

# Plaza Theatrical Productions



## ***STUDY GUIDE***

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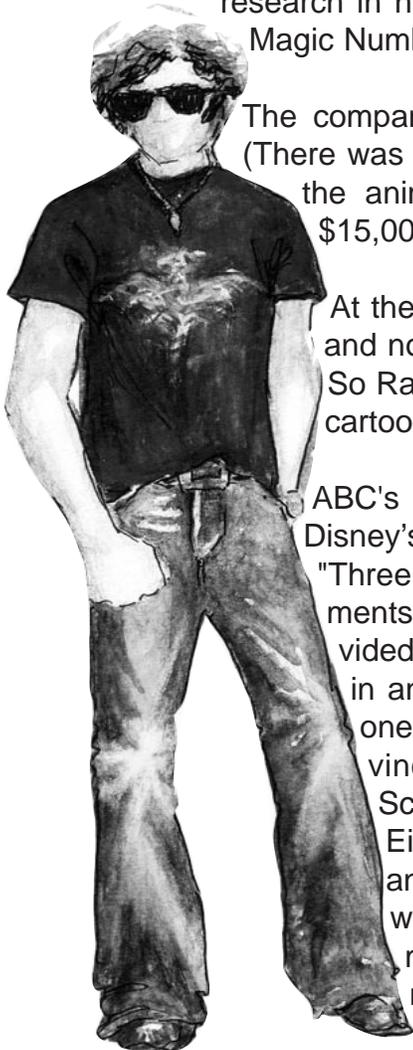
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# AND THEN THERE WAS ROCK

Schoolhouse Rock began in 1971 with a simple observation by David McCall, chairman of big-time New York ad agency McCaffrey & McCall. He noticed that his son could sing every Beatles and Rolling Stones lyric ever recorded but couldn't remember multiplication tables. He knew what all great teachers do -- reach kids where they are. So he decided to link math with contemporary music and see if kids had better luck with those multiplication tables. To implement his idea, McCall turned to his agency's creative staff, who passed the songwriting chores over to a traditional Broadway jingle writers -- clearly not rock stars -- and failed at the task.

Then agency's creative director George Newall suggested they hire Bob Dorough, a Texas jazz musician with a knack for infectious grooves. The composer was pumped about the idea, did some research in his daughter's elementary math books, and came up with "Three Is a Magic Number."



The company decided to fund their own animated "music video" for the song. (There was no MTV yet.) M&M's other creative director, Tom Yohe, story boarded the animated short, and M&M produced "Three Is a Magic Number" for \$15,000.

At the time, ABC had been critiqued by parents and sponsors for its violent and non-family friendly programming and was working to improve its image. So Radford Stone proposed a series of educational and socially progressive cartoons to the network.

ABC's head of children's programming at the time, Michael Eisner (yes, Disney's Michael Eisner), and his animation advisor, Chuck Jones, loved "Three Is a Magic Number." They gave the agency license to produce segments for the rest of the multiplication tables with the bulk of animation provided by Phil Kimmelman & Associates, a production company specializing in animation for advertising. ABC feared losing advertising revenue when one of the shorts aired instead of a commercial so McCaffrey & McCall convinced another one of their clients, General Foods, to sponsor Schoolhouse Rock, giving GF the good name and ABC the revenue. Eisner then instructed Hollywood animation studios like Hanna-Barbera and Warner Bros. to cut three-minute modules from their shows. That way, ABC could use the extra time to run the Schoolhouse Rock segments, but when the shows went into syndication, the three-minute modules could be restored. The studios begrudgingly complied. Schoolhouse Rock premiered on the weekend of January 6-7, 1973, with "My Hero Zero," "Elementary, My Dear," "Three Is a Magic Number" and "The Four-Legged Zoo."

ABC broadcast the series on Saturday mornings from 1973 to 1985 producing 41 songs and earning four Emmy Awards. It returned to the ABC Saturday morning line-up in 1992. All because one smart man knew that everything works better when it rocks.

