

Chango!

To begin the section you may want to introduce students to the power of storytelling by showing a short film such as Academy Award--winning *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* and then reading the story that inspired the film. (The unifying metaphor of life as story is a powerful one, as is the theme of the transformative power of books.)

Morris Lessmore loved words.

He loved stories.

He loved books.

But every story has its upsets.

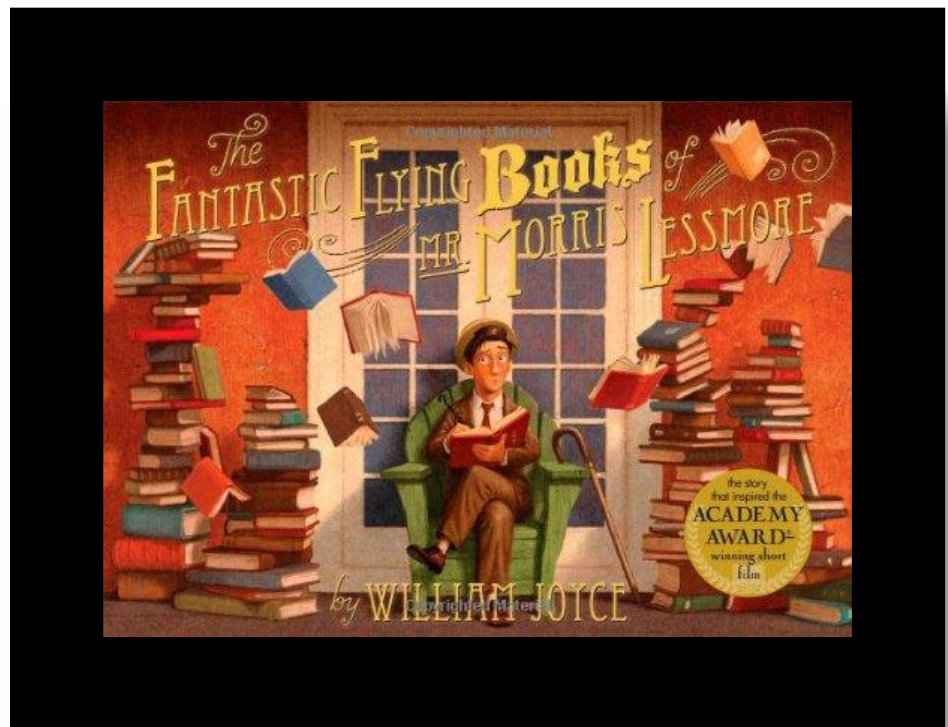
Everything in Morris Lessmore's life, including his own story, is scattered to the winds.

But the power of story will save the day.

Explore each version by watching and reading and then compare and contrast

the two versions of the magical tale. Have students decide their answer to the question, "Can the book compete with the film?" **What do we learn from each? What do we learn only from the film? What do we learn only from the book? What do we learn about the power of stories? Which one did they like best? Why?**

Can students find the many literary (Shakespeare, Humpty-Dumpty) and film references (The Wizard of Oz, The Red Balloon and Buster Keaton) or spot the motif of the bound, printed book everywhere?



Writing Magic...



1. The Writer's Oath

I promise solemnly:

1. To write as often and as much as I can,
2. To respect my writing self, and
3. To nurture the writing of others.

I accept these responsibilities and will honor them always.

Just like Magicians of Magic, Wizards of Words have an oath, and the Writer's Oath will help any person to become a better writer. Now personalize the oath for yourself. Have students make up one more rule that you think will help them to be a better writer. Have students copy The Wizards of Words Oath, adding their own rule to the list. Put the Oath somewhere they will see it often.

Now, budding wizards, we're going to tell a tale of magic. And so we begin...

To help them envision it and have a place to start, have students study the included images, or others you select. Introduce students to the idea of magic and mystery and have a class discussion about magical stories and mysteries that your students have read, written, or tried to solve. Explain to students that today they'll be searching for magic and trying to solve the mysteries within the images and tell the tales inside. Ex. Do they notice the magic lamp in the first image? Allow students to comment about each picture. What other details do they see?

1. Tell students that once their stories are written, they will be read aloud to the class and the other students will be responsible for figuring out which image their story represents.
2. Allow time for students to peruse the images and decide on which image they'd like to write about. After students have decided on an image to write about, they should begin brainstorming ideas for their story.
3. Have them follow the steps described below in the Show Don't Tell Section to help them discover the magical tale within the image.

4. Note: Much younger children who are not yet experienced writers may still participate in the creative writing process. Instead of asking them to write stories based on ideas the class comes up with, you may want to have very young children tell the stories out loud. You can take dictation or have students sit in a circle and creating a story out loud about one of the pictures, with each child adding a detail to the one before. Teachers can record the stories that younger children invent about these pictures and read them out loud later.
5. Once students are done with their first draft of their story, they may begin self-editing and peer-editing.
6. After their stories have been edited by themselves and a peer, students may begin writing their final draft of their magical story.
7. Finally, Display the images in front of the class if you have poster-size images, or display one or more copies if you have smaller versions. Organize a class read-aloud where each student is given the opportunity to read his/her story aloud to the rest of the class. Tell students that as they listen their job is to write down a question for the person reading. The questions should be about their story or the process of writing it, and should be positive.
8. Allow the other students in the class time to discuss/comment on each story and decide which image it belongs to.

