# The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum

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There exist very few fantasy authors in the contemporary world of literature who are not significantly influenced and inspired by Frank Baum's novel, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.* Similarly, no child's library should be considered complete without Baum's enchanting fantasy novel, rich in enduring themes of courage, resourcefulness, and loyalty, as well as unforgettable characters like the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, the Wicked Witch of the West, and the Cowardly Lion. In view of Robles et al., the novel's inspirational stance justifies why it continues to be a favorite of many, prompting its translation to the stage as well as film several times (112). First published in 1990, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz has met not only commercial but also critical success due to its rich, inspirational lessons on the importance of friendship, virtue, and self-sufficiency, making it so alluring and timeless, a reason why other media have adapted it.

## Self-Sufficiency Through Contradiction

Through the lens of the characters and the theme of self-contradiction, *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* stresses the critical need for self-sufficiency. To begin with, the Scarecrow believes he does not possess brains. Similarly, the Tin Woodman complains of lacking a heart, with the Lion thinking that he is deprived of courage (Gale 5). In essence, the Scarecrow turns out to be the most intelligent character in the novel, the Lion is the most courageous and gracious, and the Tin Woodman is full of compassion. The Scarecrow's knowledge increased with each new challenging situation. With this expansion of knowledge came wisdom as well as the capability of judging rightly. For instance, when Dorothy feels hungry at a point in their journey and is tempted to eat apples from a tree, the Scarecrow knows what the appealing apples contain (Gale 9). His knowledge provided him with the wisdom to understand that apples should not be consumed, regardless of how appealing and appetizing they seemed. The Scarecrow acknowledges that part of being intelligent, possessing a brain, and being educated involves possessing the wisdom to detect when you are personally susceptible and, consequently, avoid anything that directs you toward vulnerability (Baum 27).

## Recognizing Inner Strength

In light of this, the reader understands that the characters readily possess the traits they believe they lack, though the characters cannot notice this by themselves. The characters believe they have to

seek help from the Wizard. At the end of the novel, the Wizard and his benign trickery reveal these traits. For instance, the Lion uses his bravery and power to take his rightful position as the King of Beasts (Baum 22). Correspondingly, the Scarecrow becomes a wise ruler of the city of Emerald, thanks to his intellect. Similarly, the Tin manages to be the kind ruler of the Winkies. The implication is that all along, the three characters had what they needed within them and did not necessitate anyone else to solve their problems or fix them. According to Gale, the coincidence also suffices for Dorothy, who seeks the help of the Witch, yet she is already wearing the silver shoes, which could have taken her home (29). Through the experiences of the characters, the author communicates that the moral of finding our inner strength is lasting and enduring, further pointing to the importance of self-sufficiency.

# American Virtues in Oz

Baum's clear promulgation of some customary American virtues further gives *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* an inspirational stance. The key virtues highlighted in the novel include modesty, simplicity, hard work, and fortitude (Robles et al. 114). The inhabitants of Emerald City and the Munchkins work cheerfully and diligently, with the people of Emerald City working despite the fact that they do not have to. What is more, the people are humble and modest. The same attributes are also evident in Dorothy, who does not use the silver shoes or the Golden Cap for selfish or reprehensible purposes. Additionally, her conduct is mannered and upright, showing palpable bashfulness and dismay at murdering the Witch of the East. Dorothy and her friends also exemplify fortitude through their steadfast determination as they travel from Emerald City to Glinda's castle. Despite the rough road and the common misadventures, they proceed with their journey with minimal complaints (Gale 12). Similarly, the Scarecrow, the Lion, and the Tin Woodman succeed in all their endeavors due to their brains, courage, and compassion, respectively. Notably, Baum values devotion to one's goals. Importantly, Dorothy's meek and sweet morality embodies simplicity. She neither despairs nor worries. She is neither selfish nor angry. Even though she is not an intellectual, her wide-eyed and childish nature renders her a unique and alluring heroine. Overall, through the lens of the characters, the author inspires his readers to uphold the above-described virtues.

# Friendship and Mutual Support

*Wonderful Wizard of Oz* makes it clear how essential friendship is. This ardent friendship is seen in the relationship between Dorothy and Toto, the only friend who brings her joy and light (Baum 26). Furthermore, an even more prominent friendship is evident in the relationship between Dorothy, the Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman. The three friends provide both physical and emotional support to Dorothy as she moves to Emerald City and back to Kansas (Gale 18). For instance, the Lion carries her over a massive abyss, traverses across a river, safeguards her from numerous minions sent after them by the Witch, and protects her from the fatal poppy field. Above all, her friends advise her and counsel her while also solving the thorniest problems of the journey. Robles et al. argue that

while Dorothy is not their deep confidant, they protect her and give her the right direction (118). They all volunteer to accompany Dorothy on her final journey to the castle of Glinda despite the fact that they all have other tasks to perform. In any case, Dorothy might not have gotten far without the help of the three friends, painting the critical role of friendship in the novel.

## The Novel's Enduring Message

Overall, Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz has achieved both commercial and critical success, following its rich, inspiring message on a wide range of subjects such as virtue, the importance of friendship, as well as self-sufficiency. As a result, the novel has been widely considered alluring, a reason why other media have adapted it. As a story of worthy desire disillusioned by self-doubt, feelings of inadequacy, and perceived fruitless self-talk, the author communicates and stresses the critical need for self-sufficiency, arguing that self-limiting ideas are the greatest barriers to growth and development. The story, hence, concerns the value of the experiences of life that are critical for individual growth and development. While Baum's novel is a children's tale, it revolves around themes and messages that apply to everyone.

## Works Cited

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