

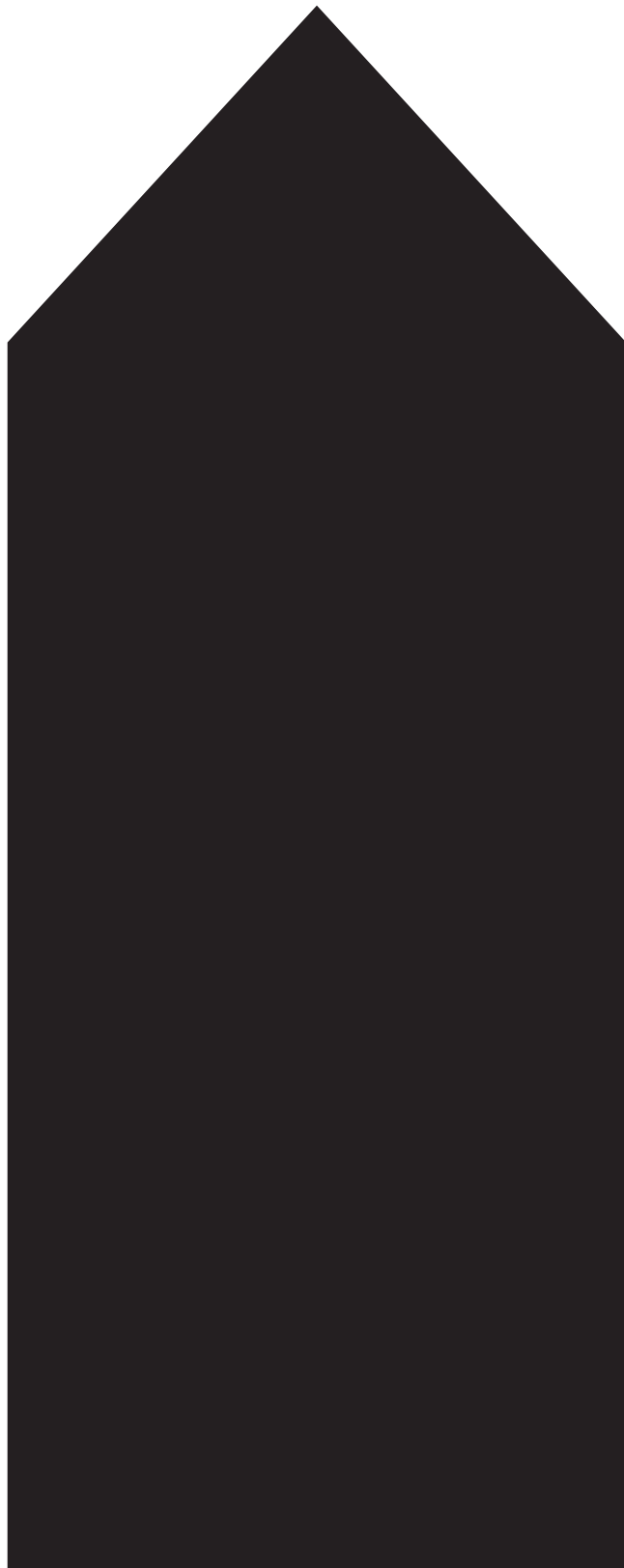


PLAY BY SUSAN NASUS



BASED ON THE BOOK
BY NORTON JESTER

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH



CAST
[IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE]

THE CLOCK	THE DUKE OF DEFINITION
MILO, a boy	THE MINISTER OF MEANING
THE WHETHER MAN	THE EARL OF ESSENCE
SIX LETHARGARIANS	THE COUNT OF CONNOTATION
TOCK, THE WATCHDOG	THE UNDERSECRETARY OF UNDERSTANDING
AZAZ THE UNABRIDGED, KING OF DICTIONOPOLIS	A PAGE
THE MATHEMAGICIAN, KING OF DIGITOPOLIS	KAKAFONOUS A. DISCHORD, DOCTOR OF DISSONANCE
PRINCESS SWEET RHYME	THE AWFUL DYNNE
PRINCESS PURE REASON	THE DODECAHEDRON
GATEKEEPER OF DICTIONOPOLIS	MINERS OF THE NUMBERS MINE
THREE WORD MERCHANTS	THE EVERPRESENT WORDSNATCHER
THE LETTERMAN	THE TERRIBLE TRIVIAM
SPELLING BEE	THE DEMON OF INSINCERITY
THE HUMBUG	SENSES TAKER

MILO'S BEDROOM:

with shelves, pennants, pictures on the wall,
as well as suggestions of the characters of
the Land of Wisdom

THE ROAD TO THE LAND OF WISDOM:

a forest, from which the Whether Man and the
Lethargarians emerge

DICTIONOPOLIS:

a marketplace full of open air stalls as well as little
shops. Letters and signs should abound

DIGITOPOLIS:

a dark, glittering place without trees or greenery,
but full of shining rocks and cliffs, with hundreds of
numbers shining everywhere

THE LAND OF IGNORANCE:

a gray, gloomy place full of cliffs and caves, with
frightening faces. Different levels and heights should
be suggested through one or two platforms or risers,
with a set of stairs that lead to the castle in the air



ACT 01

SCENE 01

“The Tollbooth”

ACT 01. SCENE 01

(The stage is completely dark and silent. Suddenly the sound of someone winding an alarm clock is heard, and after that, the sound of a loud ticking is heard.)

(LIGHTS UP in the CLOCK, a huge alarm clock. The CLOCK reads 4:00. The lighting should make it appear that the CLOCK is in the air (if possible). The CLOCK ticks for 30 seconds.)

CLOCK

See that! Half a minute gone by. Seems like a long time when you're waiting for something to happen, doesn't it? Funny thing is; time can pass very slowly or very fast and sometimes even both at once. The time now? Oh, a little after four, but what that means should depend on you. Too often, we do something simply because time tells us to. Time for school, time for bed, whoops, 12:00, time to be hungry. It can get a little silly, don't you think? Time is important, but it's what you do with it that makes it so. So my advice to you is to use it. Keep your eyes open and your ears perked. Otherwise, it will pass before you know it, and you'll certainly have missed something! Things have a habit of doing that, you know. Being here one minute and gone the next.

In the twinkling of an eye.

In a jiffy.

In a flash!

I know a girl who yawned and missed a whole summer vacation. And what about that caveman who took a nap one afternoon, and woke up to find himself completely alone. You see, while he was sleeping, someone had invented the wheel and everyone had moved to the suburbs.

Then of course, there is Milo.

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

(LIGHTS UP to reveal MILO's Bedroom. The CLOCK appears to be on a shelf in the room of a young boy – a room filled with books, toys, games, maps, papers, pencils, a bed, a desk.

There is a dartboard with numbers and the face of the MATHEMAGICIAN, a bedspread made from KING AZAZ's cloak, a kite looking like the spelling bee, a punching bag with the HUMBUG's face, as well as records, a television, a toy car, and a large box that is wrapped and has an envelope taped to the top. The sound of FOOTSTEPS is heard, and then enter MILO unhappily. He throws down his books and coat, flops into a chair; and sighs loudly.)

Who never knows what to do with himself – not just sometimes, but always. When he's in school, he wants to be out, and when he's out, he wants to be in

(During the following speech, MILO examines the various toys, tools, and other possessions in the room, trying them out and refusing them.)

Wherever he is, he wants to be somewhere else – and when he gets there, so what. Everything is too much trouble or a waste of time.

Books – he's already read them.

Games – boring.

T.V. – dumb.

So what's left? Another long, boring afternoon. Unless he bothers to notice a very large package that happened to arrive today

ACT 01. SCENE 01

(Suddenly notices the package. He drags himself over to it, and disinterestedly reads the label.)

MILO

"For Milo, who has plenty of time." Well, that's true.

(Sighs and looks at it.)

No.

(Walks away)

Well...

(Comes back. Rips open envelope and reads.)

A VOICE

"This package contains the following items:"

"One (1) genuine turnpike tollbooth
to be made according to directions.

Three (3) precautionary signs to be used
in a precautionary fashion.

Assorted coins for paying tolls.

One (1) map, strictly up to date,
showing how to get from here to there.

One (1) book of rules and traffic regulations
which may not be bent or broken.

Warning! Results are not guaranteed.

If not perfectly satisfied,
your wasted time will be refunded."

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

(Skeptically.) Come off it, who do you think you're kidding?

MILO

(Walks around and examines tollbooth.)

What am I supposed to do with this?

(The ticking of the CLOCK grows loud and impatient.)

Well ... what else do I have to do?

(MILO gets into his toy car and drives up to the first sign.)

"HAVE YOUR DESTINATION IN MIND."

A VOICE

(Pulls out the map.)

Now, let's see. That's funny.
I never heard of any of these places
Well, it doesn't matter anyway,

MILO

Dictionopolis.

That's a weird name,
I might as well go there.

ACT 01. SCENE 01

Begins to move, following map. Drives off.)

CLOCK

See what I mean? You never know how things are going to get started. But when you're bored, what you need more than anything is a rude awakening.

(The ALARM goes off very loudly as the stage darkens. The sound of the alarm is transformed into the honking of a car horn, and is then joined by the blasts, bleeps, roars and growls of heavy highway traffic. When the lights come up, MILO's bedroom is gone and we see a lonely road in the middle of nowhere.)

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT



THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH





ACT 01

SCENE 02

“The Road to Dictionopolis”

ACT 01. SCENE 02

(ENTER MILO in his car.)

MILO This is weird! I don't recognize any of this scenery at all.

(A SIGN is held up before MILO, surprising him.)

Huh?

(Reads.)

WELCOME TO EXPECTATIONS. INFORMATION, PREDICTIONS AND ADVICE
CHEERFULLY OFFERED. PARK HERE AND BLOW HORN.

*(A little man wearing a long coat and carrying an umbrella pops
up from behind the sign that he was holding. He speaks very
fast and excitedly.)*

WHETHER MAN my, my, my, my welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome to the Land
of Expectations, Expectations, Expectations! We don't get many
travelers these days; we certainly don't get many travelers.
Now what can I do for you?
I'm the Whether Man.

MILO *(Referring to map.)* Uh... is this the right road to Dictionopolis?

WHETHER MAN Well now, well now, well now,
I don't know of any wrong road to Dictionopolis

so if this road goes to Dictionopolis at all,
it must be the right road, and if it doesn't

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

it must be the right road to somewhere else,
because there are no wrong roads to anywhere.

Do you think it will rain?

I thought YOU were the Weather Man.

MILO

Oh, no. I'm the Whether Man, not the weather man.

WHETHER MAN

*(Pulls out a SIGN oropens a FLAP of his coat,
which reads: "WHETHER.")*

After all, it's more important to know whether there will be weather
than what the weather will be.

What kind of place is Expectations?

MILO

Good question, good question!

WHETHER MAN

Expectations is the place you must always go to
before you get to where you are going.

Of course, some people never go beyond Expectations,
but my job is to hurry them along whether they like it or not.

Now what else can I do for you?

I think I can find my own way.

MILO

Splendid, splendid, splendid! Whether or not you find your own way,
you will surely find some way. If you happen to find my way, please
return it back to me. I lost it years ago.

WHETHER MAN

I imagine by now it must be quite rusty.
You did say it was going to rain, didn't you?

(Escorts MILO to the car under the open umbrella.)

WHETHER MAN

I'm glad you made your own decision.

I do so hate to make up my mind about anything, whether it's good or bad, up or down, rain or shine. Expect everything, I always say, and the unexpected never happens.

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, good...

(A loud CLAP of THUNDER is heard)

Oh dear!

(He looks up at the sky, puts out his hand to feel for rain, and RUNS AWAY. MILO watches in a puzzled way and drives on.)

MILO

I'd better get out of Expectations, but fast.

Talking to a guy like that all day would get me nowhere for sure.

(He tries to speed up, but finds instead that he is moving slower and slower.)

Oh, oh, now what?

(He can barely move. Behind MILO, the LETHARGARIANS begin to enter from all parts of the stage. They are dressed to match with the scenery and carry small pillows that look like rocks. Whenever they fall asleep, they rest on the pillows.)

Now I really am getting nowhere.

I hope I didn't take a wrong turn.

(The car stops. He tries to start it. It won't move. He gets out and tries to fix it.)

I wonder where I am.

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

You're ... in ... the ... Dol ...drums ...

LETH 1

(MILO looks around.)

Yes... the ... Dol ... drums ...

LETH 2

(A YAWN is heard.)

(Yelling.) WHAT ARE THE DOLDRUMS?

MILO

The Doldrums, my friend, are where nothing ever happens and nothing ever changes.

LETH 3

(Parts of the Scenery stand up or Six People come out of the scenery colored in the same colors of the trees or the road.

They move very slowly and as soon as they move, they stop to rest again.)

Allow me to introduce all of us.
We are the Lethargarians at your service.

(Uncertainly.) Very pleased to meet you.
I think I'm lost. Can you help me?

MILO

Don't say think. *(He yawns.)*
It's against the law

LETH 4

No one's allowed to think in the Doldrums. *(He falls asleep.)*

LETH 1

Don't you have a rule book? It's local ordinance 175389-J
(He falls asleep.)

LETH 2

ACT 01. SCENE 02

(Pulls out rule book and reads.)

MILO Ordinance 175389-J: "It shall be unlawful, illegal and unethical to think, think of thinking, surmising, presume, reason, meditate or speculate while in the Doldrums. Anyone breaking this law shall be severely punished." That's a ridiculous law! Everybody thinks!

ALL LETH We don't!

LETH 2 And most of the time, you don't, that's why you're here. You weren't thinking and you weren't paying attention either. People who don't pay attention often get stuck in the Doldrums.

Face it, most of the time, you're just like us.

(Fall, snoring, to the ground. MILO laughs.)

LETH 5 Stop that at once. Laughing is against the law. Don't you have a rule book? It's local ordinance 574381-W

(Pulls out rule book and reads.)

MILO "In the Doldrums, laughter is frowned upon and smiling is permitted only on alternate Thursdays."

Well, if you can't laugh or think, what can you do?

LETH 6 Anything as long as it's nothing, and everything as long as it isn't anything. There's lots to do. We have a very busy schedule...

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

At 8:00 we get up and then we spend from 8 to 9 daydreaming **LETH 1**

From 9:00 to 9:30 we take our early mid-morning nap... **LETH 2**

From 9:30 to 10:30 we dawdle, waste time and delay... **LETH 3**

From 10:30 to 11:30 we take our late early morning nap... **LETH 4**

From 11:30 to 12:00 we bide our time and then we eat our lunch. **LETH 5**

From 1:00 to 2:00 we linger and loiter... **LETH 6**

From 2:00 to 2:30, we take our early afternoon nap... **LETH 1**

From 2:30 to 3:30, we put off for tomorrow what
we could have done today... **LETH 2**

From 3:30 to 4:00, we take our early late afternoon nap... **LETH 3**

From 4:00 to 5:00 we loaf and lounge until dinner... **LETH 4**

From 6:00 to 7:00, we dilly-dally... **LETH 5**

From 7:00 to 8:00, we take our early evening nap and then for an
hour before we go to bed, we waste time. **LETH 6**

(Yawning.) You see, it's really quite strenuous and tiring
doing nothing all day long, and so once a week,
we take a holiday and going nowhere. **LETH 1**

ACT 01. SCENE 02

LETH 5 Which is just where we were going when you came along.
Would you care to join us?