Show Don't Tell

A few techniques to help your students become Wizards with Words.

According to legend, Ernest Hemingway was challenged to write a short story using only six words. He came up with: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." And said it was his best work ever.

Six-word stories are a great way to practice your writing without actually having to *write* much. They can also be used to warm up students before they begin working on their short story.

When students first hear about six-word stories, you might get, "A whole story in six words? That's impossible!" But when you try it, you'll find it is really easy, not mention fun! Once they write their first, they can write a whole army of them. Here's how six-word stories can be used as a great writing prompt.

1. Read

Before you write a six-word story, you should look at some examples. A great website you can use is sixwordstories.net or choose some that are appropriate from one of the *Six-Word Memoir* book series (ex. *Not Quite What I Was Planning: Six-Word Memoirs from Writers Famous & Obscure*) If you just want to look at a few quick examples, here are a few samples:

"Rapunzel! I am slipping! A wig?!"

Still lost on road less traveled.

Misleadingly deep puddle. Curious child missing.

"I love you, too," she lied.

Artificial limb, bungee jump-bad idea.

Her daughter's future was at stake.

That's my dog. He eats sofas.

Everything I touch turns to mold.

2. Write

Now that they've looked at some examples, they're ready to write!

But if they end up staring at a blank sheet of paper, or a blank whiteboard, have students look at some of the included pictures, or others, and just think of a sentence or two that might be intriguing and tells a story without telling an *entire* story.

If they're still stuck, try this tip: use magnetic poetry. You know the kind that you put on your refrigerator and mess around with? That often gives kids fun ideas.

If they have an idea, but can't figure out how to shorten it into six words, here's some more advice: use contractions. Use "I'm" instead of "I am." Use "They're" instead of "They are." Now what if their story is too short? Use adjectives. Don't say, "the ball is round." That's only four words. Use, "the ball is *big and round*," or, "the ball is *furry and round*," or even, "The man-eating ball is hungry."

And encourage them to not worry if their six-word stories aren't works of art. They're supposed to be fun and creative.

3. Use Their Six-Word Stories as a Writing Prompt

When writing or reading a six-word story, you probably want to know more about the story, right? Six-word stories *severely* limit you, and of course, that's the point!

Once they've written a few six word stories, especially if they wrote them based on the images, why not turn it into a write prompt. Choose one, choose an image if they haven't already done so, and writing that same story using as many words as they would like. Now they can create interesting characters, surprising plot twists, and as much description as they want.

And now, onto the long version of the story....another set of techniques.

1. Begin with the Beginning

How do you know where a story should start? In this exercise, you will write a story about a character's trip to somewhere he or she has never been before. Pick the location and start the story three different ways:

- a. Begin your story at the moment the character arrives at the trip location. Write a page and then stop.
- b. Begin your story at the moment the character leaves his or her house. Write a page and then stop.
- c. Begin your story at the moment the character finds out that he or she will be taking the trip. Write a page and then stop.

Read through your three first pages.

Which one makes you most eager to keep writing the story? Think about why and then keep writing the story.

2. Know Your Characters

It's hard to write much of a story until you get to know your characters.

Thinking about personality traits will give good insight into how your character will behave and how he or she might affect the overall story. Fill in as much as you can of this list to create a character.

You can use the character you wrote about in exercise #2, or if you want, you can start over completely.

- Name (including any nicknames):
- Age:
- Physical appearance:
- Family members and pets:
- Best friend:
- Describe his/her room:
- Items in his/her pockets or knapsack:
- Hobbies:
- Favorite sports:
- Talents, abilities, or powers:
- Relationships (how s/he acts with others):
- Fears:
- Faults:
- Good points:
- What s/he wants most:

3. Details, Details

Details are at the heart of a story—they are what turn a basic outline into a story.

Use this exercise to expand a single sentence into a whole paragraph.

Write a short sentence in which the character you created in exercise #3 goes somewhere, does something, and has an emotion about it. For example, "Emilia walked down the street, knocked on her neighbor's door, and smiled when the door opened." Now, picture the scene as if it is happening in front of you, noticing every detail. Emilia is walking down the street. What sort of weather is it? What is she wearing? What smells does she notice? How does she feel when she gets to her neighbor's? Can she tell from looking if anyone is home? What makes Sarah smile? These types of details make a story

interesting and make it feel more real. Now, take your starting sentence, and turn it into a full paragraph, asking yourself questions like those above. Then, fill in the paragraph with the details that you choose, and you may see a story beginning to take shape.

TELL THIS STORY

Common Core:
Writing Anchor
Standard 3: Write
narratives to develop real
or imagined experiences or
events using effective
technique, descriptive
details, and clear event
sequences.

image: "Let's get out of here" by Dave Hill

Make sure you establish the situation, introduce a narrator, and organize the story in a way that unfolds naturally while using dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events. Provide a sense of closure at the end.

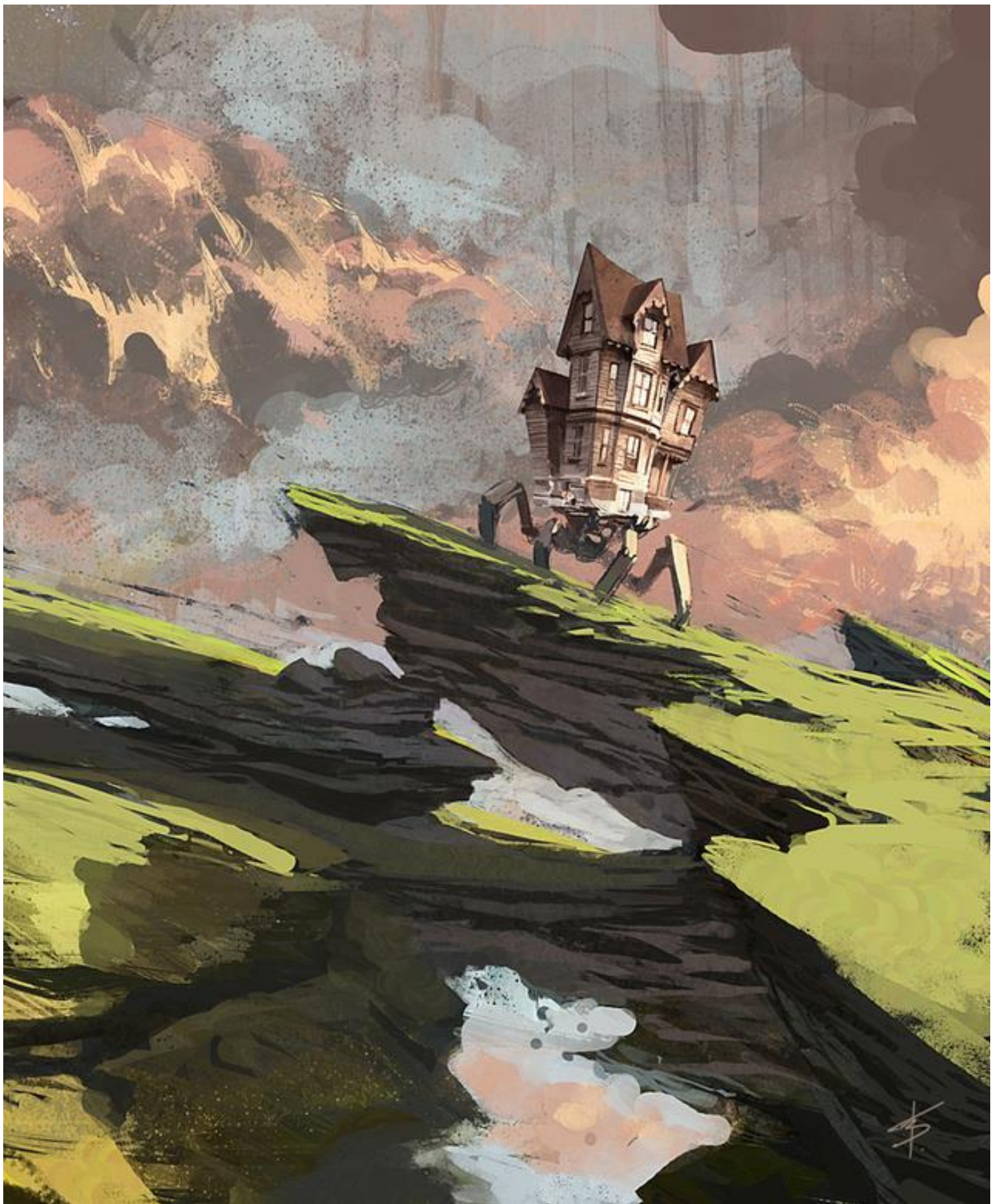
TELL THIS STORY



People are always saying things about how my aunt's house is by far the strangest house that they've ever seen... the thing is, they don't know even the beginning of how strange it really is.









Ding Dong...

For fun, you may want to introduce the following section, and access a bit of prior knowledge with a short clip, such as the clip at <http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Pixar-Brave-Video-Introduces-Us-Witch-31290.html> where the witch from Disney/Pixar movie Brave has a bit of a commercial for her services.

And, in case you were wondering, the full fine print in the ad says:

"Side effects may include: Belching, runny nose, excess hair, incoherence, mild rash and increased appetite, which includes an intense craving for trout. Other side effects may occur. Consult with your doctor before taking Witch's Magical Mystery Brew!"

The impression made by magicians has not always been as positive. In the Middle Ages nearly everyone believed in magic, and thought it linked to religion or other superstitions. People attributed magic with the power to heal, protect, or influence destiny. In some ways, things haven't changed that much. It's not hard to imagine the powerlessness people must have felt when things were inexplicable back then. Nevertheless, some educated people were already beginning to draw a distinction between sleight-of-hand and magic. In 1240 the Franciscan monk Robert Bacon offered simple explanation of conjuring tricks in order to demonstrate they were harmless fun and had nothing to do with evil powers.

But the Church saw conjuring with no kind eye, and began persecuting conjurors. They were sometimes accused of witchcraft, and were banned from certain towns. Until the 18th century (1700s) thousands of men, but mainly women, were accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake (there were around 100,000 trials and 50,000 executions). Thus, conjurors learned to keep a low profile in order to avoid being accused of witchcraft or being involved with evil powers. Only by the late 16th century did suspicion give way to applause, as magic assumed its place among the performing arts.

The First Book

It wasn't until 1584 that the first book about magic was published by the Englishman Reginald Scott. Entitled *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, the book gave detailed analysis of magic tricks in order to refute superstitions surrounding them. By distinguishing between sleight of hand tricks and sorcery, it marked a turning point in the history of magic. Scott gave away those secrets in order to persuade the Scottish king Jacques I that it wasn't right to persecute people who were only entertainers. Among the tricks described were effects with rope, paper, coins, and even a decapitation trick! All tricks still used today. Even though the book was written in order to protect the people from tricksters and charlatans, it had the opposite effect: most people at the time were too uneducated to read and too poor to buy books! Those who benefited the most from Scott's efforts were the rich...and charlatans! As a result, the king ordered every single copy to be burned, and the sorcerers, charlatans, and tricksters with them.

The same year, 1584, in France, a book appeared on the same subject: "*The First Part of Subtle and Amusing Inventions*" by J. Prevost. The author revealed a number of conjuring tricks and secrets and suggested that the term "magic" shouldn't be used anymore as it was ambiguous (vague) and could

easily be confused with witchcraft. He wanted the term “scientific amusements” to be used instead as it showed the practice of magic to be a fun and popular pastime. The influence of Provost’s book in his time, an age of scientific awakening, led many magicians to call themselves “professor,” “physicist,” or “scientist.”

A number of books devoted exclusively to the art of magic were published early in the 17th century in England, among them: “The Art of Conjuring” in 1612, “The Art of Juggling or Legerdemain” in 1614 by Samuel Rid. In 1634 an author going by the name of Hocus Pocus published a treatise entitled “The Anatomy of Legerdemain: The Art of Juggling,” which was the very first book to describe in precise detail how to perform a number of magic tricks.

Afghan Bands-A Trippy Mobius Strip

This science magic trick is based on a field known as “topology.” By making loops out of newspaper strips, you are able to cut them and vary the results: 1) two separate rings, 2) one long ring and 3) two interlinked rings.

Technically, one of the paper strips used in this science magic trick has a formal name, “Mobius strip” or “Mobius band.” A Mobius strip has only one side and if you were to trace along one side of the strip, you would eventually traverse both sides of the strip before returning to your original position.

Mobius bands have applications in belts. The advantage being that the belts will wear longer because both sides are being used. The bands are named after August Ferdinand Möbius, a nineteenth century German mathematician.

These curious bands have been used as magic tricks, traditionally, called the “Afghan Bands.” You can recreate this magic trick with a Mobius band by following the instructions here.

After the prep: Have 2 spectators give each one a ring and keep a ring for yourself. Cut yours in half and I ask them to cut theirs in half too. They fail to cut a ring of newspaper in half and make one large ring.

Materials::

- Three strips torn from a newspaper, about an inch wide. Tear the paper the long way
- Tape or glue
- Scissors

Phase One

With the first strip, form a loop and glue or tape the ends together.



Cut through the middle of the loop, as indicated by the dashed, red line.



You'll end up with two separate loops.

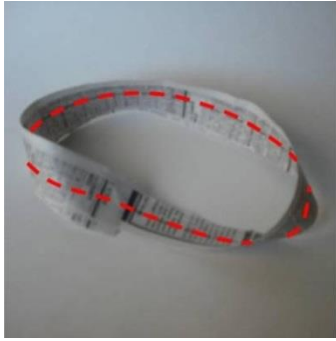


Phase Two

With the second strip, form a loop again but twist the strip (a half twist) before gluing or taping the ends together, as shown in the picture. This is the Mobius band. If a bug were to crawl along the loop, it would walk across both sides of the band before returning to its starting point.



Cut through the middle of the loop, as indicated by the dashed, red line.



You'll end up with a large, single loop.



Phase Three

With the third strip, form a loop again but twist the strip twice before glueing or taping the ends together, as shown in the picture.



Cut through the middle of the loop, as indicated by the dashed, red line.



You'll end up with two loops that are linked together.



Street Magic

From the Middle Ages to the 18th Century, magic was primarily a form of street entertainment. Magicians entertained the public at fairs or carnivals, in public squares, and at rich people and nobles homes. The European magicians of this time were generally mobile (itinerant) performers who also specialized in juggling, sword swallowing, and flame spitting. They often traveled with animal trainers, acrobats, singers, and dancers. Engravings from the period show magicians performing tricks like the cups and balls or the cut and restored rope. Later, they would add tricks with coins and, beginning in the 14th century, card tricks. It was not uncommon for a magician to work with an accomplice who would take advantage of the audiences focus on the magician and interest in the magic show to pick their pockets. Double your money!

A Whole Nine Yards: Cut & Restored String!

