough back to not be hit by the car, but we also have to be able to get the signs out of it. Whether man still doesn’t know her lines. She drives me a tiny bit nuts. The Lethargian scene is looking great, and the flashback is working nicely.

A student who used to go here but moved to California is going to come back for the last six weeks and graduate here. Morgan’s a great kid and we are friends with the family. Morgan is going to be staying with Kindall, and Kindall is beside herself with excitement. Her arrival is supposed to be a surprise, but Kindall has told me so I can plan on having her backstage. Having the princesses walk off to banishment by themselves looked weird, so I have added two cops to escort them—one will be Morgan. Having Morgan and Missy—the wonder tech—back stage will be a huge help.
4/3:

Tina’s coming to the show on the 20th. Yikes. Today the word merchant stands got built, more drops got painted, and lots of cutting out of costume pieces. We are also working on getting all the signs painted. We’ve switched to using a regular sign for Expectations, and we made a “fork in the road” as the sign for Digitopolis. I love it when we can add a pun to the show.

We ran Digitopolis today, so basically the Polanco girls took the stage. I love those three. They are brilliant, funny, and mostly hard-working. The youngest is the most studious—the other two I get notes from teachers about—but all three will bust their rears for the show. They started out as techies—they were my light and sound board ops when Jonilee (Dodecahedron) was still in elementary school. She started acting in 6th grade and the others followed. Jonilee has been working on the Dodecahedron head—and I sent her and PJ (Math) in the hall to take funny emotion face pictures to glue onto the head. I haven’t looked at them yet, but I imagine they are ridiculous.

I am worried that PJ won’t be off-book. She is usually more on the ball than this, but she has the worst senioritis I’ve ever seen. Her English teacher is going to throttle her if she doesn’t get her stuff done.

4/4:

Giant ARGH. No Cearra, no August. Neither one had rides—even though they’ve known about this rehearsal for months and Cearra got a ride on Tuesday from Kenzie. At least Cearra told me ahead of time. I got nothing from Auggie. I don’t know what to do. I really don’t want to cut her—the play is the ONLY positive thing she has going right now,
but this is crazy. I told Victoria today that she was officially August’s understudy and to start
learning the lines (which unfortunately means Gatekeeper too since I gave that role to her as
well). We discovered that having Katie inside the wagon really helped with managing the
props for the scene. She asked if she could really be in there and I said sure. We got her a
pair of crazy pink gloves and are playing it like she is another one of Dischord’s djinn. Not
everyone can see her, but it’s funny for those who can. She holds the recipe book and hands
Dischord bottles and clears them when she’s done. Zoe’s sound effects are coming along
great. I wonder how the timing will go when we have the curtains pulled, though.

Everything is progressing nicely. I’m more worried about the tech getting done,
which is kind of amazing. We’ll figure out what to do about Dischord, and Colton is learning
Milo’s part really quickly. The battle scene is awkward, but I think running it some more
will help. We ran it over and over several times tonight to practice timing.

The end of the play is playing in my head like the end of Star Wars IV where the
three friends get medals. I’d play the music if I thought I could get away with it. I don’t like
how everyone files off stage at the end of the scene—we need to figure something else out
for the goodbye.

A red shirt (district maintenance guys) came out to look at my monitor. He fixed the
wires—a bad connection—and heard all about my other concerns. Apparently “Masters
project” were the magic words because after all these years they are finally moving to do
something about our lights. He’s going to look into lamps for us, but he said he doubts that
they will buy them. Mario has gotten involved and has asked me to come up with a list and
price quotes. Tina says to order from PNTA, so that’s where I will price from. I just hope
stuff gets here in time.
4/5:

Poor Dustin, the red shirt, came in with bulbs for the ERS but they are 150 watts. I don’t think that would even show up on stage. He was really proud of having found them and I feel badly telling him they won’t work. Mario says they are renegotiating the contract with the guy (Tom Creek) who works all the theatres in town and that he is trying to get them to add Eielson to the list. I would love that.

We had a brief production meeting today—Liam chaired. I asked about costumes and got vague reassurances. Props are on, set is working, lighting is my deal.

We ran Act I today. August was here and says she’s still in. The ministers crack me up, especially Ariana when she does the “ta-da” moment when they enter in the market. It’s too bad she does so many other things (track, ROTC, etc.). I would love to be able to cast her in a large role.

Spencer (Bee) is still really nervous about the spelling. I wish he’d just treat it like any other line you memorize, but he has a mental block about it for some reason. The market scene is a mess of staging. I am constantly yelling “positions” to remind the heroes to watch their levels (never the same plane, never the same height). It’s a goal. Spencer about lost it when he heard Zoe play “Flight of the Bumblebee” for the first time today during his scene. We were all giggling. It is perfect.

Izzy (letterman) needs letters, and Katie can’t make them. I keep meaning to bake some cookies, but who has time? Izzy said she’d handle making the A’s and I’s since Katie is toasting C’s. (Apparently she can do that?) We should just use play dough for the other letters.
Someone pointed out that Kindall sounds like a drug dealer when she is hawking “happys” and “goods.” I wish they had never said it because now I can’t get it out of my head. It reminds me of the Doctor Who episode where the vendors are selling emotions. Lots of jokes are made, and Kindall tries very hard not to giggle her way through the scene. “Psst. Wanna buy some happy?”

Most of the actors have made their food, so now we are rehearsing the banquet and trying to get the right food to the right people. It’s not working, there’s not enough time. I’ll have to think about it.

4/6:

During today’s work call we worked on the backdrop, John built blocks for the mini stairs at the back of the middle platform, we did lots of painting and sewing, and we worked on puppets. Katie’s now the Wordsnatcher too, so I went ahead and made her a live hand puppet bird for that. I got the body, beak, and eyes, and had Missy put on the ragged feathers. Missy is amazing. She’s this quiet little 7th grader whom my stage managers adore. She’s always where she’s supposed to be, right on top of her cues, and always knows what’s supposed to be happening. Even with Josh doing something dumb, I love that whole family!

4/8:

August was absent again today. I want to scream. It’s excused, so there’s nothing I can do about it.
We ran Act II today. It’s coming along, and we finally fixed the goodbye scene. We made it a receiving line of sorts, and each character lines up to say goodbye to Milo before they leave. It works much better now and I like the symmetry of it.

The Dodecahedron scene is great, the numbers mine is smoother—although Katie pretends to be the worst child possible—and the Mathemagician is slowly getting off-book. PJ does a great job, don’t get me wrong. She has a strong characterization but she isn’t very professional and sometimes sets a poor example for the younger kids.

All three Polanco girls (the elder two particularly) are Doctor Who obsessed. They lobbied for the Tollbooth to be Tardis Blue, they snuck a picture of the Tardis onto the map, and Ariana orders fish fingers and custard as her meal (a reference to the eleventh doctor). They even refer to Liam as Stormageddon (a baby in the show). It didn’t hurt the show, and it made them happy to have an Easter egg, so we did it. I wouldn’t do it in a professional show, but this is high school.

4/9:

Kindall got the poster done. It is beautiful and she is—deservedly—very proud of it. Unfortunately it isn’t exactly the right size, so we are going to have to have someone scan it and shrink it to fit on the 11 x 17” cardstock for posters. However, we also use the image for the tickets, program, t-shirts (which are already done—Kindall had the line art done a while ago), and backstage passes. I have also emailed it to our Base Liason in the hopes of getting it out that way, and I submitted it to the school district for flier approval. I’ve never done that before. I doubt it will be done in time but it’s worth a shot.
Act I was on the schedule for today. At this point it feels like we are running for sets and props more than anything else. We figured out that the shadow puppets will happen inside the tollbooth—which is easier for everyone. I don’t know who I have left backstage to do them. Maybe I can assign it to Morgan when she gets here.

I remind the actors to open their mouths, and we haven’t had much in the way of volume problems. I am so impressed! Usually that is a big deal for us. If everyone can be heard, that will be a first.

We’ve gotten to the point where we can run the act, take a break, and run part of it again, depending on how often I stop to correct something. I’ve tried to side coach, but they find it way too distracting. Act I is looking like it will be about an hour.

