



The Wiz Study Guide

The Wiz is a musical with music and lyrics by Charlie Smalls and book by William F. Brown. It is a retelling of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, in the context of 1970's African American culture.

The original 1975 Broadway production won seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical. The musical was an early example of Broadway's mainstream acceptance of works with an all-black cast. The musical has had revivals in New York, London, San Diego and the Netherlands, and an off-Broadway Encores! concert version was staged in June 2009. A film adaptation was released in 1978, with Michael Jackson as the Scarecrow and Diana Ross as Dorothy.

Short Summary

On the verge of young adulthood, Dorothy is blown by a tornado into Munchkinland where she meets the Good Witch of the North, Addaperle. Dorothy desperately wants to get back to Kansas and Addaperle recommends that she see the Wiz. Dorothy follows the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City and on the way she meets the Scarecrow who is troubled about her lack of a brain, the Tinman who believes she could be a better person if she had a heart, and the Cowardly Lion who lacks any courage whatsoever. Dorothy invites each of them to visit the Wiz with her, convinced that they will be granted the things they want most. On the way to the Emerald City they encounter dangers that they never dreamed of. The Wiz sees them (grudgingly) and decides to grant their wishes, but for a price. They must destroy the Wicked Witch of the West. Once they arrive at the palace of the Wicked Witch, they end up accidentally killing her. When they return to the Emerald City and the Wiz, they discover that the Wiz may not be exactly what he claims to be... Though he thinks he can still help them all get what they want.

Main Characters

Dorothy - a young girl living with her Aunt and Uncle on a Farm in Kansas

Aunt Em - Dorothy's Aunt, impatient but loving

Uncle Henry - Dorothy's Uncle, kind and wise

Toto - Dorothy's Dog

Munchkins - Citizens of Munchkinland

Addaperle - The Good Witch of the North, sassy and melodramatic

The Yellow Brick Road - Dorothy follows the Yellow Brick Road to find The Wiz

Crows - love to torment the Scarecrow

The Scarecrow - thinks she has no brain

The Tinman - feels she has no heart

The Lion - worries she has no courage

Strangers - warn of the dangers the deep jungle

Kalidahs - creature that lives in the deep jungle

Poppies - Tempting flowers off the path
The Mice Squad - Emerald City police
The Royal Gatekeeper - officious and rude. Responsible for the gate to the Emerald City.
Emerald City Citizens - peculiar and particular
The Wiz - The Wizard of Oz, who is thought to have magical powers
Winkies - Slaves of the Wicked Witch of the West
The Lord High Underling - The Wicked Witch of the West's right-hand.
Evillene – The Wicked Witch of the West, fierce and uncompromising
Messenger - The bearer of bad news, very nervous.
Head Monkey - the military leader of the Winged Monkeys
Winged Monkeys - Evillene's outlaw band
Glinda - The Good Witch of the South, kind and helpful

Plot Overview [including songs]

ACT ONE

Aunt Em and Uncle Henry are preparing for a storm in on their farm in Kansas. Dorothy acts carefree and plays with her dog Toto. This frustrates Aunt Em, who wants Dorothy's help with the chores. Aunt Em reassures Dorothy that she is loved even though they fight [THE FEELING WE ONCE HAD].

The farmhouse spins and flies through the clouds [TORNADO BALLET], coming to rest with a great crash in a strange and beautiful country. There Dorothy is met by the Munchkins and Addaperle, the Good Witch of the North, who tells Dorothy that her house has fallen on the Wicked Witch of the East and killed her, freeing the Munchkins from her powers. Dorothy, distressed and confused, wants only to return to Aunt Em, Uncle Henry, and Toto back in Kansas, and Addaperle decides her best bet is to go guided by the Yellow Brick Road, to see the great and powerful Wiz [HE'S THE WIZARD]. Addaperle gives Dorothy the silver shoes that belonged to the Witch of the East, and tells her not to take them off before she reaches home, for they hold very powerful secret powers.

Dorothy sets down the Road of Yellow Brick, full of doubt and fear at what is in store for her [SOON AS I GET HOME]. Stopping to rest by a cornfield, she is startled when a Scarecrow hanging on a pole strikes up a conversation with her [I WAS BORN ON THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY]. She tells Dorothy of her longing for brains so that she can be like other people. Dorothy invites Scarecrow to accompany her to see if the Wiz can help Scarecrow [EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD #1].

