

A photograph of a forest with sunlight filtering through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The sun is low in the sky, casting long shadows and illuminating the scene with a soft, golden light. The trees are tall and thin, with some showing signs of decay or damage. The ground is covered in fallen leaves and twigs.

L. FRANK BAUM

The
Wonderful Wizard
of Oz

Table Of Contents

Introduction	3
I THE CYCLONE	4
II The Council with the Munchkins	6
III How Dorothy Saved the Scarecrow	12
IV The Road Through the Forest	17
V The Rescue of the Tin Woodman	21
VI The Cowardly Lion	27
VII The Journey to the Great Oz	31
VIII The Deadly Poppy Field	35
IX The Queen of the Field Mice	40
X The Guardian of the Gate	44
XI The Wonderful City of Oz	50
XII The Search for the Wicked Witch	59
XIII The Rescue	68
XIV The Winged Monkeys	71
XV The Discovery of Oz, the Terrible	77
XVI The Magic Art of the Great Humbug	85
XVII How the Balloon Was Launched	88
XVIII Away to the South	91
XIX Attacked by the Fighting Trees	95
XX The Dainty China Country	97

XXI The Lion Becomes the King of Beasts	102
XXII The Country of the Quadlings	105
XXIII Glinda the Good Witch Grants Dorothy's Wish	107
XXIV Home Again	111

INTRODUCTION

Folklore, legends, myths and fairy tales have followed childhood through the ages, for every healthy youngster has a wholesome and instinctive love for stories fantastic, marvelous and manifestly unreal. The winged fairies of Grimm and Andersen have brought more happiness to childish hearts than all other human creations.

Yet the old time fairy tale, having served for generations, may now be classed as "historical" in the children's library; for the time has come for a series of newer "wonder tales" in which the stereotyped genie, dwarf and fairy are eliminated, together with all the horrible and bloodcurdling incidents devised by their authors to point a fearsome moral to each tale. Modern education includes morality; therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident.

Having this thought in mind, the story of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz was written solely to please children of today. It aspires to being a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out.

L. Frank Baum

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I THE CYCLONE

Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife. Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles. There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty looking cookstove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner, and Dorothy a little bed in another corner. There was no garret at all, and no cellar—except a small hole dug in the ground, called a cyclone cellar, where the family could go in case one of those great whirlwinds arose, mighty enough to crush any building in its path. It was reached by a trap door in the middle of the floor, from which a ladder led down into the small, dark hole.

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.

When Aunt Em came there to live she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober gray; they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled now. When Dorothy, who was an orphan, first came to her, Aunt Em had been so startled by the child's laughter that she would scream and press her hand upon her heart whenever Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears; and she still looked at the little girl with wonder that she could find anything to laugh at.

Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke.