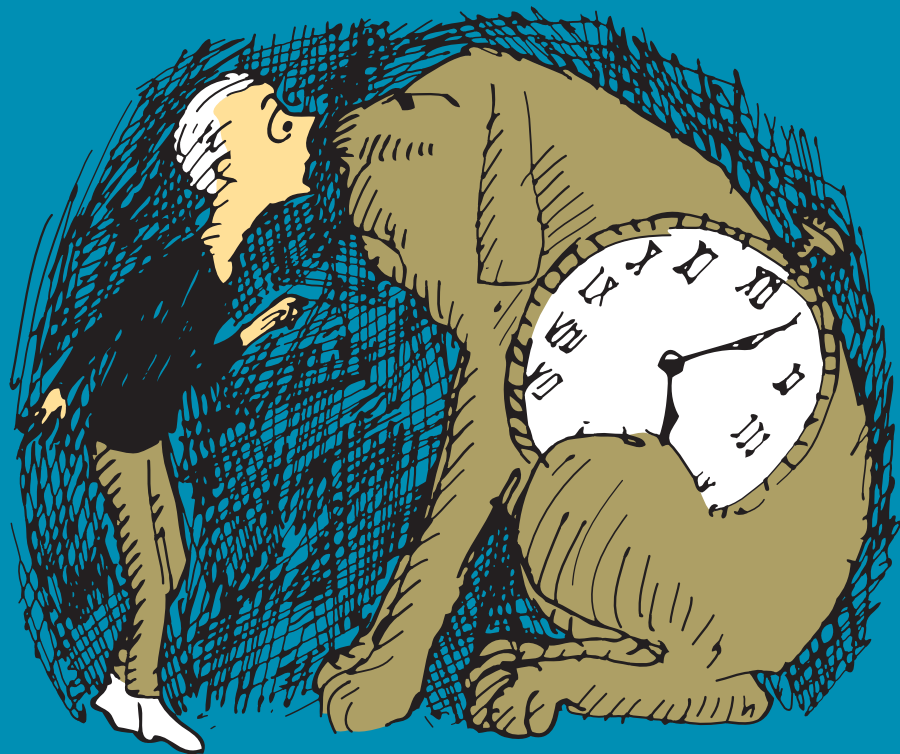


# THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH



**NORTON JUSTER**

Illustrated by **JULES FEIFFER**

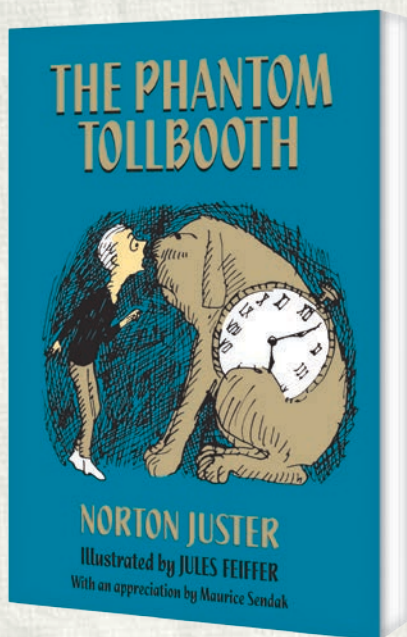
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*—The New Yorker*