Courtesy of:

<http://www.schoolhouserocklive.net/index.html>

<http://www.school-house-rock.com/history.htm>

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## **ABOUT THE PLAY**

Often plays are adapted from books, but rarely are plays adapted from television. While the songs originated with their own cartoon shorts, this version is obviously live and does not try to recreate those images. Several recordings of the Schoolhouse Rock songs have been recorded in the 33 years since it premiered on ABC in a variety of styles to suit the changing times. Our version of Schoolhouse Rock Live! will bring the music and choreography right into 2010 and what kids know now. What you see on stage may be closer to a Beyoncé video or a John Mayer concert than a '70's cartoon (all appropriate, of course!). The show will feature unique choreography by Tommie Gibbons combining elements of hip-hop, modern and musical arrangements and direction by Steve Goldstein to make these songs contemporary in style and genre.

Schoolhouse Rock Live! is essentially a revue featuring 21 of those beloved songs. In this show, the actors will use their real names. The play itself features a young, new teacher, who is worried about his first day of teaching. He rises that terrifying morning and turns on the TV to find Schoolhouse Rock After watching for a few seconds, the cast of the show emerges from the TV and teaches him how fun learning can be (for students and teachers) when they both rock out. The singers then take over (and, like good rock stars, trash) his trendy loft apartment to share with him all of their pop wisdom.

### **SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK SONG LIST**

In the event that you are rocking out in you classroom to the golden oldies before your visit, here's a song list of those we'll be singing in the show.

- ☛ Verb: That's What's Happening
- ☛ A Noun Is A Person, Place Or Thing
- ☛ Three Is A Magic Number
- ☛ Mother Necessity
- ☛ Sufferin' Till Suffrage
- ☛ Lolly, Lolly, Lolly
- ☛ Unpack Your Adjectives
- ☛ Just A Bill
- ☛ The Preamble
- ☛ Ready Or Not, Here I Come
- ☛ Do The Circulation
- ☛ Rufus Xavier Sarsaparilla
- ☛ Figure Eight
- ☛ A Victim Of Gravity
- ☛ Zero, My Hero
- ☛ Conjunction Junction
- ☛ Great American Melting Pot
- ☛ Elbow Room
- ☛ Interplanet Janet
- ☛ Interjections
- ☛ The Tale of Mr. Morton

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# LANGUAGE ARTS ROCK!

## SENTENCE RUMMY

Divide students in groups of four or five. Have your students choose at least 10 words from each of the following four parts of speech: nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. One student should write the words on the chalkboard. A student in each group copies the words on index cards. There will be 40 cards total. In addition, have each group add five cards each for the words 'The' and 'A' and two for 'An' completing the deck of 52 cards. Each group plays with a full deck. To begin, deal each player seven cards. To win a hand, a student must be able to make a complete sentence from the seven cards in his/her hand. If the student can't make a sentence s/he discards one card and draws another.

## PACK YOUR NOUNS

The Schoolhouse Rock song says to "Unpack Your Adjectives," but this activity allows your children to pack a suitcase full of nouns.

Have students sit in a circle facing each other. Place a suitcase in the middle of the circle. Have each student think of a noun that begins with the same letter as their name to pack in the suitcase. For example, the first student says, "My name is Sue and I am packing a sandwich for our trip." Go around the circle and have each child place his/her "noun" in the suitcase. For a bigger challenge, have each student repeat the nouns that the students packed before them (in order), then add his/her noun. The last person might need some help from the rest of the class! Or try this same activity with one letter to see if students can each come up with an item with the chosen letter. Any noun counts, (person, place or thing) so the class could pack an apple, an airplane, Atlanta or Annie for the letter A. No repeats allowed!