MILO (Yawning.) That's where I seem to be going, anyway. (Stretching.)
Tell me, does everyone here do nothing?

LETH 3 Everyone but the terrible watchdog! He's always sniffing around to
see that nobody wastes time!!! The most unpleasant character.

MILO The Watchdog?

LETH 6 THE WATCHDOG!

ALL LETH (Yelling at once.) RUN! WAKE UP! RUN!
HERE HE COMES! THE WATCHDOG!

*(They all run off and ENTER a large dog with the head, feet,
and tail of a dog, and the body of a clock, having the same
face as the character THE CLOCK.)*

WATCHDOG What are you doing here?

MILO Nothing much. Just killing time. You see...

WATCHDOG KILLING TIME! (His ALARM RINGS in fury.)
It's bad enough wasting time without killing it.

What are you doing in the Doldrums, anyway?
Don't you have anywhere to go?

MILO I think I was on my way to Dictionopolis
when I got stuck here. Can you help me?

WATCHDOG Help you! You've got to help yourself! I suppose you know
why you got stuck.

↑
TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

I guess I just wasn't thinking. **MILO**

Exactly! Now you're on your way. **WATCHDOG**

I am? **MILO**

Of course. Since you got here by not thinking, it seems reasonable that in order to get out, you must start thinking. Do you mind if I get in? I love automobile rides.
(He gets, in. They wait.) Well?

All right. I'll try. **MILO**
(Screws up his face and thinks.)

Are we moving?
Not yet. Think harder. **WATCHDOG**

I'm thinking as hard as I can. **MILO**

Well, think just a little harder than that. **WATCHDOG**
Come on, you can do it.

All right, all right. ... I'm thinking of all the planets in the solar system, and why water expands when it turns to ice, and all the words that begin with "q," and ...

(The wheels begin to move.)
We're moving! We're moving!

Keep thinking. **WATCHDOG**

(Thinking.) How a steam engine works and how to bake a pie and the difference between Fahrenheit and Centigrade...

WATCHDOG

Dictionopolis, here we come.

MILO

Hey, Watchdog, are you coming along?

TOCK

You can call me Tock, and keep your eyes on the road.

MILO

What kind of place is Dictionopolis, anyway?

TOCK

It's where all the words in the world come from. It is used to be a marvelous place, but ever since Rhyme and Reason left, it hasn't been the same.

MILO

Rhyme and Resason?

TOCK

The two princesses. They used to settle all the arguments between their two brothers who rule over the Land of Wisdom. You see, Azaz is the king of Dictionopolis and the Mathemagician is the king of Digitopolis and they almost never see eye to eye on anything. It was the job of the Princesses Sweet Rhyme and Pure Reason to solve the differences between the two kings, and they always did so well that both sides usually went home feeling very satisfied. But then, one day, the kings had an argument to end all arguments...

(The LIGHTS DIM on TOCK and MILO, and come up on

KING AZAZ of Dictionopolis on another part of the stage.

AZAZ has a great stomach, a grey beard reaching to his waist, a small crown and a long robe with the letters of the alphabet written all over it.)

AZAZ

Of course. I'll accept the decision of Rhyme and Reason, though I have no doubt as to what it will be.

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

They will choose words, of course. Everyone knows that words are more important than numbers any day of the week.

(The MATHEMAGICIAN appears opposite AZAZ. The MATHEMAGICIAN wears a long flowing robe covered entirely with complex mathematical equations, and a tall pointed hat. He carries a long staff with a pencil point at one end and a large rubber eraser at other.)

That's what you think, Azaz. People wouldn't even know what day of the week it is without numbers. Haven't you ever looked at a calendar? Face it, Azaz. It's numbers that count.

MATHEMAG.

Don't be ridiculous.
(To audience, as if leading a cheer.) Let's hear it for WORDS!

AZAZ

(To audience, in the same manner.)
Cast your vote for NUMBERS!

MATHEMAG.

A, B, C's!

AZAZ

1, 2, 3's!

MATHEMAG.

(A FANFARE is heard.)

(To each other.) Quiet!
Rhyme and Reason are about to announce their decision.

BOTH AZAZ & MATHEMAG.

(RHYME and REASON appear.)

Ladies and gentlemen, letters and numerals, fractions and punctuation marks – May we have your attention, please. After careful consideration of the problem set before us by King Azaz of Dictionopolis (AZAZ bows.) and the Mathemagician of Digitopolis (MATHEMAGICIAN raises his hands in a victory salute.) we have come to the following conclusion:

RHYME

REASON Words and numbers are of equal value, for in the cloak of knowledge,
one is the warp and the other is the woof.

