



Ozified!

“Ozified” is the term that MGM studios used to describe the entire United States in 1939 when the movie *The Wizard of Oz* first came out. There was a special radio broadcast about the movie and most newspapers featured Oz stories to get people interested in the film. It was the very first time that a movie release was accompanied by the sales of books, toys, dolls, games, soaps, Valentines, and dresses! The sales of these items were expected to hype the movie and entice people to go see it. And the hype worked. *The Wizard of Oz* was wildly successful. Ten thousand people gathered just to greet the film’s stars and production staff on opening night. Thousands more from California to New York paid to see it. But the movie just broke even, meaning that it made only enough money to cover what it cost to make it.

The Wizard of Oz was considered a very expensive movie to make. It cost more than three million dollars—an astounding amount of money in 1939! Even though the movie was wildly popular, it didn’t even make back the three million until it finally started being shown on television starting in 1956. From 1956 to 1988 it was shown every year and finally grossed about twenty million dollars. It was also re-released in movie theaters and made another five million there. And we are still “Ozified!” as the lure of this wonderful film continues to pull in home-video viewers. But there is a long story behind the path to the video.

The Wizard of Oz as we know it was not the first production of this wonderful story, written by L. Frank Baum in 1896. In 1902 it was performed as a play on Broadway in New York City. Then it was made into a silent movie in 1908, 1910, 1914, and 1925. Imagine having to read the words to know that the Scarecrow needed a brain and that Dorothy was trying to get back to Kansas!

When the 1939 version of *The Wizard of Oz* was first shown in New York, Judy Garland would actually appear on the stage with Mickey Rooney for a 30-minute song and dance between showings of the film. The teenage couple performed their act five times during the week and several times a day on weekends!

Ozified? Yes. There are Oz references everywhere in our language and culture. We often speak of “following the yellow-brick road” or a person with “straw for brains.” It is not uncommon for someone to say “You’re not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy,” when a person is encountering a new situation.

Items from the movie are also very popular. In 1988 a bidder paid \$168,000 for Dorothy’s ruby red slippers. It was the most money anyone had ever paid for a piece of movie memorabilia. *The Wizard of Oz* has been seen by more people than any other entertainment in the history of the world. Its audience now tops over one billion people. Ozified, indeed!

By Mary Rose



Dear Parents

"The Wizard of Oz" is a classic movie that has become part of American culture. This article provides some background on the film, but if your child has not seen the movie, he or she may need extra help with the assignment.

TIP OF THE WEEK

Identifying an author's purpose is an important reading skill. Often, the purpose is to persuade, inform, or entertain the reader. You can help your child remember these purposes with the acronym **PIE**, an effective mnemonic device. But today's tests ask students to discuss an author's purpose in paragraph form, meaning they must provide support for their answer by including examples from the text.

The Questions

1. Why did the author explain the item "Ozified" in the opening paragraphs of the article?

2. Why does the author include the fact that one billion people have seen this movie?

3. What was the author's purpose for writing this article? Support your answers with examples from the text.

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature