

# Introduction



If you take the basic *Wizard of Oz* story, mix it with the life, loves, and trials of its author, L. Frank Baum, and then blend in themes from his Oz characters—the Scarecrow, who stands for Learning and Wisdom; the Tin Woodman, for Loving or Heart; the Cowardly Lion, for Serving and Courage; Dorothy, for a Focus on the Future; and the Wizard, for Humility—you have the basis for *The Way of Oz*. This book, representing such a synthesis, begins with an overview of Baum’s original 1900 Oz book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and the later acclaimed film made from it and is followed by a chapter on the life and times of L. Frank Baum.

The positive attributes of his characters emanate from the life of L. Frank Baum himself. He was a man of many interests and notable creative talents: he was at different times in his life an actor, a breeder of rare chickens, a director, a gardener, a lyricist, a merchant, a movie producer, a philatelist, a photographer, a playwright, a printer and newspaper publisher, a salesman, a theater manager, a window dresser, and, of course, a celebrated author. Baum had a great capacity for loving and serving; his focus on the future is reflected in many of his creative works, and his humility can be seen as a result of several business failures and personal setbacks. What I call *The Way of Oz* derives from Baum’s original tale and its sequels, the life story of its creator, and the derivative lessons for you and me from all of these elements. As you will come to see, successes evolve for those who embrace the tenets of *The Way of Oz*, whether they know it or not.

The two introductory chapters are followed by five sections on learning, loving, serving, focusing on the future, and humility and related virtues—all connected to the Oz story and its author and all crafted as a guide to adolescents—in



Education professor  
Patricia Patrick  
comments on the value  
of *The Way of Oz*.

particular for students enrolled in gifted and talented programs and those aspiring to enroll in college. All of these students will find their lives enriched and assuming special meaning through self-directed learning, a caring engagement with the world and its inhabitants, and a drive for service.

Throughout the chapters, I hope you will enjoy the illustrations masterfully created by Dusty Higgins along with a unique feature of this book. Imbedded in the text are quick response (QR) two-dimensional barcode icons and uniform resource locators (URLs) that will link you to a series of more than a dozen videos related to the substance and messages in *The Way of Oz*. The videos, produced by a team of colleagues at Texas Tech University, portray students and colleagues for whom *The Way of Oz* or its antecedent literature and cultural influences, not least of all the life and times of Frank Baum, have influenced their own outlooks and successes in navigating their lives' yellow brick roads. For those less familiar with QR technology, we offer help at [www.TheWayofOz.com](http://www.TheWayofOz.com) on downloading a linking application (app) into a smart phone. For those of you who are reading *The Way of Oz* through an electronic version, the URLs should help you connect directly to the video messages.

In essence, *The Way of Oz* is intended as a guide and a set of tools for lifelong learning, loving, serving, and leadership. It is a guide for personal and professional development, and it represents a highly integrated paradigm that can be useful to people of all ages.

There are countless books about human development. I refer to several in *The Way of Oz*. But I'm unaware of another book that ties literature, biography, and personal and professional development into a cohesive and compelling whole. The Oz story contains many important lessons for the intellectual, emotional, and social development of Americans and others in our international community.

The gestalt of *The Way of Oz* includes powerful archetypal themes embedded in the basic Oz story and its sequels; it taps into imagery that has had a powerful influence on the modern American psyche, experience, and parlance; and it gives me the opportunity to help advance the cause of women's rights, which, as it was for Frank Baum, has been a personal passion for many years.

A history professor at Texas Tech who read an earlier version of the manuscript of this book wrote me: "The work truly touched me in a way that I did not expect—as a person and an educator, and perhaps most fundamentally, as a

mother who will share the lessons of Oz with her child.” This is my hope, then, that *The Way of Oz* will touch a universally responsive chord in its readers, giving them an understanding of the powerful Oz-inspired triad of learning, loving, and serving.

So, take the trip down the yellow brick road with me to learn about the life and times of L. Frank Baum and see how you can incorporate the intriguing and helpful perspectives embedded in *The Way of Oz*—a new model for personal and professional development—into your own life.



History professor Aliza Wong offers a personal view on *The Way of Oz*.