RHYME It is no more important to count the sands than it is to name the
stars.

RHYME & RESON Therefore, let both kingdoms, Dictionopolis and Digitopolis,
live in peace.

(The sound of CHEERING is heard.)

AZAZ Boo! Is what I say. Boo and Bah and Hiss!

MATHEMAG. What good are these girls if they can't even settle
an argument in anyone's favor?
I think I have come to a decision of my own.
So have I.

BOTH AZAZ & MATHEMAG. (To the PRINCESSESS.) You are hereby banished from this
land to the Castle-in-the-Air.

(To each other.) And as for you KEEP OUT OF MY WAY!
(They stalk off in opposite directions.)

*(During this time, the set has been
changed to the Market Square of Dictionopolis.
LIGHTS come UP on the deserted square.)*

TOCK And ever since then, there has been neither Rhyme nor Reason in
this kingdom. Words are misused and numbers are mismanaged. The
argument between the two kings has divided everyone and the real
value of both words and numbers has been forgotten.

What a waste!

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

Why doesn't somebody rescue the Princesses
and set everything straight again?

MILO

That is easier said than done.
The Castle-in-the-Air is very far from here, and the one path which
leads to it is guarded by ferocious demons.

TOCK

But hold on, here we are.

(A Man appears, carrying a Gate and a small Tollbooth.)

AHHHHREMMMM! This is Dictionopolis, a happy kingdom,
advantageously located in the foothills of Confusion and touched
by gentle breezes from the Sea of Knowledge. Today, by royal
proclamation, is Market Day.
Have you come to buy or sell?

GATEKEEPER

I Beg your pardon?

MILO

Buy or sell, buy or sell. Which is it?
You must have come here for a reason.

GATEKEEPER

Well, I...

MILO

Come now, if you don't have a reason, you must at least have an
explanation or certainly an excuse.

GATEKEEPER

(Meekly.) Uh ... no.

MILO

GATEKEEPER

(Shaking his head.) Very serious. You can't get in without a reason. (Thoughtfully.) Wait a minute. Maybe I have an old one you can use. (Pulls out an old suitcase from the tollbooth and rummages through it.) No ... no... no...
this won't do... hmmm...

MILO

(To TOCK.) What's he looking for? (TOCK shrugs.)

GATEKEEPER

Ah! This is fine. (Pulls out a Medallion on a chain. Engraved in the Medallion is: "WHY NOT?") Why not.
That's a good reason for almost anything... a bit used, perhaps, but still quite serviceable.

There you are, sir.

Now I can truly say: Welcome to Dictionopolis.

(He opens the Gate and walks off.)

TIME

DATE

LANE

INTERCHANGE

EXIT



THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH





ACT 01

SCENE 03

“A Feast of Words”

ACT 01. SCENE 03

(CITIZENS and MERCHANTS appear on all levels of the stage, and MILO and TOCK find themselves in the middle of a noisy marketplace. As some people buy and sell, others hang a large banner which reads: WELCOME TO THE WORD MARKET.)

MILO Tock! Look!

MERCHANT 1 Hey-ya, Hey-ya, hey-ya, step right up and take your pick. Juicy tempting words for sale. Get your fresh picked "if's," "and's" and "but's"! Just take a look at these nice ripe "where's" and "when's"

MERCHANT 2 Step right up, step right up, fancy, best-quality words here for sale. Enrich your vocabulary and expand your speech with such elegant items as "quagmire," "flabbergast," or "upholstery".

MERCHANT 3 Words by the bag, buy them over here. Words by the bag for the more talkative customer. A pound of "happy's" at a very reasonable price... very useful for "Happy Birthday," "Happy New Year," "happy days," or "happy-go-lucky." Or how about a package of "good's," always handy for "good morning," "good afternoon," "good evening," and "goodbye."

MILO I can't believe it. Did you ever see so many words?

TOCK They're fine if you have something to say.
(They come to a Do-It-Yourself Bin)

MILO (To MERCHANT 4 at the bin.) Excuse me, but what are these?

209135

41205

121145

914205183811475

524920

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

These are for people who like to make up their own words. You can pick any assortment you like or buy a special box complete with all the letters and a book of instructions. Here, taste an "A". They're very good. (He pops one into MILO's mouth.)

MERCHANT 4

(Tastes it hesitantly.) It's sweet! (He eats it.)

MILO

I knew you'd like it. "A" is one of our bestsellers. All of them aren't that good, you know. The "Z," for instance – very dry and sawdusty. And the "X"? Tastes like a trunkful of musty air. But most of the others aren't bad at all. Here, try the "I."

MERCHANT 4

(Tasting.) Cool! It tastes icy.

MILO

(To TOCK.) How about the "C" for you? It's as crunchy as a bone. Most people are just too lazy to make their own words, but take it from me, not only is it more fun, but it's also de-lightful, (Holds up a "D.") e-lating, (Holds up an "E.") and extremely useful! (Holds up a "U.")

MERCHANT 4

But isn't it difficult?
I'm not very good at making words.