## IN THE MANNER OF THE WORD

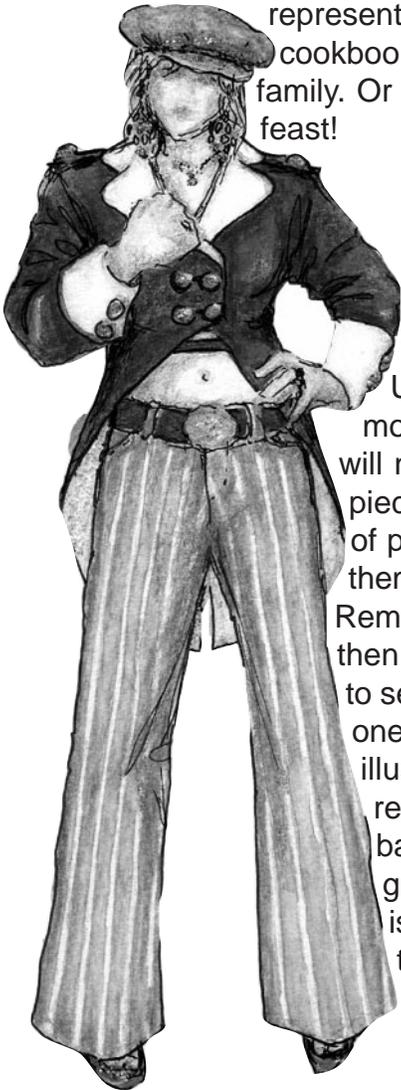
To demonstrate how adverbs modify verbs, try out this totally fun activity. Have one student leave the class. Have the rest of the class pick a verb or activity (skipping, ballet dancing, playing air guitar, etc.) that the student who just left the class will act out (no words!) in front of the class when s/he returns. While they are discussing, the teacher and the student that left the class secretly decide on one adverb that dictates the manner in which s/he will act out the activity. Then the student returns, the class reveals the activity, the student performs the activity in the manner of the word until the class guesses the adverb. It is not necessary (and actually preferable for entertainment value) that the verbs "match." For example, air guitar gracefully or skipping nervously.



# **SOCIAL STUDIES ROCKS!**

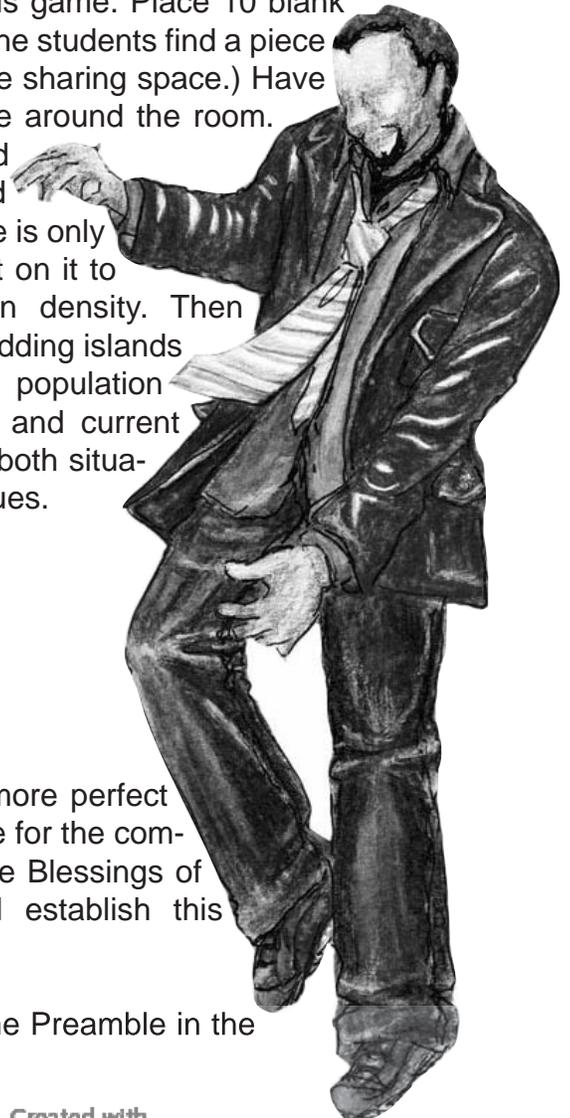
## **RECIPE FOR AMERICA**

The “Great American Melting Pot” celebrates how so many different cultures have combined to create a unique America – and also a delicious America! Have each of your students bring in a recipe that represents his/her family or heritage. Have each child then make a page for a class cookbook. Copy and bind it so they can take them home and share them with their family. Or for the brave, have them all bring an actual dish and have an American feast!