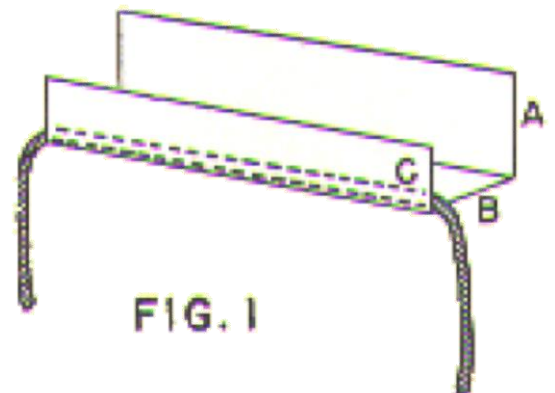
A string or rope is cut into two pieces, and then magically restored into one piece!

Materials:

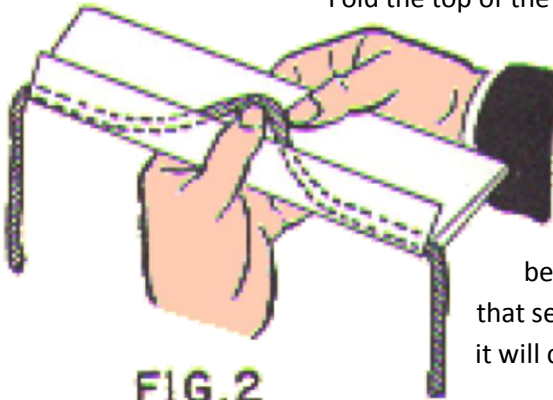
- One piece of heavy string or thin rope
- A piece of writing paper.
- A pair of good scissors.

The Cut-and-Restored rope effect is a classic of magic.

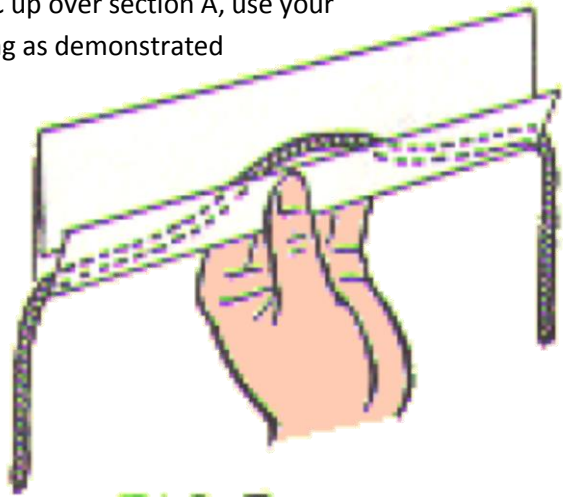
Pre-fold a piece of paper before the show so it looks like the paper in Figure 1. When it's time to present the trick, pull out the paper and lay the string in it as shown.



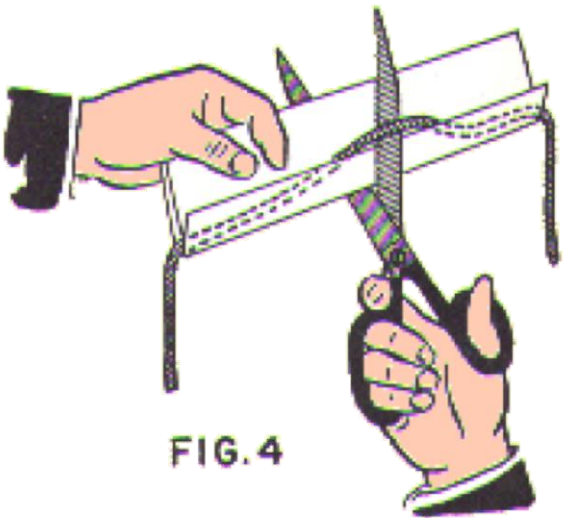
Fold the top of the paper (section A) down, then fold the bottom of the paper (section C) up. Now for the secret move:



When you fold section C up over section A, use your thumb to catch the string as demonstrated in Figure 2. When you prefold the paper before the show be certain that section A is not so long that it will cover the string.



Securely grasp the package as in Figure 3, making sure that the view shown in the diagram is seen only by you.



Cut through the paper, as shown in Figure 4. Cut completely through the paper, dividing it and, presumably, the rope in half. In reality, only the paper is cut in half, the rope is still intact.

Crumple up the paper, and pull the rope out slowly. It is restored into one complete piece! The paper may be examined, and it will be seen to have been cleanly cut into two halves!

For another variation that uses no paper (all you need is cotton rope and scissors) watch the following video and have students follow the instructions to do it themselves! <http://prop-tricks.wonderhowto.com/how-to/do-the-cut-and-restore-rope-trick-123758/>

Wondrous, not Witchy

Once the era of witch-hunts had passed, the art of magic became an increasingly popular form of entertainment. In the 18th century jugglers and polite entertainers performed increasingly in private homes of wealthy patrons. They had to be entertaining! That's how they earned room, board, food, and possibly handsomely rewarded with gifts if their patron was feeling generous and they put on an especially good show.

One of the typical figures of the period was a man named Isaac Fawkes, who performed in private homes and at public fairs and earned a huge fortune with nothing but magic tricks! (One interesting fact: Fawkes' Christian name was forgotten until 1904 when the details of his burial were discovered by Harry Houdini (the famous magician) in the records of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.) His act was squarely presented as entertainment, and for his entertainments mentioned no special powers but said, "Tricks by Dexterity of Hand, with his Cards, Eggs, Corn, Mice, curious India Birds, and Money...Likewise the surprising Activity of Body perform'd by his Little Boy, of 12 Years of Age..."