Got a surprise today. Tom Creek’s assistant came out to the theatre to look at our lights and get info for Tom. Apparently he’s coming tomorrow! So cool! I have no idea who moved what mountain to make this happen, but I am thrilled.

4/10:

Today was amazing! Tom was in the theatre already when I found him. He’d found a ladder to reach the front of house! Get this, he found it IN OUR BUILDING. Really? Yeesh. No one could have told me that five years ago? I didn’t know the batten could support the weight of a ladder, but he says it’s rated for all kinds of weight. He looked at our equipment, said I could come to town tomorrow to pick up gel frames, safety cables, and gels from him at Herring Auditorium, was impressed with our dimmer (we call her Sheila) but horrified by our lights. I told him the lights were older than we are. I looked it up—the data sheet from the Kliegl ERS is dated 1976.
It turns out that I know Tom from college. He went through UAF a few years after me and we have mutual friends. We discussed lighting design, my old lighting professor, and the state of our equipment. He just did an overhaul at West Valley High and surplussed a bunch of instruments from there for being too old. You guessed it: they are younger than ours, so he is going to see if he can get them for us. He’s even throwing in some gaff tape. I’m in heaven.

Kindall is beside herself. Morgan gets in today. She is bouncing off the walls. I admit: I can’t wait to see Morgan either.

We ran Act II today, and got all the way through it twice, which felt good. August was actually here today, so we had the first ever rehearsal of the Dischord scene with all the people who are actually in it. Sigh. Kindall has the Dynne almost finished. She used it today in rehearsal and it worked really well. It is going to look so cool.

The Dodecahedron head is looking great. Jonilee glued her faces on and it freaks everyone out. She’s always looking at you, no matter where she stands. It is so funny. We still don’t have a wall/door for the castle. I need to talk to Troy Daigle and John about that and see if my two construction geniuses can come up with something clever.

4/11:

I told Kyrie (and Shaylee—who I’ve started treating more like the designer since she’s the one who gets things done) that we’d have a costume parade today. It did not go well. Almost no one had a costume, much less a complete one. I’m starting to really freak out. Part of this is my fault—no question. I should have set better deadlines and been clearer about expectations. On the other hand, Kyrie has done almost nothing. Shaylee is tearing her
hair out trying to get everything done. We made a list today. I will find some folks who can do costume sewing. We are officially in costume emergency mode.

We did our first full run tonight. It was a stumble-though, as they usually are, but it was good to see where the problems were. We identified many places where we needed someone to do a set change, or where the car had to be somewhere else, or where someone didn’t have time to make a costume change. We got all the way through the show but I didn’t have time for notes at the end so I will give them tomorrow.

I went to town tonight to pick up stuff from Tom. Lathrop High is doing *Beauty and the Beast* in that huge auditorium. She rented $3000 in drops, which makes our show look so tiny. On the other hand, I think our sets look better. Tom was amazing. He emailed everyone today and outlined all the stuff we are getting: ladder sorted, he’s sending us six new-to-us fresnel and ten new-to-us ERS with extra lamps, the district agreed to relamp our current instruments, and arranged to have someone change out the stage pins on the new instruments for twist lock. I am so stoked! He let me pick out whatever gels I wanted, gave me a safety chain full of gel frames, a roll of gaff tape, and lots of good advice. I sent an email to his boss/district contact thanking him and complimenting Tom.

4/12:

I ordered posters and tickets today. I will get the program done as soon as possible. We got our new lights today—I am so excited! I thought Colby would pass out when he saw them during drama class. He is so jealous. 😊

We did our second full run tonight. I gave notes first and then we ran the show with a break at intermission. Not only do the kids need it, but Gary needs it to reset the backdrops.
August wasn’t here—I put Vicky on stage. The Dynne puppet is awkward but it looks really cool. Kindall’s getting better with it, she just gets stuck in the curtains a lot. Morgan has been a big help already and I can’t remember what I did without her. She’s a good kid. When kids aren’t on stage they are working on costumes or props or something. I spend more time answering questions than I do watching the run.

This weekend we need to get the walls done, benches done, remaining props finished, costumes done, and lights hung/focused/cued. Sigh.

4/13 & 14:

This was originally going to be dry tech, but we just got the new lights yesterday so that wasn’t going to happen. Troy and John came up with a brilliant idea for the doors after much brainstorming by all. I love it, and it is simple. We still get to do the magnets on the letters, but it is so much simpler than the crazy stuff I was coming up with. John made benches and Troy finished the tollbooth and made the walls. I spent the day cutting out patterns and sewing.

John and I ended up coming in again on Sunday, and the Daigles are crazy enough that they volunteered to come too. The backdrop is done and we got it hung on Sunday. We also got the lights hung, gelled, and focused. Troy was up on the ladder so I could be in the house looking at John on stage. I could not have done this without them. Julie has the Tock costume almost done, and she’s got all the backdrops finished. The spiral on the stage is laid out and we’ve started painting it. It was a long weekend.

4/15:
I sent out my “please excuse these students on Thursday” email and got a lovely email from my assistant principal. We had a go-round in the fall about kids wearing pajamas on in-school day. We’ve done it for eight years, as long as he’s been here, and he’s just now getting upset about it? This time he conceded that only kids who were going to classes needed to be in regular clothes (instead of anyone who wanted to go to the bathroom, their locker, or the lunch line). It will have to do. The backstage passes should help.

I got an email from a dance company in Healy, AK, that is also doing *Phantom Tollbooth*. The state student government conference was just down there and some of my kids were talking to theirs. They’d like to borrow set and prop pieces from us for their show. I told her that would be awesome. She’s welcome to see the show and then tell me what she’d like to borrow. She mentioned money, so I’m hoping she’ll be willing to rent stuff. Either way, this is the first time we’ve gotten to do something like this and I’m really excited. I’ve always been jealous of teachers in the Lower 48 who are close enough to borrow and exchange stuff with each other.

Today was supposed to be wet tech, but we really only added sound. This is the first of three late nights, and we have a parent volunteer provide food for the kids. I had to stay even later at school to do light cues. Gary managed to scrape up a couple of people for tech positions. We needed a light board op and a follow spot op, and Gary found both. Jimmy has done shows with us before and AJ is a neat kid who should have been doing theatre all along. I asked the actors to be patient as we stumbled through the sound cues, especially in the Discord scene. I’m really stressing right now, and I’m worried about costumes. I asked Mario (my principal) if I could take a personal day to work in the theatre but he said we can’t in
case I got hurt. So, bless his heart, he authorized a day of administrative leave since it is for my thesis. I’ll be out Wednesday and Thursday for the show.

4/16:

Mike Riebolz (our security guy) said before that his wife would be willing to come in and sew. Well, she’s coming in Wednesday and Thursday, and I have a feeling we will keep her busy all day long. Some stuff is cut out, some isn’t, but everything needs work.

We did a full dress today, and they were supposed to have their makeup. Many didn’t. Hair isn’t an issue in this show, thankfully, and the makeup is purposefully minimal. I prefer to see actors’ faces rather than “dog makeup,” especially for kids’ shows. Kids are willing to play “let’s pretend” with you.

The banquet scene got fixed today—Katie had the brilliant idea of alternating sides when ordering, which gave the waiters time to get to everyone. I loved it. The Humbug’s monologue is really awkward, and she keeps getting right up in Milo and Tock’s faces, which puts her full back to the audience. I tried to give her some direction to open her up some, but it is coming across as imposed rather than natural. I hope she will settle into it.

At this point we are putting into muscle memory. I give notes every night, but we basically have time to get dressed, run the show to intermission, eat, run Act II, do notes and go home. The notes at this point are little things: “watch your staging in this moment,” “I can see you behind that platform,” “watch the timing on opening that bottle,” and compliments for kids who are doing great.

4/17:
I spent today in the theatre all day. It was wonderful and we got so much done. The puppets are done, Mrs. Riebholz came in, set up her machine, and proceeded to sew ALL DAY LONG. It was amazing. Then she said she'd be back tomorrow. Wow. The minister’s outfits are done, the Mathemagician robes are getting there, and Julie is piecing together enough fabric to make the last Lethargian robes. (A combination of low estimating on my part and cutting errors on the part of the kids meant we did not have enough material. Originally the material was going to be for the drop too, but we ended up just painting it to match.) Shaylee is really stressed, but she has worked so hard and I am so proud of all that she has done. Both girls have learned to sew, to pin and cut out patterns, and I’ve even caught Shaylee teaching other people.