MILO

(The SPELLING BEE, a large colorful bee, comes up from behind.)

Perhaps I can be of some assistance... a-s-s-i-s-t-a-n-c-e.
(The Three turn around and see him.)
Don't be alarmed ... a-l-a-r-m-e-d.
I am the Spelling Bee.
I can spell anything. Anything. A-n-y-t-h-i-n-g. Try me. Try me.

SPELLING BEE

(Backing off, TOCK on his guard.) Can you spell goodbye

MILO

SPELLING BEE

Perhaps you are under the misapprehension...
 m-i-s-a-p-p-r-e-h-e-n-s-i-o-n that I am dangerous.
 Let me assure you that I am quite peaceful. Now, think
 of the most difficult word you can, and I'll spell it.

209135

MILO

Uh... o.k. (At this point, MILO may turn to the audience and ask
 them to help him to choose a word or he may think of one on his
 own.) How about ..."Curiosity"?

41205

SPELLING BEE

(Winking.) Let's see now ... uh ... how much time do I have?

MILO

Just ten seconds. Count them off, Tock.

SPELLING BEE

(As TOCK counts.) Oh dear, oh dear. (Just as the last moment,
 quickly.) C-U-R-I-O-S-I-T-Y.

121145

MERCHANT 4

Correct!

(ALL Cheer.)

MILO

Can you spell anything?

914205183811475

SPELLING BEE

(Proudly.) Just about. You see, years ago, I was an ordinary bee
 minding my own business, smelling flowers all day, occasionally
 picking up part-time work in people's bonnets. Then one day, I
 realized that I'd never amount to anything without an education, so
 I decided that ...

524920

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

(Coming up in a booming voice.) BALDERDASH! (He wears a lavish coat, striped pants, checked vest, spats and a derby hat.) Let me repeat ... BALDERDASH!

HUMBUG

(Swings his cane and clicks his heels in the air.)

Well, well, what have we here?
Isn't someone going to introduce me to the little boy?

(Disdainfully.) This is the Humbug.

SPELLING BEE

You can't trust a word he says.

NONSENSE! Everyone can trust a Humbug. As I was saying to the king just the other day...

HUMBUG

You've never met the king.

SPELLING BEE

(To MILO.) Don't believe a thing he tells you.

Bosh, my boy, pure bosh. The Humbugs are an old and noble family, with honorable descendants. Why, we fought in the Crusades with Richard the Lionhearted, crossed the Atlantic with Columbus, blazed trails with the pioneers. History is full of Humbugs.

HUMBUG

A very pretty speech... s-p-e-e-c-h. Now, why don't you go away?
I was just advising the lad of the importance of proper spelling.

SPELLING BEE

BAH! As soon as you learn to spell one word, they ask you to spell another.
You can never catch up, so why bother?

HUMBUG

(Puts his arm around MILO.)

Take my advice, boy, and forget about it.
As my great-great-great grandfather George Washington Humbug used to say...

You, sir, are an impostor I-M-P-O-S-T-O-R who can't even spell his own name!

SPELLING BEE

What? You dare to doubt my word? The word of a Humbug? The word of a Humbug who has direct access to the ear of a King? And the king shall hear of this, I promise you...

HUMBUG

VOICE 1 Did someone call for the King?

209135

VOICE 2 Did you mention the monarch?

VOICE 3 Speak of the sovereign?

VOICE 4 Request the Emperor?

41205

VOICE 5 Call his Highness?

(Five tall, thin gentlemen regally dressed in silks and satins, plumed hats and buckled shoes appear as they speak.)

MILO

Who are they?

121145

SPELLING BEE The King's advisors. Or in more formal terms, his cabinet.

MINISTER 1 Greetings!

MINISTER 2 Salutations!

MINISTER 3 Welcome!

MINISTER 4 Good Afternoon!

MINISTER 5 Hello!

914205183811475

524920

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

Uh ... Hi.

MILO

(All the MINISTERS, from here on called by their numbers, unfold their scrolls and read in order.)

By the order of Azaz the Unabridged..

MINISTER 1

King of Dictionopolis..

MINISTER 2

Monarch of letters...

MINISTER 3

Emperor of phrases, sentences,
and various figures of speech...

MINISTER 4

We offer you the hospitality of our kingdom...

MINISTER 5

Country

MINISTER 1

Nation

MINISTER 2

State

MINISTER 3

Commonwealth

MINISTER 4

Realm

MINISTER 5

Empire

MINISTER 1

DEF/XYZ

MINISTER 2 Palatinate

209135

MINISTER 3 Principality.

MILO Do all those words mean the same thing?

MINISTER 1 Of course.

41205

MINISTER 2 Certainly.

MINISTER 3 Precisely.

MINISTER 4 Exactly.

121145

MINISTER 5 Yes.

MILO Then why don't you use just one?
Wouldn't that make a lot more sense?

MINISTER 1 Nonsense!

914205183811475

MINISTER 2 Ridiculous!

MINISTER 3 Fantastic!

MINISTER 4 Absurd!