## **GET OFF MY ISLAND**

“Elbow Room” discusses how pioneers in the early development of the United States forged the frontier. When populations grow, it is natural (and more comfortable) for them to expand and create a little elbow room. You will need an open space to play this game. Place 10 blank pieces of paper on the floor. Have the students find a piece of paper to stand on. (They may be sharing space.) Have them leave the “islands” and move around the room. Remove a few pieces of paper and then have them again find an island to settle on. Continue this until there is only one island and everyone has to fit on it to illustrate increases in population density. Then repeat the activity in reverse by adding islands back in. Discuss the ideas of population growth and expansion (historic and current issues), and how it felt to be in both situations. Use music to help with cues.



## **THE PREAMBLE**

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Can your class figure out which four words are left out of the Preamble in the Schoolhouse Rock song?

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# **SCIENCE ROCKS!**

## **IT'S IN YOUR BLOOD**

When we “Do the Circulation,” we learn about the functions of blood and the importance of keeping our circulatory systems healthy. Below is a recipe for fake (and edible) blood that illustrates what different parts of our blood does.

**CANDY RED HOTS** (44%): Red Blood Cells (RBCs) carry oxygen and carbon dioxide around body, RBCs only live for about 3 months but are continuously produced in the bone marrow.

**CORN SYRUP** (55%): Plasma is a syrupy, thick, clear, yellowish liquid that carries dissolved food and wastes.

**WHITE JELLY BEANS** (0.5%): White Blood Cells (WBCs) are bigger than RBCs, oddly-shaped cells that “eat” bits of old blood cells and attack germs.

**CANDY SPRINKLES** (0.5%): Platelets are bits of cells and cytoplasm that help your blood clot.

## **SOLAR SYSTEM SHUFFLE**

“Interplanet Janet” teaches us about the 8 planets and where they are in the solar system. Create a human solar system to show where each planet is located in order from the sun and illustrate the ideas of “orbit”, “revolution” and “rotation.” Place one student as the sun and place 8 other students in place as the planets. Give them each an orbit on which they revolve around the sun and have them safely rotate while doing so. For extra fun, have other students carefully navigate through the planet maze or for older students, have them research speeds of the planets’ rotations and revolutions and apply those to the planet maze.

## **DREAM A MACHINE**

In “Mother Necessity”, we learn about famous inventions that made our lives easier and more comfortable. Create an original machine with your class that no one has ever seen before (it could be to solve a problem they face or could be based on a theme they know). Have the first student come to the front to the class and perform a sound and movement that s/he can repeat over and over to be the base of the machine. One by one add students to our machine until the class has created an entire machine together. For fun, conduct the machine (faster, slower, louder, softer) if you’d like.

## **SPACE FORECAST**

As a galaxy girl, “Interplanet Janet” has visited all the planets. Divide the class into 7 groups, one for each planet besides Earth (remember Pluto’s no longer a planet). Have each group research their particular planet to see what the weather is like there. Have the students script a weather report, and then act them out as planetary meteorologists.

## **R.I.P. PLUTO**

NCT would like to express our heartfelt condolences to Pluto. We really appreciated all you work you did as a planet, and we are sorry to see you go. It was good while it lasted. Enjoy your retirement.

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# MATH ROCKS!