The floor spiral is almost done. Little details can be handled tomorrow (like painting the escape bannisters black, or covering up the tower under the stairs, or running the speaker cords so they can’t be seen).

Rehearsal went well. Notes were mostly for tech cues or about projection and staging. Anything deeper than that is too late to fix. The kids are really excited for tomorrow.

4/18:

The in-school dress rehearsal went well today. The kids are out of school all day in the theatre. Anyone who needs to go to a class in the morning is encouraged to do so, but the afternoon is prep and show. There are two periods after lunch on Thursdays. Sixth period is first—my drama class—and the kids will get ready then. My drama kids who aren’t already in the show (or absent—we have a lot out sick or with injuries) help clean the house for the audience. Fifth period is last, and we perform the first act of the show for students. The
activities director opens up reservations and teachers email her to claim seats. It usually sells out in a matter of minutes. Then we perform the second act after school.

Having all day is great because kids can do last minute fixes to things, everyone is there to work on stuff, we can do last minute rehearsals of tough bits, and everyone can chill out in preparation for a live audience. To prevent issues like we’ve had in the past (and still do sometimes with the assistant principal) I made the kids laminated “backstage passes” that they were to wear all day today. That way, if they left the theatre to use the restroom, go to lunch, or go to their locker, no one would give them a hard time. Also, per Fink’s request, kids who go to class must be in regular clothes, but the rest of the time they can wear pajama bottoms. Having a backstage pass will prevent them from being harassed. The kids loved the passes so much I think I’m going to make it a tradition. I will order fun lanyards next year. (This year I got some leftovers from my friend, the JROTC instructor.)

The kids put details on puppets, did last minute sewing (all the ministers sewed big red bows to their shoes so they would all match), did painting touch-ups, and made sure everything was ready. I also had a group working on locker posters. One of these years I’m going to get these done early in the process, but for now it tends to happen at this time. Every kid gets a copy of the poster—with his or her name printed across the front—laminated and put on their school locker. All the sports do it, and I think it’s important for activities to do it as well. Some kids have theirs from every show they’ve been in.

We had some unexpected reactions, which is the entire reason for a preview performance. When Milo got into the car and drove, the audience started laughing. I guess they were surprised or delighted, I’m not sure. It wasn’t mocking. Some of the jokes we
thought were hilarious missed the students entirely; some things they really liked shocked the actors.

Tech was a little spotty. We had missed cues and sound was a little all over. It will get better. All in all it was a good rehearsal for the kids and very valuable for them to be in front of a live audience. It is a totally different feeling.

We had to be out by 5:00 so that JROTC could use the theatre for their awards ceremony. The ROTC kids forgot to ask me, so Greg (my friend who runs JROTC) came to check today and it isn’t a problem. He gets as frustrated with his kids as I do with mine.

4/19:

Opening Night. Yikes. The library sells and delivers balloons as a fundraiser, so I always order a balloon (and tootsie pop) for each kid as an opening night gift/"Break a leg." It doesn’t hurt as school wide advertising either: “Why’d you get a balloon?” “The play opens tonight!” Also, all the kids bought t-shirts, so we all wore them today to school, and the ushers wore them at the door.

Predictable errors happened: missed light cues, sound cues, dropped objects, set pieces doing weird things, etc. It was a really small house. I am worried that we didn’t do enough advertising. I know we didn’t do enough advertising. The News-Miner wouldn’t come out and we didn’t even get a sign up in North Pole. Safeway has changed their policy in town—now 8.5x11 posters only. The only good thing about publicity was that Mrs. Nelson went over to the commissary and they agreed to put fliers in the grocery bags. They even did a nice display for us. She volunteered to do the box office, which John usually does, and she did a great job. She was selling stuff at intermission, hawking t-shirts and coffee, and
managing the doors. It was wonderful, especially since Liam decided he didn’t want to be at school anymore and we could hear his crying in the theatre. John ended up driving him back and forth between Eielson and North Pole until the show was over just to keep him quiet. He would wake up anytime the car went below 55. I came out of the show and turned on my phone to find my husband wasn’t even in the building. 😊

I think tomorrow will go well. I told the kids I cannot be here earlier than 5:30—I didn’t tell them I was having dinner with Tina—so they asked me if I would give my keys to Mrs. Daigle and she could let them in at four. I agreed. They want to have everything ready early and I can’tfault them for that. I dropped my keys off at Julie Daigle’s house on the way home.

4/20:

Tonight Tina came to see the show. The kids kept asking me when she was coming and was it tonight, and I wouldn’t tell them. I didn’t want them to be extra nervous or do anything odd. Apparently Kindall figured it out because she saw Tina in the audience writing notes, and it got around the backstage pretty fast. Gary asked me directly if she was here and I told him no. I think if it had been confirmed Gary in particular would have been really stressed out. He was laughing when he found out.

The show was okay, full of typical mistakes and cringe-worthy moments. The curtains got stuck on the drops a couple of times, Gatekeeper keeps pointing her gun at the audience, Humbug’s banquet monologue was awkward, and to top it all off the head of the Gross Exaggeration fell off in the middle of the battle scene. Sigh. Whether Man got too excited and lifted the center pole too high. She hit a lighting fixture, which seems to be okay,
and knocked off the demon’s head. I was really proud of the kids. They handled it very professionally. They didn’t react to it, walked around it, and found a cute way to get it off the stage. Letter Man scooped it up during the receiving line and “booga-booga’d” Milo as her goodbye. It worked, and the audience was willing to go along.

Afterwards we had a wonderful feedback session with Tina. I gathered all the kids up to sit in the house and Tina answered questions and spoke with them for a good half hour. It was really great for the kids to get feedback from her that not only echoed what I’d told them but also contained both compliments and constructive criticism. The criticism was worded extremely carefully and delicately, which I appreciated. I spend a lot of time in drama class teaching how to give constructive criticism in a way that is productive to the performer, and Tina modeled it for them perfectly. It also helped them take the criticism better. Mrs. Chiment doesn’t really count, so having a “real” theatre person compliment them was great.

The kids cleaned up the band room for classes on Monday, and then Tina, John, Liam, and I went out for coffee to discuss the show further. Tina didn’t have much more to say than what she’d already said, which was good. It meant she hadn’t sugar-coated her feedback for the kids, or at least, no more so than she had for me.

We have pick-up rehearsal on Wednesday and then two more performances. We’re almost done!

4/24:

The pickup rehearsal was fun, as always. Our tradition is to do it as a speed through and be as silly as possible. Weird costumes, silly props, ridiculous stunts all make an appearance. It’s a way to enjoy the rehearsal, get a chance to do all the stupid pranks that
they’d like to do in front of an audience, and build some energy back up for the second weekend. The only rules are “stick to the script,” and “put it back where you found it when you’re done.” Zoe forgot her computer at home, which was annoying, but we rehearsed everything else. Princess Reason couldn’t be there today (grrrr) so Humbug actually memorized her part and performed it. AJ (followspot) was in drag, Morgan (cop) came on as Batman, and several people wore fish hats from *Seussical*.

4/26 & 27:

Final weekend. Whew. We rented the camera again to video. I got to give out the final night gifts. This year I did a great job—I did bags like Milo’s presents. Usually I do one gift: an insert mug, button, hat, keychain, rubber duck… I found what must have been restaurant doggie bags with a paw print on the front (for Tock). I put in a giant pencil (magic staff), a copy of the map, two plastic gold coins (for tolls), and some Laffy-Taffy (box of laughter). (They were supposed to get some little letter stickers too, but I forgot them.) The kids loved them, and I caught kids in my math classes writing with the pencils. They were so worth it. It is always fun to hand out the presents before the show, and it’s a good way to get the kids amped up for the final performance.