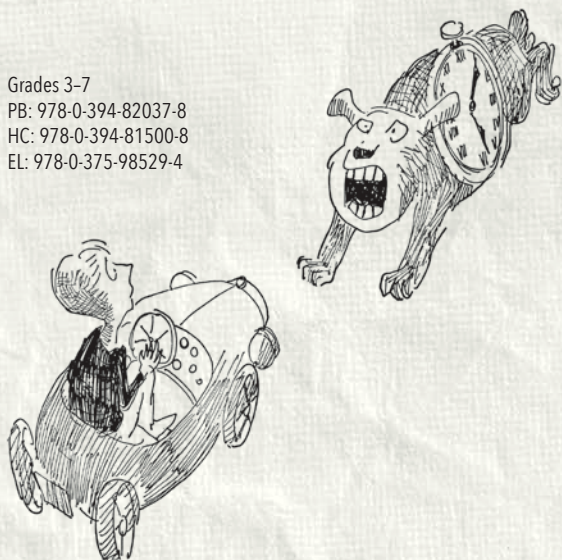


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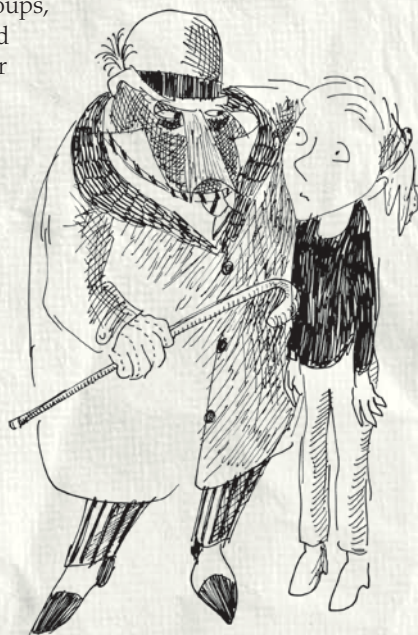
Grades 3-7  
PB: 978-0-394-82037-8  
HC: 978-0-394-81500-8  
EL: 978-0-375-98529-4



## MY JOURNEY WITH MILO

by **Bev Walnoha**

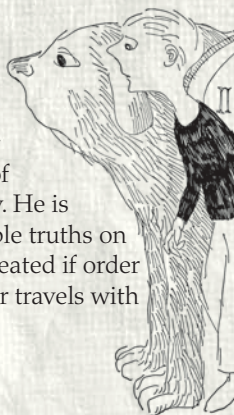
Each of my thirty-three years of teaching fifth graders began with the opening pages of *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Through the following weeks, I read aloud the sequence of Milo's travels and his encounters with the unique characters he met. Each day's reading led to an assignment, art project, or learning activity. Some were completed individually, others in groups, some as a whole class endeavor. We displayed our Found Writing for open houses and our family coats of arms for parent-teacher conferences, and had our "Beware of the Demon" posters ready for Halloween. I shared newspaper headlines, comics, magazine ads, and other examples from daily life to illustrate the ubiquity of its language (and math). Students enjoyed sharing their own discoveries of homonyms, puns, palindromes, and even the number "17"! Our classroom became the Lands Beyond: throughout the school year, students were often asked to check if they had gotten soaked in the Sea of Knowledge, might have jumped to Conclusions, or were being led astray by a demon. We knew that the end of the school year was just another tollbooth into their own Lands Beyond. . . .



Enjoy this Educators' Guide prepared by Bev Walnoha, a former teacher at Margaret White Elementary School in Blythe, California, who is now traveling in the Lands Beyond with her grandchildren.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Phantom Tollbooth* tells the story of Milo's journey through a magical tollbooth to the Lands Beyond. He meets many strange characters, travels through many strange lands, and is thoroughly confused by the topsy-turvy inversion of illusion and reality, deception, and the suspension of the laws of nature—just as many students experience the real world they face every day. He is joined by two loyal companions, receives mysterious gifts, and learns valuable truths on the way to rescue Rhyme and Reason. Demons must be challenged and defeated if order is to be restored to the land. Milo has embarked on a hero's journey, and our travels with him provide important lessons.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

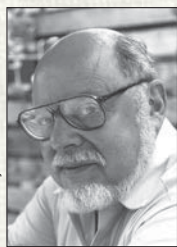


Photo courtesy of Norton Juster

**NORTON JUSTER** is an architect and the author of other highly acclaimed children's books, including *The Dot and the Line*; *The Hello, Goodbye Window*, illustrated by Chris Raschka, which received the Caldecott Medal; and *The Odious Ogre*, also illustrated by Jules Feiffer.

**JULES FEIFFER** is the author and illustrator of two novels for young readers, as well as several acclaimed picture books including *Bark*, *George* and *Meanwhile*. . . . He has won numerous prizes for his cartoons, plays, and screenplays.