The Yellow Brick Road leads them into a great forest where they discover a woman made of tin, rusted and stiff. They oil her joints [SLIDE SOME OIL TO ME] and she tells them how the Wicked Witch of the East put a spell on her ax so that it began to cut off parts of her body. Each time it happened, a tinsmith replaced the missing part with metal until the woodchopper was entirely made of tin. The one item the tinsmith left out was a heart, and the Tinman has longed for one ever since. Dorothy and the Scarecrow invite her on their journey to see the Wiz with the hope that he may give the woodchopper a heart [EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD #2].

The Yellow Brick Road leads them into the jungle where they are attacked by a lion [I'M A MEAN OLE LION], but are unharmed because the Lion is a coward. They agree that Lion should make the journey to see the Wiz to ask for courage, and the trio becomes a quartet [EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD #3]. The foursome leaves the Yellow Brick Road and enters the deep jungle. They face danger as they are attacked by a fierce creature - the Kalidah [KALIDAH BATTLE]. After a great fight, and a harrowing

escape, they stop by the road to rest. The Lion is embarrassed by her cowardice in the battle, but is comforted by Dorothy's kind words [BE A LION].

Seeing a green glow in the distance, they continue their journey to The Emerald City, and wander into a field of Poppies who try to entice them to play. The Lion, being the most childlike, is distracted by the Poppies. Dorothy recalls that the Munchkins warned her of the dangerous Poppies, and runs from the field as fast as she can with the Scarecrow and Tinman behind her. The Lion stops to play with the Poppies [LION'S DREAM]. She is dragged from the field and returned to his friends by the Mice Squad who police the area.

Marching up to the gates of the beautiful city, they are met by the Gatekeeper who insists they must all be fitted with a pair of green tinted glasses (because that's the rule). They enter the city and look about in awe at the richly dressed people that inhabit this magnificent place [EMERALD CITY BALLET]. The haughty and condescending people laugh and ridicule this odd party for wanting to see the Wiz until they spot the Witch of the East's silver shoes on Dorothy's feet. This terrifies them and they leave the foursome to meet the Wiz.

Once in the throne room, they are assaulted by a great show [SO YOU WANTED TO MEET THE WIZARD]. They each plead their case. The Wiz agrees on one condition - they must kill the Wicked Witch of the West. Dorothy and her companions reluctantly agree.

ACT TWO

The Winkies (slaves of the Wicked Witch of the West - Evillene) are toiling in the castle. Evillene wakes up in a bad mood most afternoons and likes to make everyone around her suffer. She reminds the Winkies that she will punish anyone who brings her bad news [DON'T NOBODY BRING ME NO BAD NEWS]. Her Messenger has to deliver the (very bad) news to her that Dorothy and her odd friends are coming to destroy her. Evillene gives orders to the Head Monkey - send her flying monkeys to capture Dorothy and her friends [FUNKY MONKEY]. A great battle ensues between the monkeys and the four friends. The four friends are captured. While searching for a way to get the powerful shoes from the little girl, the witch forces the Lion and Dorothy to work doing menial chores. After taking delight in tormenting the Lion before Dorothy, the Witch is melted as the angry girl throws a bucket of water on her. The spell on the Winkies is lifted, and the four friends, the Winkies, and the Monkeys celebrate their freedom [EVERYBODY REJOICE (BRAND NEW DAY)].

Returning to the Emerald City, they find the Wiz (now a booming voice that seems to come from the very air), and he reneges on his promise. They find out that he is a farce, just a guy in bunny slippers, which makes the friends angry [WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?]. He tells them he is really a former nobody from Omaha, Nebraska who traveled to Oz by accident when his hot air balloon drifted off course. The people of Oz had never seen such a sight and proclaimed him Wizard. Not wanting to disappoint them, he assumed the role, and had a great city built. He then had everyone in the city wear green glasses to create an illusion of life that was beautiful and glamorous.

The angry foursome confront the Wiz on his deceptions. He points out that the Scarecrow, Tinman, and Lion all have the qualities they seek as shown in their behavior on the journeys they have made. They remain unconvinced so he creates physical symbols of their desires and they are satisfied. Unfortunately, he has no way of getting Dorothy back to Kansas. The Scarecrow proposes that Dorothy return to Kansas the way the Wiz came, in his hot air balloon. Once Dorothy promises to give the Wiz her silver slippers once in Kansas, he agrees. The Wiz addresses the Citizens of the Emerald City in

person for the first time in many years, telling him of his imminent journey, and leaving the Scarecrow, Tinman and Lion in charge [Y'ALL GOT IT]. Just as his speech reaches its climax, the balloon comes free from its moorings and rises quickly into the air, taking Dorothy's hopes of getting home with it.