We had one horrible moment the last night where apparently someone heard Gary say something about the curtains over the mic and pulled them. We were still in intermission and had audience in the bathroom. The actors are sweethearts—they started acting—but lights weren’t on and I was freaking out. We hadn’t closed the doors yet. I was really upset at first because I thought Gary had called start without checking with the box office, but it turned out to be an honest mistake. Oh well. We still had the problems with the traveler and the
drops, and there were predictable weirdnesses—at one point PJ (Math) totally lost her lines—but over all it was a good show. I’m really proud of the kids and the work they’ve done.

Gary’s never seen a Senior Night and no one thought to say anything to him about how to call it. The seniors always take the stage at the end of the last show—often give me flowers or a gift—and I talk about each senior and recognize them. Gary called the end of the show like any other and didn’t bring the lights back up or open the curtain. They ended up doing it a minute later, but by then half the audience was in the hall. It was pretty confusing. I can’t tell them when/how to do it because it’s supposed to be a surprise for me—even though they do it almost every year. I’ll have to make sure to say something to the next stage manager about it.

The kids got together with my husband and made a framed hand and footprint of Liam—my son—at exactly four months old. Then they did a giant poster of all of their handprints and copies of the posters of all the shows they’d been in. They signed the back with wonderful messages. It was a really lovely gift.

Afterward we had strike followed by cake. The kids all fought over who could take what pieces home. I usually don’t let them but we store way too much stuff, so this time I did. August had a meltdown during the show and part of strike, and she was talking scary again. She wouldn’t come home with me, but didn’t want to go back to her boyfriend’s house. After she left I ended up calling a counselor about it. I love that girl to bits and I was really worried. August has a history and I didn’t want her to do anything stupid. I texted her until the counselor—who called mom—who is currently living with the school nurse to get away from stepdad—called the police to check on August. She’s okay, but I have a feeling
she’ll be back in treatment after the show is over. Why are teachers also parents, confidants, counselors, friends, advocates, and therapists?

This was a good show, and we are all tired. I’m glad it’s done. We’ll all have PPD (post-play-depression) for the next two weeks as we try to figure out what to do with our afternoons and evenings again.

5/25:

The show just doesn’t feel finished until the cast party. We have a combined one every year for both shows in May once the snow has melted. We have it at our house, kids run around outside, use our hot tub, play video games and Apples to Apples inside, and generally run amok. We start at five, do awards and letters at six, and I tell the kids we’ll kick them off the property at midnight.

We usually have the party the weekend before or after graduation. Prom is the first weekend of May, and it has been too cold the second weekend the last couple of years. This year was worse. There was still snow on the ground. Today. It hasn’t all melted yet. Luckily we didn’t have the party last weekend. I woke up last Saturday to find this:
Yes, that’s fresh snow. On May 18th. Really?

Kids vote on most of the awards. Spencer (Bee) got Supporting Actor, Cearra (Insincerity) got Best Cameo (it wasn’t really a cameo but they vote—what can you do?), Kenzie (Tock) got Actress of the Year for both Grace in *Radium Girls* and for Tock, Kindall got high school Techie of the Year and Missy got junior high Techie of the Year. In a surprise move, Colton was voted Actor of the Year. It’s the first time the award has gone to a junior high student.

The kids played Mario Kart, got in the hot tub, broke a piñata, played a huge game of Apples to Apples, and ran around beating each other up with the pool-noodle light sabers I’d made. Josh came with Missy, which was good. I want him to audition again next year. They all had a good time. We had some teachers and parents show up too, which is always important—more adult supervision is always better—and it means a lot to the kids when the teachers come to the party.

I’ve never had so many seniors graduate at once. I’m losing twelve this year! I made these really wonderful senior gifts that I think I’m going to make a tradition. They have the
names of all the seniors, “Drama”, “2013”, the student’s name larger, and all the shows they worked on. I framed them and I’m pretty proud of them. I’m proud of the seniors too. It’s been a crazy but a good year.
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
THEATRE ARTS GRADUATE PROGRAM

THESIS PROJECT/ PRODUCTION PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

STUDENT- Angela Chiment ID#

UNDER CONSIDERATION IS DIRECTION OF: The Phantom Tollbooth

EVALUATOR’S NAME: Christina Barrigan TITLE: Associate Professor, Thesis Chair

PLACE OF PERFORMANCE: Eielson Jr./Sr. High, Eielson AFB, AK

DATE OF VIEWING: April 20, 2013

DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE VENUE:
Eielson Jr./Sr. High’s theatre is a small proscenium space with a moderate quantity of equipment. Excerpted from Angela’s description of production parameters:

Eielson’s theatre is a small proscenium, approximately twenty feet across and deep, that seats 140. The stage has a small arched apron that is edged by stairs leading down to the house. There is no pit. Wing space is very limited and curtains are hung from static battens. The light booth is in the back of the house at audience level and looks out onto a small shelf balcony, from which the follow spots are usually manned. Lighting instrumentation is a challenge of the space. There are approximately 20 ERS, 10 Fresnel, and 4 colored strip light units hung over the audience and stage.

For the performance, one of the follow spots, both of the front-of-house lighting positions and the main curtain were used.

DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPT:
The director wishes to contrast the realistic world of Milo’s house with the imaginatively child-like world of creative lands beyond the tollbooth:

The Land of Expectations, including the Lethargians, should be extremely organic and consist of excessively smooth curves. Dictionopolis should be a more structured organic shape, while Digitopolis should be more geometrical in design. The Mountains of Ignorance, which are Milo’s fear and doubt landscape, should be jagged and severe, with the Castle in the Air made entirely of sharp straight lines.

The color palette for the show will be bright, chaotic, and jewel toned. I have no desire to recreate the Kansas to Oz effect, so the colors will remain the same in both, though in Milo’s room they will be more muted.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTUAL PRODUCTION DIRECTION AND/OR REALIZED DESIGN OF SETS, PROPS, COSTUMES, LIGHTING, SOUND:

SETS:
It was a unit set made from platforms and a map-backdrop. The platforms were a symmetrical structure: two taller (approx. 36” high) flanked a center shorter (approx. 18” tall) platform and were connected with short stair cases. The taller platforms had a series of banner-like mini-backdrops for each location. As we moved from one location to another, the cast would un-roll a new set of small, painted drops to become the background to the action. Separate set props were brought on to become merchant stalls, seating, and cars.

PROPS:
There was some excellent attention to detail in the props. This story demands several very specific props to accompany the characters and the story telling. Just a few of these brilliantly realized props were: The Mathemagician’s gigantic pencil Magic staff (it had to be able to write), Milo’s words at the banquet (the had to be what he said), the word sellers’ wares, and Milo’s small car. There were also many sign props which needed to be fun-looking and easily readable from the audience and were both!

COSTUMES:
Costumes were as fun and creative as the props. Characters appeared in clothes and accessories as described in the novel, yet, with a fun interpretation. The Humbug, for example, was wearing a hood, hat and “antennae” in green so to suggest an insect without slavishly trying to replicate one. All characters aside from Milo appeared to be clothed quite eccentrically, but all very appropriate to their characters and all actors and thus the characters seemed very comfortable in their clothes.
Many of the characters were puppets. Use of puppets allowed for wonderful differences in scale: The Awful Dynne could be enormous and ominous, and the Spelling Bee could then be smaller and bee-shaped. Actors manipulating the puppets worked well with the puppets, actors who were interacting with the puppet character were very good at speaking to the puppet and not the operator. I found the addition of puppets a delightful expansion of the imaginative world and an effective dramatic element.

**LIGHTING:**
Lighting was sometimes dark (as a deficiency of fixtures was to blame) but the timing of the cuing was quite sensitive to the rhythm and tempo of the performance.

**SOUND:**
There were spot effects motivated by the text and they were all delightfully appropriate to the context of the scene. Also, the student sound designer had chosen classical music selections to emotionally underscore the action for the entirety of the performance. I found the selections to be very thoughtfully chosen and effectively used.

**HOW DID THE PRODUCTION DIRECTION OR DESIGN IMPLEMENT THE IDEAS EXPRESSED IN THE CONCEPT STATEMENT?**
The realized technical elements reflected the concept statement in that there were contrasting settings for the many locations of Milo’s journey. Use of color reflects the jewel tones referred to in the concept, and it serves to distinguish the land of imagination from Milo’s real life. The mechanism for changing scenes was very simple and delightfully effective it fit in well with the idea of a child playing in his bedroom and how just turning a storybook page can change the entire environment.