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## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES/VOCABULARY

My students returned from lunch break on the first day of the school year to see me hugging a copy of *The Phantom Tollbooth*. After a discussion of the meanings of "phantom" and "tollbooth," I warned that this book was not written for little kids and we would be hearing a lot of new words as we went along. Then I began the reading, stopping as needed to ask clarifying questions or explain a word. After each day's installment, we would add words to a *Phantom* dictionary, words being numbered in the order that they appeared. This could also be done in an alphabetical booklet. The list would grow to almost three hundred words, some being suggested by the students. These could be used for spelling bees, syllabication exercises, prefix and suffix charts, and flash card activities.



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# QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR JOURNAL WRITING

## Chapter 1

- What kind of friend do you think Milo would be?
- Where do you think Milo lives?
- What do you think of his room at home?
- How would you react to finding a present with an envelope addressed to you?

## Chapter 2

- How did Milo end up in the Doldrums?
- What sorts of situations do you find boring?
- What things do you find interesting to think about?

## Chapter 4

- The Humbug and the Spelling Bee disagree about the importance of proper spelling. Are there pros and cons to a “slavish concern for the composition of words”?
- Why is the Humbug so defensive?
- What is a “bankrupt intellect”?

## Chapter 7

- The Humbug tells Milo to look at “the bright side of things.” What is an optimist?
- What is a pessimist?
- How would each look at various situations: rain, taking a wrong turn, losing a race, etc.? Challenge students to think of situations that seem to be obviously positive or negative, but could actually be the opposite. (This foreshadows Alec Bings!)
- What do they think about the notion that “everything happens for the best”? When evaluating statements, words like “never,” “always,” “must,” “all,” and “every” should be challenged before accepted.

## Chapter 9

- Alec Bings says that “it’s all in how you look at things” and that Milo will “always see things in a different way” as he grows up. Milo finds it hard (and painful!) to try to look at things the way an adult does. What are some things that the adults you know see in a different way than you do? Examples: parents and a clean bedroom, teachers and roughhousing, fathers and your favorite music.
- Has your point of view on anything changed since you were five years old? In second grade? On a T-ball team?



## Chapters 11 and 12

- Are there any unpleasant sounds that are truly necessary?
- The Soundkeeper selfishly kept all the sounds from the people of the Valley of Sound. What three sounds would you keep in a vault if you were only allowed those three?

## Chapter 13

- Milo, Tock, and the Humbug all jumped to Conclusions by deciding “something without having a good reason.” Many story plots in books, on TV, in movies, and even in commercials show the results of a character jumping to a conclusion. What have you read or watched this week with this type of situation? Can you think of a time when someone jumped to a conclusion about you? How did you feel?
- Have you ever done that to someone else and found out later that you were wrong? Was it difficult to be friends afterward?
- The Humbug emerged from the Sea of Knowledge completely dry. What does this tell you about the Humbug?



## Chapter 19

- Milo meets Rhyme and Reason at last. What lessons do they have for him?
- What secret did Azaz and the Mathemagician reveal about Milo's quest?
- Why did it have to be a secret?
- Why does Milo have to leave and return home?



## Chapter 20

- The tollbooth is a device used by the author to take Milo from his home to the Lands Beyond. What devices have other authors used like this? (Alice's rabbit hole, Harry Potter's train station)
- What events in your own life can take (or have taken) you to your own future? (graduation, moving to a new house/city)
- What lessons from Milo's journey might help you succeed in your own journey?



## ACTIVITIES

### Setting a Goooooooooooooal!

Milo has no goals; he does not even know why he is in school. After meeting Milo and discussing his attitude, students can make a goal-setting project in which they state their goal and three or four steps necessary to attain it. A two-dimensional format could be a five-pointed star, with their name in the center, their goal in the top-most point, with the other points each containing one of the steps. Other motifs could be race car (name and goal on body of car and steps written on wheels), hot-air balloon (name and goal on basket, steps on balloon), or rainbow mobile (name and goal on rainbow, steps on small clouds). Some can be designed as 3-D. Steps could include good grades, high school diploma, college, apprenticeship, military or police academy, abstention from drugs, trade school, volunteer work, practice, exercise, good nutrition. Display in the classroom all year.