Fawkes was not the first fair conjurer and neither was he particularly innovative in his routines (though he did make copious use of the recently invented Egg Bag), but by consciously rejecting the association of conjuring with black magic and mysterious forces and making it clear that his show was not designed to defraud his audience, he was among the first to successfully market his act to fashionable society outside the fairs. Fawkes eschewed the stereotypical voluminous cloak and hat of the traditional fair conjurer and instead presented himself in genteel dress with a powdered wig and smart suit. His act was squarely presented as entertainment; he emphasised his skills of dexterity and if he did mention the dark forces it was only to mock those of his contemporaries that claimed a connection with the supernatural.

He was not embarrassed by his success; late in 1723 a newspaper advertisement appeared boasting of his fame and wealth:

The famous Mr Fawks, as he modestly styles himself, has since Bartholomew and Southwark-Fairs, put seven hundred Pounds into the Bank...

How much do you make?

Wages for eighteenth-century women could range from the £2 (two pounds sterling would be \$3.30 in modern exchange rates) or so mentioned before to between £6 and £8 for a housemaid (around \$13), and up to £15 (\$24.75) per annum (per year!) for a skilled housekeeper. By contrast a footman could expect £8 (\$13) per year, and a coachman anywhere between £12 (\$20) and £26 (\$43). Because they had to provide their own food, lodging and clothing, independent artisans needed to earn substantially more than this. £15 to £20 per year was a low wage, and a figure closer to £40 (\$66) was needed to keep a family. The middling sort required much more still and could not expect to live comfortably for under £100 (\$165) per year, while the boundary between the "middling sort" and the simply rich was in the region of £500 (\$825). The First Lord of the Treasury enjoyed an annual salary of £4,000 (\$6,600).

(for comparison, a well-paid schoolteacher in that era might have had an annual salary of £60 (very roughly equal to \$4,000 in 2000) while wages could be as low as two or three pounds per year for a domestic servant, plus food, lodging and clothing. See textbox for more information.) He challenged any of his competitors to prove that they could deposit a similar amount. Fawkes made extravagant use of this sort of self-promotion through newspapers, journals, broadsheets and playbills; he kept the public informed not only of his forthcoming shows but also of his performances for the rich and famous, his successes, and his developing career. He also employed a flexible pricing structure for his entertainments: the entrance fees for his shows varied between sixpence and two shillings depending on the audience and the location.

By the time of his death, reports at the time suggested he "had honestly acquired a fortune of above ten thousand pounds, being no more than he really deserved for his great ingenuity, by which he surpassed all that ever pretended to be art."

The Amazing Egg Bag!

Source: <http://eggs.ab.ca/kids-stuff/egg-bag>. © 2012 Egg Farmers of Alberta Some images © BRIMAR PUBLISHING INC. and Centax Books. All Rights Reserved.

With just an egg and small black bag, the magician causes the egg to vanish and reappear, even while periodically letting the audience inspect the bag. This trick requires some practice and sewing (or gluing) skills, but it is guaranteed to leave your audience astounded and dumbfounded.

How it looks:

You start by introducing the trick as "one of the oldest tricks in magic," with an empty black bag and an egg.

You place the egg in the bag, say the magic words and the egg disappears. You turn the bag inside out to prove that it is empty, then turn it right side out again. You say the magic words backwards, and the egg reappears in the bag.

You show the audience the trick again, but this time they think you slip the egg under your arm. When you lift your arm, the egg is not there. You say the magic words backwards and the egg has reappeared in the bag.

Finally, you place the egg back in the bag and say some different magic words, and this time you pour 4 eggs out of the bag!

For a more detailed description of how to present this trick, see "The Presentation" below.

What you need:

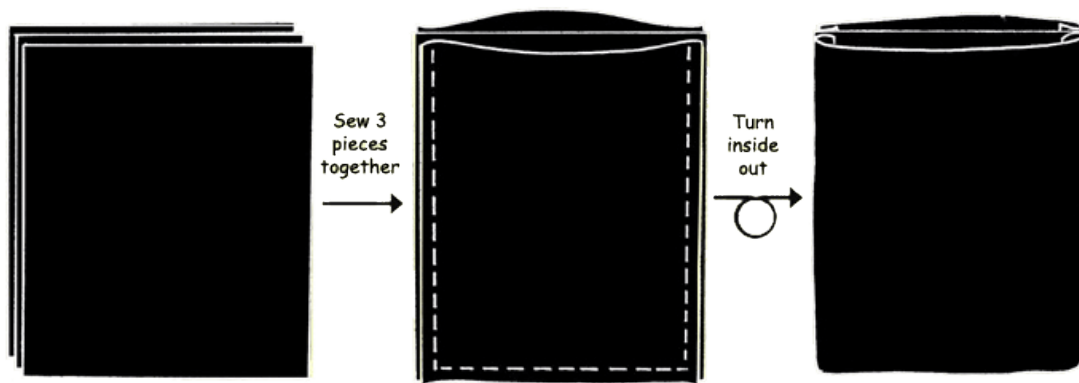
- 4 eggs

- 3 pieces of heavy black rayon lining material (9½" x 11" or 24 cm x 28 cm)
- Double-faced tape
- Counter or hard surface
- Adult helper (to help sew the 3 pieces of rayon lining material together)