There is a flash of light and Addaperle appears, suggesting Dorothy ask Glinda, the Good Witch of the South for help. Glinda's appears and tries to comfort Dorothy [A RESTED BODY IS A RESTED MIND]. Glinda is a beautiful and gracious sorceress. She tells Dorothy that the silver shoes have always had the power to take her home, but like her friends, Dorothy needed to believe that fact before it was possible [IF YOU BELIEVE]. Dorothy bids a tearful goodbye to her companions, and as their faces fade into the darkness, she thinks about what she has learned, that she was taught to love, and that she has gained the strength to face life as a young adult [HOME]. She taps the heels of the silver shoes together three times, and as she sees Toto, she knows she is at last back home.

Musical Numbers

Act 1

- The Feeling We Once Had – Aunt Em
- Tornado Ballet – Company
- He's the Wizard – Addaperle, Addaperle's Entourage and Munchkins
- Soon as I Get Home – Dorothy
- I Was Born on the Day Before Yesterday – Scarecrow, Crows, Yellow Brick Road
- Ease on Down the Road – Dorothy, Scarecrow and Yellow Brick Road
- Slide Some Oil to Me – Tinman
- (I'm a) Mean Ole Lion – Lion
- Kalidah Battle – Kalidah
- Be a Lion – Dorothy and Lion
- Lion's Dream – Lion and Poppies
- Emerald City Ballet – Emerald City Citizens
- So You Wanted to Meet the Wizard – The Wiz

Act 2

- Don't Nobody Bring Me No Bad News – Evillene, Winkies
- Funky Monkeys – Monkeys
- Everybody Rejoice – Winkies, Monkeys, Dorothy, Lion, Scarecrow, Tinman
- Who Do You Think You Are? – Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tinman and Lion
- Y'all Got It! – The Wiz, Company
- A Rested Body Is a Rested Mind – Glinda, Secret Service
- If you Believe – Glinda
- Home / Finale – Dorothy

Vocabulary

Dilemma - a usually undesirable or unpleasant choice

Addaperle: *Just take your **dilemma**, child, and lay it on the wizard*

Lubricate - to apply a lubricant (such as grease)

Tinman: *All y'all that don't have to **lubricate** sure have got it made*

Emanates - to come out from a source

Wiz: *Just keep your eyes open and the magic you will see... as it **emanates** from me*

Pox - a plague, a curse

Evillene: *A **pox** on your house! ... A **pox** on both your houses!*

Urban Renewal - a construction program to replace or restore substandard buildings in an urban area
Gatekeeper: *It had something to do with an **urban renewal**.*

Liquidated - to do away with (in this case it is a play on words since she melted and turned into liquid)
Lion: *Would you say the lady was **liquidated**?*

Omnipotent - having virtually unlimited authority or influence
Wiz: *Who is the Great, the Terrible, the **Omnipotent** Wizard of Oz in reality?*

Distillation - extract of the essence
Wiz: *Through the miracle of modern science, they have dehydrated, pre-frozen, and packaged a **distillation** of some of the best brains in the world.*

Sacred - worthy of religious veneration
Wiz: *That the things we hold up as **sacred**, are sometimes holding us down!*

Turbulent : characterized by agitation or tumult; not calm
Wiz: *Afraid to wade through strange and **turbulent** waters*

The Timeline of Oz

1900 – *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum is published. It is dubbed the first “American Fairy Tale.”

1939 – *The Wizard of Oz* is turned into a major motion picture directed by Victor Fleming. It is nominated for five Academy Awards and wins two of them.

1956 – *The Wizard of Oz* is played on television. It is the first major movie to be shown on network TV.

1975 – *The Wiz* opens on Broadway. It puts a fresh, urbanized spin on the classic tale. This successful show wins seven Tony awards and runs for four years.

1978 – *The Wiz* becomes a major motion picture with stars such as Diana Ross and Michael Jackson.

1995 – *Wicked* becomes a best-seller. Ever wonder what the Wicked Witch of the West’s story is? So did Gregory Maguire, the author. He tells her side of Baum’s classic story in this tale of his own.

2003 – The musical adaptation of *Wicked* opens on Broadway, winning three Tonys

Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. How does Dorothy wind up in Oz? If you heard about a big storm coming, what would you do? Does your family have any drills or procedures to prepare for a tornado? What about at school?
2. Along the way, Dorothy meets the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Cowardly Lion. How do her friends help her defeat the Wicked Witch? When have you worked together with your friends to accomplish a difficult task?
3. What do you think Dorothy has learned at the end? What does she have to say to get back home, and why do you think those words bring her back?
4. If you landed in Oz, what would you miss about home?