## EVERY VOTE COUNTS

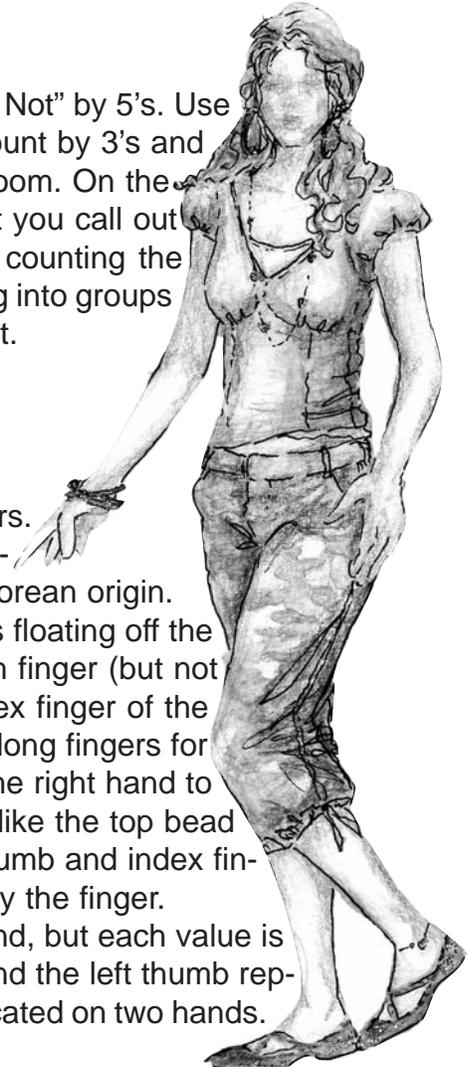
“Sufferin’ Till Suffrage” discusses how women fought to gain the right to vote in the United States. To illustrate the principal of democracy and have a weekly hands-on math lesson, select students to poll the class each week on issues important to them. For example, “What’s your favorite pizza topping?” or “How many pets do you have?” The class can create a bulletin board dedicated to tracking these statistics. Each week’s group can decorate the board according to their topic and record the new results.

## COUNTING TO THE FINISH

In “Three is a Magic Number,” we count by 3’s and in “Ready or Not” by 5’s. Use this game to help define this principle by using our bodies to count by 3’s and 5’s (and others if you like). Clear an open space in your classroom. On the count of 3 have your class scatter into groups of a number that you call out (e.g. “On 3, find a group of five.”) Have those groups practice counting the class by threes by using this physical illustration. Then try moving into groups of five and two. Same number of people, different ways to count.

## CHISENBOP

In “Ready or Not” we count by fives by using our fingers. Chisenbop is a method of counting based on the abacus to perform basic mathematics operations. It is said to be of ancient Korean origin. Hold hands in a relaxed posture on or above a table with fingers floating off the table. Fingers are pressed into the table to indicate value. Each finger (but not the thumb) of the right hand has a value of one. Press the index finger of the right hand onto the table to indicate "one." Press the index and long fingers for two, the three leftmost fingers for three, and all four fingers of the right hand to indicate four. The thumb of the right hand holds the value five, like the top bead of a soroban or abacus. To place the value 6, press the right thumb and index finger onto the table. The thumb indicates 5 plus the 1 indicated by the finger. The left hand represents the tens digit. It works like the right hand, but each value is multiplied by ten. Each finger on the left hand represents ten, and the left thumb represents fifty. In this way, all values between 0 and 99 can be indicated on two hands.



## MULTIPLYING ON MY FINGERS

This is a neat trick of how to multiply numbers by nine. Hold hands spread out in front of you. Give your fingers the values of one through ten from your left pinky to your right pinky. Lower the finger that you want to multiply by nine. Look at your hands. The fingers to the left is the tens digit, to the right, the ones. For example, for  $9 \times 6$ , lower the finger for six (the right hand thumb). Left are five fingers to the left and four to the right. So, the answer is 54.

Courtesy of: <http://www.answers.com/topic/chisenbop> and [www.curiousmath.com](http://www.curiousmath.com)

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