Preparation:

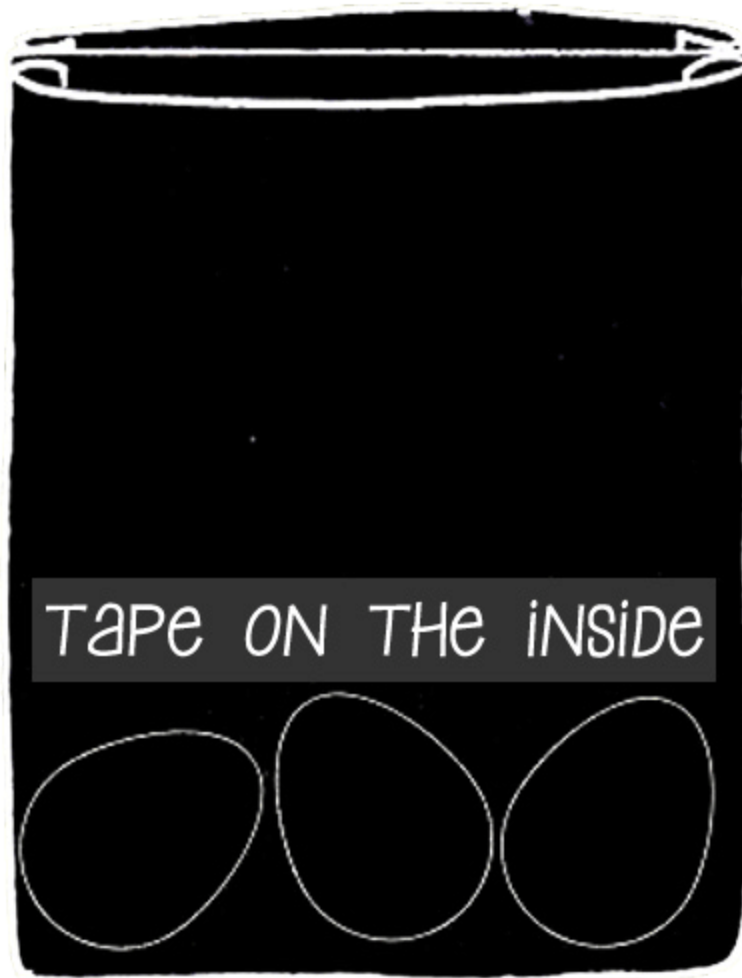
This trick requires a special bag. Your adult helper must separately hem (or glue with super glue) the tops of the 3 black rayon pieces and then sew (or glue) all three pieces together with a French seam down both sides and across the bottom (see diagram). The seams are turned to the inside. The result should be a bag divided inside into 2 sections by a piece of material in the middle.

Sew 3 pieces together ... Turn inside out.



Turn one of the sections (which we will refer to as the rear section) inside out, and with the bag flat on the table, run a strip of double-faced tape across it horizontally from one side to the other. The strip of tape should be about 3" from the bottom of the bag. Turn the bag right side out again and drop 3 eggs inside the rear section, and press the tape flat so it sticks to both sides and seals off the

How it works:



The Secret:

The trick to using this bag is where you place the egg and how you turn the bag inside out. When you want to make an egg disappear, place the egg in the rear section of the bag (it will rest on top of the tape and not mix with the 3 concealed eggs). When you want to show the crowd that the bag is empty, hold the bag in front of you by the bag's top corners so that your thumbs are in the front section and your fingers are gripping the bag from the front side (see diagram). Gather up the bag with your fingers and turn the front section inside out. With some practise, the eggs in the rear pocket will remain concealed from view and the bag will appear empty.

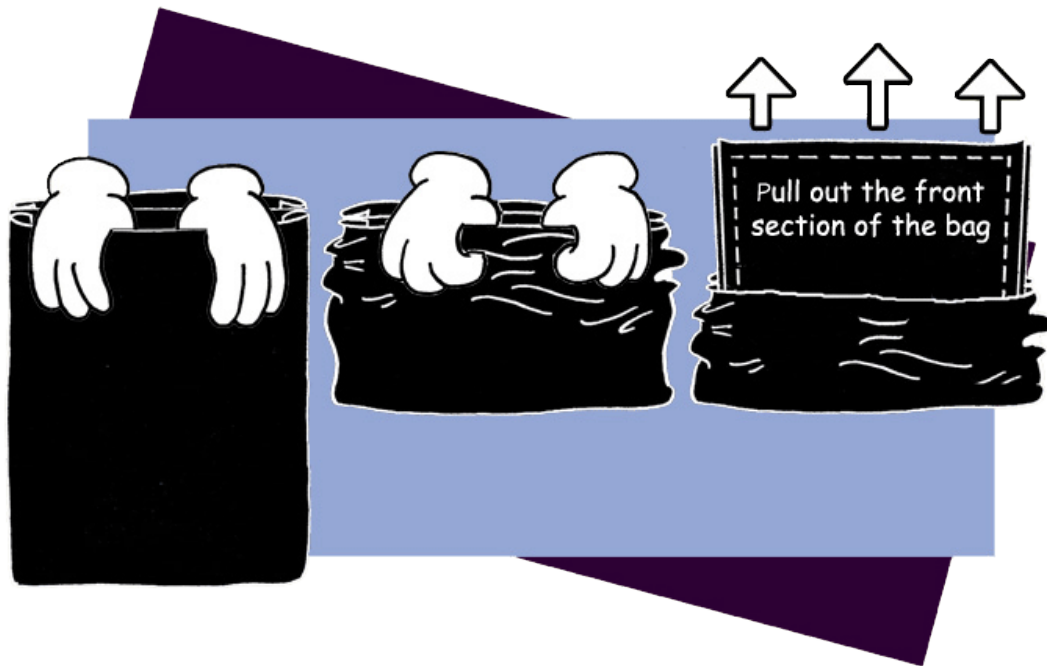
The final twist at the end of the trick is where you produce four eggs from one. Place the egg in the back section of the bag, and spread your fingers wide so the sticky tape inside pulls free. The three eggs hidden in there are now available for you to pour out.