### A Very Welcome Sign!

The wall nearest the classroom door is an ideal place for a bulletin board that declares “Welcome, welcome, welcome to the land of Expectations.” After the class has met the Whether Man, ask students to write a letter to the teacher listing their expectations. They can describe their hopes, wishes, and fears for their new grade or the next grade, the new calendar year or other timely upcoming event. These can be filed and reviewed at the conclusion of the year.

### Palindrome Pals!

Milo states that the Whether Man’s sentences sound “as if they would make as much sense backward as forwards” Introduce the concept of palindromes (racecar, Otto, “A man, a plan, a canal, Panama”). Many examples are available online, and students may enjoy writing their own. Palindromic numbers can be found on digital clocks (12:21), house numbers (14341), or store receipts (\$25.52). Have students check the odometer on the family car; find out how

many more miles are needed to create a palindrome, or how many miles ago the last palindrome appeared. Numeric palindrome projects can be found online. Students are easily engaged in creating palindromes with repeated addition, discovering patterns, and creating charts.

### A Sense of Nonsense!

The confusion in the market place creates a perfect opportunity for the class to make sense of a word jumble. Present each small group of students with a collection of colorful words clipped from magazines—the more, the better! As students sort through the words, their task is to give an order to the mixed-up words. Using glue sticks and their own written words as needed, younger students may create sentences while older students enjoy writing poems or stories. The teacher may choose a theme or topic, or students can create their own through the relationships they discover among the words.

### It’s a Family Affair!

King Azaz’s coat of arms contains important symbols of his reign: the vowels. Students can design their own family coat of arms. A simple shield cut from 9 × 12 art paper (scaloped at the top and pointed at the bottom) can be divided into sections vertically, horizontally, and/or diagonally to form four to six sections. Each section can illustrate a family tradition, heritage, or history. Patterns, symbols, and other information can be found online or students can create their own to illustrate hobbies, sports, teams, pets, etc.

### Being Literal, Figuratively Speaking!

The king’s cabinet speaks in idiomatic language. Using 3 × 5 cards, write down one idiom per card; be sure to include the idioms from the book, as well as others that the students generate or that are used frequently. Students each choose a card and illustrate the literal meaning of the idiom on one half of their art paper and the figurative meaning on the other, being sure to label each side as “literal” or “figurative.”

## En“light”ening Music!

The meeting with Chroma introduces two areas of research: musical instruments and the spectrum (rainbows, color wheel, or light). Students can investigate the instruments (history, development, musical range), recordings of their sounds can be brought in for comparison, and full symphonies can be played. The acronym ROYGBIV for the colors of the rainbow should be explained as the correct sequence of the spectrum. This can be expanded into a general study of light.

## What’s in a Name?

The Dodecahedron states that in Digitopolis, “everything here is called exactly what it is.” Search online for “patterns for three-dimensional shapes” and print your selections on colorful, sturdy art paper. Have students create a variety of geometric figures, labeling vertices, sides, lines, etc., as they explore (or review) mathematical terms and the names of the shapes and prisms they are constructing. Completed figures can be displayed as mobiles.

## Beware the Demons!

The demons are allegorical figures for many of the pitfalls in life. Recognizing the dangers of these demons is essential for Milo’s success on his journey. Making “Beware” posters demonstrates the connection between the symbol and real life. Write the name of each demon on a 5 x 8 card—including the Wordsnatcher, a nuisance; Dr. Dischord, an annoyance; and Canby, a serious detour. Students can also work in pairs. Students choose a card that names the demon and may include its physical description, unless students have access to their own copies of the book. On 12 x 18 art paper, the words “Beware Of” are posted across the top. A 10 x 10 square outlined below this title is reserved for an illustration of the demon and its name. Two sections below this are for three statements each: “Be on the Lookout For” and “How to Protect Yourself.” For example, the Terrible Trivium is cleverly disguised as a nice guy,

so one must be on the lookout for someone who is just pretending to be nice, may be lying, or is really a stranger. One protects oneself by not believing everything one is told (especially if something is too good to be true), keeping a distance from strangers, and checking into the facts. These can be posted in the classroom as reminders to beware of the Threadbare Excuse, the demon of insincerity, the distracting Senses Taker, and all the rest.