**APPROPRIATENESS OF CHOICE OF SCRIPT FOR ABILITIES OF PERFORMERS, AUDIENCE, VENUE, AND/OR ACADEMIC SETTING?**
I think this script was a great choice and a hugely challenging choice for a Jr./Sr. High school. Students who were involved ranged from 6th grade to 12th grade and brought their wildly varying skill sets and attention spans with them. While the script is wonderfully interesting and educational because it is constantly playing with language and literary concepts, it is this very quality that makes it a challenge for young students to relate to the allegorical characters. In spite of such challenges, I believe the students producing the performance offered a very successful production to their audiences.

**ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING IF APPLICABLE: CLEAR DELINEATION OF UNITS OF ACTION, MOTIVATED BLOCKING, VISUALLY INTERESTING COMPOSITION, VISUAL EXPRESSION OF METAPHOR, USE OF PICTURIZATION IN STORYTELLING, CLEAR AND BELIEVABLE CHARACTERIZATION, ADEQUATE USE OF BODY AND VOICE, UNITY OF PRODUCTION ELEMENTS, CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING.**
There were fairly clear units of action as the script delineates each scene with a location change. I think this helped the young actors find the major actions. Blocking was usually motivated and very rarely looked stiff or unmotivated; although, the floorplan did not allow for many acting areas to help motivate actors to cross the stage. Much of the composition for conversation was static, but well-staged. The actors made nice pictures

**WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THIS PARTICULAR PERFORMANCE VENUE, WAS THIS PRODUCTION SATISFACTORY OR UNSATISFACTORY?**
This was a very satisfactory production.
The Phantom Tollbooth: Self-Evaluation

The Phantom Tollbooth, by Susan Nanus, was produced at Ben Eielson Junior/Senior High School in April of 2013 as a thesis project for the master’s program at Central Washington University. The production presented and contained many challenges and several successes; technical and performance aspects of the show were strong, but many opportunities for improvement and learning were also present.

Technically, this show was far more complex than originally thought. Perhaps it could have been done very simplistically, but it seemed to demand more. Using student designers was—while a headache—absolutely valuable and improved the quality of the final project and student learning. Unfortunately, two designers abandoned the show, which left the director to make a great deal of the design choices in the middle of production.

Understudy actors have been assigned in the past, but perhaps understudy designers should be planned additionally. The new process of having designers submit a proposal worked very well, but the due date should have been concrete: this would have prevented an unreliable student from being assigned to the set design.

Losing the set designer made things complicated, and the art teacher, Julie Daigle, ended up designing many of the drops as a result. The set absolutely would not have happened without her help. The challenge became a learning opportunity for other students as they researched images on Pinterest, designed a drop or two, and learned scenic painting.

The stairs proved to be difficult as well, for a few reasons. Sometimes students are not as experienced as they think they are—directors need to listen to their instincts if something does not look right. Eventually, the uneven stair tread was fixed, but it took extra time, was frustrating for everyone involved, and should have been prevented.
Despite the setbacks, the set was successful overall. The platform towers and twin staircases gave opportunities for levels, triangles, and interesting stage pictures. The rolling drops on the towers worked very smoothly for changing sets quickly—although it would have been nice to find a better solution for keeping the traveller from tangling them when it closed. The smaller set pieces solved a number of problems creatively and were impressive enough for a visiting dance troupe from Healy, Alaska, to ask to borrow. The color delineation between the two cities was effective and helped students make design decisions. The map backdrop turned out beautifully: the students were proud of it, and it looked great under the lights. The best part of the set, however, was the floor. It gave a wonderful sense of dizziness and really tied everything together. The pink and blue echoed the warm and cool conflict between the two cities, and the swirl implied a dreamscape as well as evoking the Munchkinland scene from *The Wizard of Oz*.

Though not without some highlights, the costuming process was a stressful disaster that could have been avoided by supplying the designer with deadlines and strictly enforcing them. If not for one student and a couple of adult volunteers, most of the cast would not have been dressed. On the positive side, the student designer learned to think more creatively—instead of pulling everything right from stock—and many students learned to sew this semester. The costumes looked just like the student designs, and fit the show perfectly. Shaylee and Kyrie made all of the costuming decisions, and they have developed a good eye and creative problem-solving skills. Neither student could sew or pin patterns at the beginning of the show but, by the end of the show, they were teaching their peers. The next production will need concrete deadlines, renderings for all costumes, and ensured delegation of the sewing jobs earlier and in a more organized fashion.
Props went wonderfully all thanks to the props designer. Katie is an amazing student and a brilliant problem-solver and artist. She put in countless hours making sure everything was right—and her hard work showed: she did a remarkable job. She had never done a show with Eielson before, so she had no preconceived notions about how it should go and was able to do it properly from the start: prop lists, placement schedules, rehearsal props, and organization. She came to production meetings, always ran her ideas by the group, and understood that her props had to compliment the set and costumes. She will be used as a role model for future designers.

Sound also went very well. We bypassed the built-in system entirely and ran the show from a laptop and speakers, which solved our old sound issues. Junior high students were not originally eligible to design because of our school’s bell schedule, which makes their attendance at lunchtime meetings impossible, but Zoë made an impressive proposal: since sound was more easily separated from the other design areas, she could have her own meetings. The sound design succeeded in large part because she attended extra rehearsals to get the timing right and developed a good sense of each scene. She also presented her ideas to the director on a regular basis and made corrections throughout the process. Next time, the sound cues must be written out and to the stage manager much earlier—Zoë had all of her paperwork in order, but it did not get to the stage manager until the last minute—and the stage manager needs to be calling them himself, instead of relying on the soundboard operator.

It was clear in the beginning that lights were going to be a challenge. The declining state of Eielson’s lighting equipment is well documented, and losing the lighting designer meant more work for the director. However, the existing light plot was overhauled, newer
fixtures and gels were added, and the front-of-house batten was focused—none of which had been done in over ten years. The system updates were impressive, but the lighting cues were too dark—a common mistake at Eielson that will be remedied. Because the district came through at the last minute, cues were not edited to the degree necessary. The student running the follow-spot was new to the position; however, he was mentored by the previous operator and picked it up amazingly quickly. He routinely saved cues or added emphasis in creative and delightful ways: he highlighted the box of laughter as it fell open in act two. Previous to the show, a one-on-one lighting seminar was taught to the former lighting designer; he learned about our new fixtures—he hung, focused, and gelled one of each type—and was instructed in basic computer light plot drafting. In the course of the production, the lighting system was improved, relationships were developed with theatre professionals in town who will be of help in future, and the school district to agreed to provide services and consumables. For the next show, the light plot will be drafted on the computer, the higher powered instruments will all be hung, and the cues will be written earlier so that edits can be made during tech week.

Publicity was a rough area for this show: there was very little of it. Materials were not sent over to the elementary schools and, due to cutbacks at the local newspaper, the play was not covered. The poster was done in time—despite the change in requirements that it needs to have a standard letter size—and t-shirts were done early, but the program and tickets were not finished until the last minute. The box office, as always, was run by a wonderful parent volunteer and that practice will continue. The students put so much work into these shows; they deserve a large audience, and that must happen. In the future, posters will get to the
district early enough to get approval and sent to all schools, the commissary will be approached earlier, and ways to replace the newspaper coverage will be researched.

On the acting side, we experienced some tremendous successes. This is the first show in which every actor could be heard clearly everywhere in the theatre. Even though the cast was young, students were off-book at a reasonable time and watched their levels on stage. The student who stepped in to play Milo did a remarkable job given the short rehearsal process and his inexperience. Several students stepped up to replace other actors, and they all did a great job. Several characters had to be replaced, though, which created delays, so some scenes did not get the polishing that they required. The end of act one in particular needed work and time simply ran out. The Humbug’s performance never developed beyond the surface—some one-on-one rehearsal time should have been spent with her doing verbs.