524920

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

Bosh! **MINISTER 5**

We're not interested in making sense. It's not our job. **MINISTER 1**

Besides, one word is as good as another, so why not use them all? **MINISTER 2**

Then you don't have to choose which one is right. **MINISTER 3**

Besides, if one is right, then ten are ten times as right. **MINISTER 4**

Obviously, you don't know who we are. **MINISTER 5**

(Each presents himself and MILO acknowledges the introduction.)

The Duke of Definition. **MINISTER 1**

The Minister of Meaning. **MINISTER 2**

The Earl of Essence. **MINISTER 3**

The Count of Connotation. **MINISTER 4**

The Undersecretary of Understanding. **MINISTER 5**

And we have come to invite you to the Royal Banquet. **ALL FIVE**

SPELLING BEE The banquet! That's quite an honor, my boy. A real h-o-n-o-r.

HUMBUG DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
Everybody goes to the Royal Banquet these days.

SPELLING BEE (To the HUMBUG.) True, everybody does go.

But some people are invited and others simply push their way in where they aren't wanted.

HUMBUG HOW DARE YOU? You buzzing little upstart, I'll show you who's not wanted... (Raises his cane threateningly.)

SPELLING BEE You just watch it! I'm warning w-a-r-n-i-n-g you!

(At that moment, an ear-shattering blast of TRUMPETS, entirely off-key, is heard, and a PAGE appears.)

PAGE King Azaz the Unabridged is about to begin the Royal banquet.
All guests who do not appear promptly at the table will automatically lose their place.

(A Huge Table is carried out with KING AZAZ sitting in a large chair, carried out at the head of the table.)

AZAZ Places. Everyone take your places.

(All the characters, including the HUMBUG and the SPELLING BEE, who forget their quarrel, rush to take their places at the table. MILO and TOCK sit near the king. AZAZ looks at MILO.)

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

And just who is this?

Your Highness, my name is Milo and this is Tock.
Thank you very much for inviting us to your banquet,
and I think your palace is beautiful!

MILO

Exquisite.

MINISTER 1

Lovely.

MINISTER 2

Handsome.

MINISTER 3

Pretty.

MINISTER 4

Charming.

MINISTER 5

SILENCE! Now tell me, young man, what can you do to entertain us?
Singsongs? Tell stories? Juggle plates? Do tumbling tricks?

AZAZ

Which is it?

I can't do any of those things.

MILO

What an ordinary little boy. Can't you do anything at all?

AZAZ

Well... I can count to a thousand.

MILO

HIJ/XYZ

AZAZ AARGH, numbers! Never mention numbers here.
Only use them when we absolutely have to.
Now, why don't we change the subject and have some dinner?

Since you are the guest of honor, you may pick the menu.

MILO Me? Well, uh... I'm not very hungry.
Can we just have a light snack?

AZAZ A light snack it shall be!

(AZAZ claps his hands. Waiters rush in with covered trays. When they are uncovered, Shafts of Light pour out. The light may be created through the use of battery-operated flashlights, which are secured in the trays and covered with a false bottom. The Guests help themselves.)

HUMBUG Not a very substantial meal.
Maybe you can suggest something a little more filling.

MILO Well, in that case, I think we ought to have a square meal...

AZAZ (Claps his hands.) A square meal it is!

(Waiters serve trays of Colored Squares of all sizes. People serve themselves.)

SPELLING BEE These are awful.

(HUMBUG coughs and all the Guests do not care for the food.)

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

(Claps his hands and the trays are removed.) Time for speeches. **AZAZ**
(To MILO.) You first.

(Hesitantly.) Your Majesty, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to **MILO**
take this opportunity to say that...

That's quite enough. Mustn't talk all day. **AZAZ**

But I just started to... **MILO**

NEXT! **AZAZ**

(Quickly.) Roast turkey, mashed potatoes, vanilla ice cream. **HUMBUG**

Hamburgers, corn on the cob, chocolate pudding p-u-d-d-i-n-g. **SPELLING BEE**

(Each Guest names two dishes and a dessert.)

(The last.) Pâté de foie gras, soupe à l'oignon, salade endives, **AZAZ**
fromage et fruitset demi-tasse.

(He claps his hands. Waiters serve each Guest his Words.)
Dig in.

(To MILO.) Though I can't say I think much of your choice.

I didn't know I was going to have to eat my words. **MILO**

Of course, of course, everybody here does. **AZAZ**
Your speech should have been in better taste.

MINISTER 1 Here, try some somersault. It improves the flavor.

209135

MINISTER 2 Have a rigmarole. (Offers breadbasket.)

MINISTER 3 Or a ragamuffin.

MINISTER 4 Perhaps you'd care for a synonym bun.

41205

MINISTER 5 Why not wait for your just deserts?

AZAZ Ah yes, the dessert. We're having a special treat today... freshly made at the half-bakery.

MILO The half-bakery?

121145

AZAZ Of course, the half-bakery! Where do you think half-baked ideas come from? Now, please don't interrupt.

By royal command, the pastry chefs have...

MILO What's a half-baked idea?

(AZAZ gives up the idea of speaking as a cart is wheeled in and the Guests help themselves.)