## On the Road with Milo!

To recap the plot of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, each student can trace Milo’s journey on a copy of the map from the book. As each destination is approached, students can discuss who Milo met there, what obstacle he faced, who he met, how he overcame the obstacle, and what lessons he learned. The map is placed on a grid that can be labeled with coordinates (alphanumeric, so both Azaz and the Mathemagician are satisfied!) and major locations. Students can also create a compass rose using graph paper to illustrate the cardinal directions and diagonals between those to include the intermediate directions. This can be further defined with all thirty-two points, called “boxing the compass.”



## QUICK LESSONS

Before (or during) each reading, locate and define vocabulary as needed. Students can make a *Phantom* dictionary or flash cards. Encourage students to report on finding these words in independent and other classroom readings.

**Page 27:** The Lethargarians are worried they might not have time to “never get nothing done.” Explain that double negatives result in a positive as is true in math:  $-(-2) = +2$ . If you “haven’t got nothing,” you must have something! The class can generate other examples. To increase awareness, students can catch classmates using double negatives: If Sam hasn’t got no pencil, he must have at least one!

**Pages 38–40:** Discuss synonyms, the thesaurus, and shades of meaning, choosing among synonyms. Brainstorm words for “said” (“yelled,” “whispered,” “declared,” “asked”), “walked” (“ambled,” “hurried,” “skipped,” “strolled”), “asked” (“queried,” “questioned,” “demanded,” “hinted”).

**Pages 50–55:** Have a classroom spelling bee.

**Page 81:** Have students prepare brief reports on the history of each letter of the alphabet.

**Page 88:** Translate the king’s French meal into English.

**Page 188:** Solve the math problem to prove that it does come to zero. Have students create their own “zero” equations to be solved by a classmate. Challenge them to use as many of the mathematical processes as they know thus far. Create additional equations that result in the number 17!

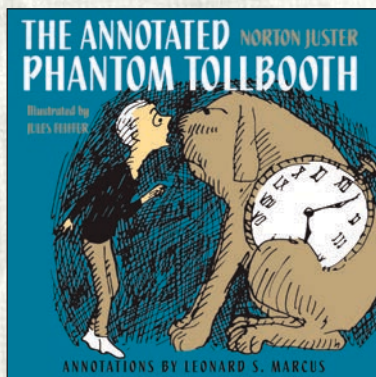
**Pages 195–196:** List the number of children in each family in the class. Find the average number and show the results as decimals, fractions, or remainders. Which is best when sharing children among families? Do the same for pets, cars, hair length, pencils (length or number), etc. How is the resulting number best written?

**Page 199:** The author has admitted that the Mathemagician’s code has no “solution.” Have the students suggest possible messages that fit the pattern of the Mathemagician’s code. Explore codes, such as Morse code, and demonstrate designing codes using symbols, numbers, and letter substitutions. Students can design a code and then write a message to another classmate to solve, or rewrite a list of spelling or vocabulary words in their code.

**Pages 201–203:** Milo has collected four gifts: words, telescope, sounds, and a silver pencil. Which one would each student choose (and why). Chart the choices on a graph; list all the reasons the class can generate for choosing each gift. After Milo completes his journey, revisit this chart and compare their list with how the gifts helped Milo.

**Pages 204–207:** Make a list of all the multiple-meaning words that the Wordsnatcher used to confuse Milo. Explain the difference between homonyms and homophones. Homographs share spelling, but not sound or meaning. List words under headings for each category. Students can begin with the Wordsnatcher’s list and add words discovered in other reading. Be sure to stress the concept of Context and how the Wordsnatcher wanted to be “out of Context.” Students can come up with sentences that illustrate these various meanings.

### Also Available



*The Annotated Phantom Tollbooth*

HC: 978-0-375-85715-7

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