The commitment was made to remember to do warm-ups before and breaks in the middle of every rehearsal, and it helped the actors’ focus and energy. The shorter rehearsal time, due to maternity leave, meant that rehearsals were scheduled during testing and over Spring Break—which will not be done again. Students did not have transportation, were out of town, or simply skipped rehearsals, and it was a source of much tension. If rehearsals must be scheduled during testing, a conversation will be had with the cast regarding expectations and time commitments.

Puppet rehearsals were, at the recommendation of my professor, scheduled early and often, sometimes overlapping other rehearsals; this contributed to the strong puppet performances in the show. While, in some cases, the students did not get the actual puppet they would be using until late in the process, most puppeteers rehearsed with a stand-in puppet similar in style to the one they would eventually use. The exception was the Trivium,
which was not done until late in the process; given more rehearsal time, the student likely would have made delightful discoveries in her performance. The puppets were a fun addition to the show and students enjoyed them. There was a large crossover between class and production this year, which was a nice change, and having students in class who were learning to make and operate each type of puppet—and would eventually be cast in puppet roles—worked very well. Puppets are a great addition to Eielson’s repertoire and they will certainly be used again. Next time, all the puppets will be built earlier so that students can rehearse with the structural puppet, if not the entire decorated piece.

Staging was a little static, primarily to combat young actors’ tendency towards purposeless movement. The cast worked hard on stage pictures and playing the level game, and staging was usually discussed with students rather than imposed; in fact, the least successful scenes were the ones where blocking was imposed on the actors, and it showed. The floor plan could not have the traditional obstacle course or pinned corners because the car had to travel back and forth across the stage. Instead, smaller pieces were brought on in scenes where they would not impede the car. The show was staged more like a musical than a regular play and corners were often pinned with people rather than set pieces. The stairs and platforms were supposed to provide enough acting areas, but the areas in front of the towers were not well delineated.

Breaking the fourth wall was an option: the script was written so that Milo could use his own given word or number, or go to the audience. Audience participation has been done in several shows at Eielson, all successfully, so it was decided that Milo would address the crowd. Since he only does so twice and things should be done in threes, the student suggestion of bringing children up on stage during the mining scene seemed like a great
solution and a fun way to involve kids. Unfortunately, Colton did not have enough rehearsal time to become comfortable addressing the audience and that scene always came off awkwardly. The impromptu miners were distracting to the action on stage and entered and exited abruptly. Though the easiest solution would have been to cut them, in the battle between theatrical integrity and students and the audience having fun, fun should win. It was the favorite part of the show for many of the children in attendance—one young lady had so much fun that she came back a second night.

Ultimately, the show is a vehicle for education, and students met the learning goals. The students demonstrated self-discipline and commitment to a project: designers saw a design through to implementation; actors learned lines and made rehearsals; and all students managed their schedules, grades, and other commitments to be a part of the production. Everyone learned a new skill or two—whether designing and rendering a backdrop, cartooning a giant drop, blocking with levels, using a sewing machine, practicing scenic painting, managing projection or diction, running a spotlight, or operating a puppet. Students used proper vocabulary, participated in the performance, and—most importantly—had a good time.

The show was stressful, attrition was high, and time was at a premium. Most improvements seem to boil down to planning and getting things done in advance. Still, the show turned out really well and, most importantly, students had fun. The program received complimentary emails from audience members, a request to borrow set pieces and props, and devoted four-year-old fans.
BEHS DRAMA PRESENTS
The Phantom Tollbooth

at Ben Eielson H.S. Theatre Saturday April 27th
Works Cited


Works Consulted


APRIL 19, 20, 26, 27

ABC

BEHS DRAMA PRESENTS

The Phantom Tollbooth

at Ben Eielson H.S. Theatre

TICKETS Adults $6.00

Youth $4.00

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.
Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High Drama Presents:

The Phantom Tollbooth

Written by Susan Nanus
Adapted from the book by Norton Juster

Directed by Angela Chiment

Stage Manager: Gary Salmans
Assistant Stage Manager: Kindall Loveless
Costume Design: Kyrie Long & Shaylee Shocklee
Prop Design: Katie Daigle
Sound Design: Zoë Smith

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.
For the safety of the actors and the enjoyment of the audience, please:

- Take flash-less photos
- Turn off video cameras
- Turn off cell phones, iPods, and other devices
- Do NOT text during the show
- Keep food and drink outside the theatre
- Stay seated during the performance.
- If an emergency arises, please wait for a scene change to leave the theatre.

We hope you enjoy the show!

Director's Notes:

Welcome to Ben Eielson's performance of The Phantom Tollbooth! Directing this adaptation of Norton Juster's classic children's book has been on my wishlist for years - I am immensely grateful to the amazing students you will see tonight for not only making this dream a reality but for exceeding all of my expectations. In every rehearsal I saw student actors, techs, and designers overcome challenges - horrible puns that needed to be brought to life, monstrous and giant characters that needed to fit onstage, and sets ranging from the deliberately bland to the exotic and arcane - with innovative and original solutions. It has been a pleasure working with all the cast members, and I thank you for once again lending me your children. I received a copy of The Phantom Tollbooth for Christmas in 1985, and it quickly became one of my favorite books. Milo's adventures through the Land of Wisdom helped ensure a lifelong love of both the English language and mathematics, two loves I now pursue as a drama and math teacher. Tonight, you will see Milo battle doubts and demons along his quest - accompanied by his faithful watchdog, Tock, and his guide, the Humbug - to restore the princesses Rhyme and Reason to their rightful throne. Until he does, the kingdom will continue to make little sense, regardless of whether or not things are technically correct. By facing his own doubts, fears, and confusion, Milo shows us all that even the impossible can be possible if enough people are there to help you. His adventures inspired me as a young girl and I know that this cast will spark the same sense of wonder about the true value of learning in all the audience tonight, young and old. And just like Milo needs everyone's aid on his quest, I need to recognize that this performance isn't just the result of the cast's and my own labor - this show would not be the awesome result it has become without the countless hours volunteered by the cast's parents. Every one of you who swung a hammer, hung a light, brought snacks to a rehearsal, pitched coffee to your coworkers, or even just patiently tolerated another rehearsal running long contributed a key part to the success of this show. Tonight, I am proud to share with you the fruits of all of your labor: cast, crew and parents. Thank you for making this performance possible - I know you'll enjoy the show.

-Angela Chiment, Director
Cast
(In order of appearance)

Mackenzie Foreman .................................................Clock/Tock
Colton Jenkins ..........................................................Milo
Paloma Polanco .........................................................Tollbooth/Mathemagician
Cat Foster ..............................................................Whether Man/Waiter/Gross Exaggeration
Katie Daigle .........................................................Lethargian 1/Everpresent Wordsnatcher/Senses Taker
Cearra Mihal ..............................................................Lethargian 2/Demon of Insincerity
Jonilee Polanco .........................................................Lethargian 3/Dodecahedron
Matt Gilliam .........................................................Lethargian 4/Shopper/Waiter/Gross Exaggeration
Spencer Price ...............................................................Lethargian 5/Spelling Bee
Izzy McCoy ..............................................................Lethargian 6/Letter Man/Gross Exaggeration
Kristin Gadow ............................................................King Azaz
Jayden Hedricks ......................................................Princess Sweet Rhyme
Hailey Baker ...............................................................Princess Pure Reason
Kindall Loveless ........................................Cop/Word Merchant #3/Waiter/Awful Dynne/Number Miner 13
Morgan Delashmit ......................................................Cop/Demon
August Patterson .........................................................Gatekeeper/Dr. Dischord
Shaylee Shocklee .......................................................Word Merchant #1/Number Miner
Kyrie Long ..............................................................Word Merchant #2/Waiter/Terrible Trivium
Autumn Pryor ............................................................Word Shopper/Page
Lyndzie Carter .........................................................Humbug
Victoria Nelson ..........................................................Duke of Definition/Number Miner
Zoë Smith ............................................................Minister of Meaning/Number Miner
Rachel Tannis ...........................................................Earl of Essence/Number Miner
Nikki Ruble ..............................................................Count of Connotation/Number Miner
Ariana Polanco ..........................................................Undersecretary of Understanding/Number Miner