914205183811475

HUMBUG They're very tasty, but they don't always agree with you. Here's a good one. (HUMBUG hands one to MILO.)

MILO (Reads.) "The earth is flat."

524920

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

People swallowed that one for years. (Picks up one and reads.) "The moon is made of green cheese." Now, there's a half-baked idea.

SPELLING BEE

Everyone chooses one and eats. They include: "It Never Rains But Pours," "Night Air Is BadAir." "Everything Happens for the Best," "Coffee Stunts Your Growth."

And now for a few closing words.
Attention! Let me have your attention!

AZAZ

(Everyone leaps up and Exits, except for MILO, TOCK, and the HUMBUG.)

Loyal subjects and friends, once again on this gala occasion,
we have...

Excuse me, but everybody left.

MILO

(Sadly.) I was hoping no one would notice. It happens every time.

AZAZ

They're gone to dinner, and as soon as I finish this last bite,
I shall join them.

HUMBUG

That's ridiculous. How can they eat dinner right after a banquet?

MILO

SCANDALOUS! We'll put a stop to it at once. From now on,
by royal command, everyone must eat dinner before the banquet.

AZAZ

But that's just as bad!

MILO

Or just as good. Things which are equally bad are also equally good.
Try to look at the bright side of things.

HUMBUG

ACT 01. SCENE 03

MILO I don't know which side of anything to look at. Everything is so confusing, and all your words only make things worse.

AZAZ How true. There must be something we can do about it.

HUMBUG Pass a law!

AZAZ We have almost as many laws as words.

HUMBUG Offer a reward.
(AZAZ shakes his head and looks madder at each suggestion.)

Send for help? Drive a bargain? Pull the switch?
Lower the boom? Toe the line?

(As AZAZ continues to scowl, the HUMBUG loses confidence and finally gives up.)

MILO Maybe you should let Rhyme and Reason return.

AZAZ How nice that would be. Even if they were a bother at times, things always went so well when they were here.
But I'm afraid it can't be done.

HUMBUG Certainly not. Can't be done.

MILO Why not?

HUMBUG (Now siding with MILO.) Why not, indeed?

Much too difficult.

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

Of course, much too difficult.

HUMBUG

You could, if you really wanted to.

MILO

By all means, if you really wanted to, you could.

HUMBUG

(To HUMBUG.) How?

AZAZ

(Also to HUMBUG.) Yeah, how?

MILO

Why... uh, it's a simple task for a brave boy with a powerful heart,
a focused dog and a useful small automobile.

HUMBUG

Go on.

AZAZ

Well, all that he would have to do is cross the dangerous, unknown
countryside between here and Digitopolis, where he would have to
persuade the Mathemagician to release the Princesses, which we
know to be impossible because the Mathemagician will never agree
with Azaz about anything. Once achieving that, it's a simple matter
of entering the Mountains of Ignorance from where no one has ever
returned alive, an effortless climb up a two thousand foot stairway
without railing in a high wind at night to the Castle-in-the-Air.
After a pleasant chat with the Princesses, all that remains is a
leisurely ride back through those chaotic steep rocks where the
frightening fiends have sworn to tear any intruder limb from limb
and swallow him down to his belt buckle. Finally after doing all
that, a triumphal parade! If, of course, there is anything left to
parade... followed by hot chocolate and cookies for everyone.

HUMBUG

I never realized it would be so simple.

AZAZ

ACT 01. SCENE 03

MILO It sounds dangerous to me.

TOCK And just who is supposed to make that journey?

AZAZ A very good question. But there is one far more serious problem.

MILO What's that?

AZAZ I'm afraid I can't tell you that until you return.

MILO But wait a minute, I didn't...

AZAZ Dictionopolis will always be grateful to you, my boy, and your dog.
(AZAZ pats TOCK and MILO.)

TOCK Now, just one moment, sire...

AZAZ You will face many dangers on your journey, but fear not, for I can give you something for your protection.

(AZAZ gives MILO a box.)

In this box are the letters of the alphabet. With them, you can form all the words you will ever need to help you overcome the obstacles that may stand in your path. All you must do is use them well and in the right places.

MILO (Miserably.) Thanks a lot.

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

You will need a guide, of course, and since he knows the obstacles so well, the Humbug has cheerfully volunteered to accompany you.

AZAZ

Now, see here ...!

HUMBUG

You will find him trustworthy, brave, resourceful and loyal.

AZAZ

(Flattered.) Oh, your Majesty.

HUMBUG

I'm sure he'll be a great help.

MILO

(They approach the car.)

I hope so. It looks like we're going to need it.

TOCK

(The lights darken and the KING fades from view.)

Good luck! Drive carefully!

AZAZ

(The three get into the car and begin to move. Suddenly a thunderously loud NOISE is heard. They slow down the car.)

What was that?

MILO

It came from up ahead.

TOCK

t's something terrible, I just know it. Oh, no. Something dreadful is going to happen to us. I can feel it in my bones.

HUMBUG

(The NOISE is repeated. They all look at each other fearfully as the lights fade.)