Stage Manager: .........................................................Gary Salmans
Assistant Stage Manager: ...........................................Kindall Loveless
Scenic Design: ........................................................Sara Schreiber,
Costume Design: ....................................................Kindall Loveless, Mrs. Daigle
Sound Design: ........................................................Kyrie Long & Shaylee Shocklee
Prop Design: ..........................................................Zoë Smith
Poster Design: .........................................................Katie Daigle
Wardrobe Chief: ......................................................Kindall Loveless
Light Board: ............................................................Shaylee Shocklee
Sound Board: ..........................................................Jimmy Erickson
Followspot: ..............................................................Zoë Smith & Missy Riggs
Run Crew: .................................................................A.J. Langworthy
Morgan Delashmit, Missy Riggs

Set, Costume, Prop, & Puppet Construction:
Hailey Baker, Lyndzie Carter, Katie Daigle, Mr. & Mrs. Daigle,
Morgan Delashmit, Mackenzie Foreman, Cat Foster, Colby Freel,
Kristin Gadow, Matt Gilliam, Jayden Hedricks, Colton Jenkins,
Kyrie Long, Kindall Loveless, Isabel McCoy, Teresa McCoy,
Dakota Martin, McKayla Berry, Cearra Mihal, Victoria Nelson,
Abby Parker, August Patterson, Ariana Polanco, Jonilee Polanco,
Paloma Polanco, Spencer Price, Autumn Pryor, Missy Riggs, Nikki
Ruble, Gary Salmans, Sara Schreiber, Shaylee Shocklee, Zoë
Smith, Rachel Tannis & Mrs. Chiment's Drama Class
Cast & Crew Biographies

Hailey Baker (Princess Reason) Hailey is an outgoing person who loves music and animals. She is in seventh grade, and wants to be a veterinarian when she gets older. She loves Facebook, and should probably spend more time off of it. Thanks for watching!

Lyndzie Carter (Humbug) Lyndzie is on 7th grade. You saw her in the last play Radium Girls as the shop girl. She is now the Humbug and loves it. Lyndzie also likes acting, running, cheerleading, and hanging with friends. Thanks for coming and enjoy!

Angela Chiment (Director): Mrs. Chiment is directing this play for her Master’s thesis project. She is very proud of all of the students and their hard work. This is Mrs. Chiment’s fifteenth show at Eielson. She would like to thank her husband and their new son, Liam, for being patient with all the rehearsals.

Katie Daigle (Props/Lethargian/Wordsnatcher/Senses Taker) Katie is going to share but first you must tell her your name, your seat, the color of the gum on the bottom of your shoe......

Morgan Delashmit (Cop/Puppeteer/Demon) Morgan is a senior, she has done plays with Eielson before. She is sad to be leaving and hopes you enjoy the show.

Joshua Erickson (Light Board) Josh is a senior and thinks Shaylee is amazing.

McKenzie Foreman (Clock/Tock) Kenzie is a senior this year and was last seen in the fall production of Radium Girls as Grace. She likes pina coladas and getting’ caught in the rain, she plans on being an actress after high school, and marrying Johnny Depp. They will have 10 cats together, and live in a grass hut. In the Bahamas. Thank you all for coming please enjoy the show.

Cat Foster (Whether Man/Waiter/Demon) Cat an 8th grader and in her first play. She loves to sing, is in yearbook, and spend a lot of her time with video games. She wants to deal with children when she grows up, but is occupied with video games. Have a wonderful time at the show.

Kristin Gadow (King Azaz) Kristin is a senior who loves math and her favorite word is “ambrosia.”

Matt Gilliam (Lethargian/Shopper/Waiter/Demon) I am in 8th grade. This is my second show here at Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High. I enjoy spending time with my dogs.

Jayden Hedricks (Princess Rhyme) Jayden is in seventh grade and this is her first play. She is a sport addict and is a very crazy person. She loves hanging out with her friends and being on Facebook. The one thing she likes most is Batman, people even call her Batman! Thanks for coming to the show.

A.J. Langworthy (Followspot) AJ loves to dance and show off his skillz, but mostly for the ladies. ;) He is just a fun loving dude who is happy to be a part of all this.

Colton Jenkins (Milo) Colton is in 8th grade. This is his first play and he is happy to be Milo. He enjoys watching baseball games and dreams to be a pitcher for the L.A Dodgers. He also enjoys killing zombies in his spare time. He hopes to enjoy the play that everyone spent so much time on.
Kyrie Long (Costumes/Merchant 2/Trivium) Kyrie is a junior. Shout outs to the Polancos, Cearra, Shaylee, and Spencer. J’aimes too. She loves her dad for putting up with her design shows, and thanks her family for all the support.

Kindall Loveless (ASM/Merchant/Miner) Is it time to take a nap yet? Kindall is a senior and has worked very hard on this to help bring it to life for you to enjoy. This is her last play here at BEHS and she has so very much enjoyed all the time she has spent doing all of the plays she has participated in. She is sad to be leaving but hopes that she has made an impact on the drama department here. Please enjoy the show!

Isabel McCoy (Lethargian/Letter Man/Exaggeration) Izzy McCoy has been in three previous plays, most recently Radium Girls (Katheryn Schuab), and enjoys listening to music and visiting social networking sites in her leisure time. Her future plans consist of going to Juilliard and traveling the world changing lives. Though she can be loud, she does treasure quiet time every once in a blue moon. Her favorite quote is “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt”. - Abraham Lincoln

Cearra Mihal (Lethargian/Insincerity) Hi! This is my first time acting and sadly, my last show with these lovely drama geeks. It has been such fun being a part of the department and working with every member. I love them all. Anyway. Enjoy the show!

Victoria Nelson (Duke of Definition/Miner) Victoria is in 8th grade and is looking forward to her second play with BEHS Drama! She is an avid baker and bookworm, and loves to draw. She enjoys the time she spends with friends and family, and loves to laugh till she is blue in the face! Enjoy the show, as it is a labor of love!

August Patterson (Gatekeeper/Dischord) August is a junior and this is the latest in a list of Eielson shows including Radium Girls, Midsummer, and Wind In The Willows. She loves being AS LOUD AS POSSIBLE and hopes you enjoy the show.

Ariana Polanco (Undersecretary of Understanding/Miner) Greeting Earthlings! This is my 8th play that I have been a part of and my second time acting. I really LOVE Doctor Who, It’s my favorite show that fills up most of my free time. I’m pretty excited about the 7th season and also the next season of Sherlock, which is my 2nd favorite T.V. show. Anyway, hope y’all have an awesome time watching the show! Never give up, never surrender!

Jonilee Polanco (Lethargian/Dodecahedron) Jonilee is a sophomore who has been involved in other productions (mostly as a monkey). Make sure you don’t miss out on my scene because it’s going to be awesome! I hope you enjoy the show!

Paloma Polanco (Tollbooth/Mathemagician) PJ is a proud English nerd and avid Doctor Who fan. She’d like to shout out to Stormageddon.

Spencer Price (Lethargian/Bee) Spencer is a senior and this is his second show; he was in Radium Girls as Mr. Berry. He is an Eagle Scout and went to the state DECA competition. He’s really excited to start college at Utah State in the fall. He plans to work and spend time with family and friends this summer. Hope you really enjoy the show.

Autumn Pryor (Word Shopper/Page) Autumn is an eighth grader at Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High School. She has only been at this school for four months now. She has been doing plays for about nine years now. The last play was the Wizard of Oz for the Alamogordo music theatre. She is musically inclined, she plays the viola, guitar, piano, and can sing. She is a military kid and was born in England, then moved to South Carolina then to Italy then to New Mexico, then to here to the wonderful place of Alaska.

Missy Riggs (Techie) Melyssa is a 7th grader and was a techie in Radium Girls. I’ll try to play softball and Melyssa loves drawing and reading. Melyssa loves to play with her friends during summertime. Melyssa wants to help animals when she grows up. Oh, and Melyssa is thirteen years old and will be fourteen this December. Thanks for coming to the show!

Nikki Ruble (Count of Connotation, Numbers Miner) Nikki is a seventh grader. She was last seen in Radium Girls as the photographer. She is now the Count of Connotation. She spends her free time babysitting. Enjoy the show!
Gary Salmans (Stage Manager) Yo! Wazz up! My name is, my name is, my name is Gary Salmans. I’m the real “Slim Shady” with dark brown hair.

Shaylee Shocklee (Costumes/Merchandiser) Shaylee is a sophomore at Eielson. She likes doing costumes and Moulin Rouge is an awesome movie.

Zoe Smith (sound design, minister of meaning, numbers miner) Zoe is an 8th grader and this is her first play. When she is not blowing her ears out while looking for new music, she is writing, drawing or reading. She plans on becoming an ecologist and working with mammals. She hopes that you like the show and the music involved.

Rachel Tannis (Earl of Essence, Numbers Miner) Rachel Tannis is an 8th grader at Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High School. She is a funny, happy, and smiley girl. Rachel loves playing basketball and softball. She can’t wait to be in the next play. Hope you enjoy the show.

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Special Thanks to our amazing volunteers:

Julie & Troy Daigle
Jamie & David Nelson
Sharon Rebholz
Lori Lovan

And Thanks To the Faculty, Staff, & Administration of Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High

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2013 Yearbooks

are still available for $65! Please see Mrs. Job as soon as possible. Yearbooks will be distributed to students on May 3rd! (Seniors receive their Yearbooks on April 29th)

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Juniors - now is the time to start thinking of next year’s Senior Photos - 2 copies of Senior photos and 2 baby pictures will be due on September 27th. Start making plans now to book a photographer - appointments fill up fast! Also, consider your own Senior page - prices range from $130 - $310, depending on the size and whether you choose color or black and white.

All BEHS students: pre-order your 2013-14 Yearbook at the beginning of the school year and you will only pay $50 - what a deal! The price goes up throughout the school year, so it makes sense to purchase your Yearbook at the lowest possible price.

Contact anyone in Yearbook class or Mrs. Job in Room H142, donna.job@k12northstar.org, 372-3110 X 4154.

Cut this page out and post it on your refrigerator as a reminder ©
Autographs

Want to see your business or club advertised here? Contact Mrs. Chiment for advertising in our fall program!

angela.chiment@k12northstar.org
Phantom Tollbooth Tickets

Friday 19th
Adult $6
Youth $4

Saturday 20th
Adult $6
Youth $4

Friday 26th
Adult $6
Youth $4

Saturday 27th
Adult $6
Youth $4
Early Rehearsals

Milo (Josh) & Tock 3/25/13

Numbers Mine 3/29/13

Digitopolis
3/29/13

Milo (Colton),
Katie standing in for
Dodecahedron
Lighting Equipment

We had about 15 functioning Kliegl ERS.

All units are twist lock

Most of our fixtures looked like this. We also had about 10 functioning Colortran fresnels of similar age.
The backdrop was a copy of the map in the book.

Painting the backdrop
We do most of our painting in the hallway & Great Hall

Painting the Doctor Sign

The Great Hall
Sets: Expectations

The platforms under the drops were painted with the roads to the two kingdoms. They were used for Expectations and the road to Digitopolis.
Set: Tollbooth / Doldrums

The tollbooth had to have a functional arm, be collapsible, and work as a screen for shadow puppets.

Placed on the top corner is the Banana Slug, our unofficial mascot. He makes a subtle appearance on the last performance.

The Doldrums drops were flat gray to match the Lethargian costumes.
Sets: Dictionopolis

The book titles are all from shows done at BEHS.
Set: Numbers Mine

Drops roll down over platform faces.
Set: Mathemagician’s office
Set: Mountains of Ignorance

The mountain drops were based on images from Fantasia
Set: Castle in the Air

Three of the “bricks” were metal, allowing the letter magnets to stick.

Milo could push the walls apart.
Puppets: The Awful Dynne
Shadow puppets were projected from inside the tollbooth.

Thought Puppets:
- Lethargian Schedule
- Escape from the Castle in the Air
- Planets in the solar system
- Water turns to ice
- Words that begin with Q
- Steam engine
- How to bake a pie
- Fahrenheit vs. Centigrade
Puppets: Rod Puppets

Trivium’s arms are run from rods coming out of the elbow. The feet are attached to the performer’s shoes. The body of the puppet is worn like a backpack.

Exaggeration was a three-person puppet, one per arm.
Puppets: Hand Puppets

Hand & Rod Puppets

The Spelling Bee

Demon of Insincerity

Everpresent Wordsnatcher

Senses Taker

Live-hand Puppets
Props

Cake made of Styrofoam and decorated with caulk

Mining picks made from pink foam and cardboard tubes

Each student picked their own dishes and made them in play dough.

Jewel numbers were made with folded acetate and backed, giving them angles and sparkle

Magic staff really writes
Act 1

Setting up

Pre-show

Curtain speech by Eddie (Chiment)

Tock’s opening monologue

Milo is bored

Milo finds the tollbooth
Act 1

Milo decides to go to Dictionopolis

Land of Expectations

Milo enters Wisdom

The Whether Man

The Doldrums

Milo meets the Lethargians
Act 1

Lethargians asleep

Milo meets Tock

Thinking to get moving

Tock tells the story of the two kings

Flashback
Act 1

King Azaz

Princesses Reason & Rhyme

Mathemagician

Rhyme & Reason are banished

The kings hate the decision

The Gatekeeper

Milo needs a reason to enter Dictionopolis "Why Not?"
Act 1

The Word Market

Word Merchant

Letter Man

Word Merchant
Act 1

Spelling Bee

Milo addresses the audience to find a word for the Spelling Bee
Act 1

The royal banquet
Milo meets King Azaz

Square meals taste terrible
Milo must eat his words

A treat from the Half-Bakery
Heroes are off to Digitopolis
Act 2

The heroes find a noisy wagon

Dr. Dischord

The Awful Dynne

Road to Digitopolis

Dodecahedron's word problem

The Numbers Mine
Act 2

Mathemagician hands Milo a jewel

Subtraction Stew

Students pulled kids from the audience up onto stage to play miners

Mathemagician erases the mine

Mathemagician’s office & triplets

Mathemagician makes things disappear
Act 2

The princesses worry about Milo

Heroes arrive in the Mountains of Ignorance

The Terrible Trivium seems so nice

The Everpresent Wordsnatcher (above)

Milo uses his magic staff (left)

The Demon of Insincerity tricks them into a pit
Act 2

Heroes are threatened by demons

They must fill out forms to pass

Heroes reach the princesses

There's no door

Milo uses his letters to make an entrance
Act 2

Milo "push"-es down the wall

They escape the tower

Demons fight the armies of Wisdom

Heroes receive medals

Kings congratulate the heroes

They are made "Heroes of the Realm"
Act 2

Milo says goodbye to his friends

Milo starts the journey home

Milo gets home, “There’s so much to do!”
Students and teachers used Pinterest to organize and share images relevant to design. Please find our other research images on our Tollbooth Pinterest Board: http://pinterest.com/achiment/tollbooth/

Inspiration for Expectations drops
Inspiration for Dictionopolis
Inspiration for the Numbers Mine
Inspiration for the Mountains of Ignorance
Creative Color Schemes
Interactive eBook (PDF)
English edition 1.2
2009 (Printable)

For ebook updates and paper version, please visit
creativecommons.com
BRILLIANT

BRILLIANT-L  BRILLIANT-F  BRILLIANT-G
BRILLIANT-E  BRILLIANT-L  BRILLIANT-F
BRILLIANT-G  BRILLIANT-L  BRILLIANT-K

Description ✳ Brilliant scheme mainly contains bright, vibrant colors, contrasting with warm magenta and orange.

Meanings ★ Bright, strong, quick, active

Implications ➔ Smart, intelligence, success, high technology

Associations 🌠 Night, printing

CREATIVE COLOR SCHEMES
Doldrumms: grey, light yellow, pastels (dull)

Dictionoposis:
Warmer colors

Stair cover, book colors:
dark red, warm yellow, mutual
orange, possibly a olive green

Market tents: red/white

Letter trees: greens, green tones

Agitoposis:

Cooler colors, lots of purples/blues/some green
lot of angles

Much more city like: street lamps?
Graph paper?

Mine: browns, very mutual

Mountains of ignorance:
much more black, darker greens

Design notes for set by Sara Schrieber
Mathemagician's Office rendering by student Kindall Loveless