The Presentation:

"I want to show you one of the oldest tricks in magic. It involves a little black bag and an egg." You hold up a black bag and an egg. You turn the black bag inside out and show both sides to the audience to

demonstrate that it is empty, and then turn it right side out again. “Now what I do is put the egg inside this bag.” You put your hand in the bag and drop the egg in gently. Next, you withdraw your hand and show the audience that your hand is empty. “I say the magic words ‘EGGRA-KADABRA!’ and the egg has magically disappeared!”

You gather up the front section of the bag, turning it inside out to show that it is empty and then turn it right side out again. “If you want to see the egg again, all you have to do is say the magic words backwards and the spell is reversed. ARBADAK-ARGGE!!!” You reach inside the bag and pull out the egg, holding it up for everyone to see.



Pull out the front section of the bag.

“Do you think you know how I made that egg invisible? Let’s try it once more; watch closely this time.” You place the egg in the bag and take your hand out. Your hand is closed, as if you are concealing the egg in your palm. You move your closed hand to your armpit and pretend to slip the “palmed egg” under your arm. You keep your elbow tightly pressed to your side, concealing your armpit as if the egg were inside of it.

“Now for the magic words, EGGRA-KADABRA!” You turn the bag inside out to show that there is nothing in it, and raise it up with both hands for everyone to see. What the audience also notices is that the egg is not hidden under your arm! You lower the bag and turn it right side out again. “It’s that easy, ARBADAK-ARGGE!” You reach in the rear section of the bag and pull out the egg. “It comes and goes like it has legs! All you need is a bag and an egg.”

“There’s one more trick I want to show you, only this one uses different magic words.” You put the egg in the rear section of the bag and spread your fingers to release the three hidden eggs. You take your hand out and wave it in the air, saying the words “YOLKUS-POKUS!”

You ask the audience, “What do you think happened? Do you think the egg has disappeared again? Quite the contrary!” You gently pour four eggs out of the bag onto the table. “It has multiplied into four eggs!” While the audience is wondering how you just did that, you pop the eggs back into the bag, saying, “Eggra-Kadabra” after each one. Once you have put them all back in the bag, you turn the bag inside out one more time to show everyone that the eggs have disappeared again and the bag is empty.

Place egg in the rear pocket. Spread your fingers out to release the tape from the inside of the bag.



Did you know...

Eggra-Kadabra is derived from the word “Abracadabra,” which made its first appearance in a 2nd century AD poem by Q. Severus Sammonicus. When written in a triangular form (the first line containing the whole word, the others successively omitting the first and last letters, until the last line is simply the letter A) and worn around the neck, it was believed to ward off or cure certain diseases.

Robert-Houdin Advances the Hands of Time

As the 18th Century progressed magicians were gradually moving their performances from the street to



the stage. The art of magic seemed to be trendy throughout Europe. Even famous poets and writers of the time were bringing an illusionist into their poems and stories. Between the 18th and 19th century, professional magicians seemed to be replacing charlatans (tricksters) for good, giving magic a much more respectable image. These entertainers rented or even built magic theatres that filled with eager spectators. This shift lent itself to the development of stage gimmicks such as trap doors, leading to

the creation of larger more complex illusions.

Of all the new artists, one quickly emerged as the “Father of Modern Magic,” Jean-Eugene Robert-Houdin (1805-1871). (It is incorrect to refer to Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin as “Houdin”. His last name was Robert-Houdin. His birth name was Jean Eugène Robert. He married Mademoiselle Houdin and, under special dispensation from the French government, was allowed to use the hyphenated last name.) He stood out for both the elegance of his presentation and the creativity of his illusions. Even though his career in magic only lasted ten years, he inarguably inaugurated a Golden Age for magic, making magic an art in its own right. Robert-Houdin quickly became a celebrity and in 1845 opened his “Theater of Enchanted Evenings” in Paris, France.

He had envisioned a stage that would be as elegant as the drawing rooms in which he had been hired to perform. He also thought that a magician should be dressed as such by wearing traditional evening clothes.

He hired workmen to redesign the old assembly room into a theatre. They painted it white with gold trim. Tasteful drapes were hung, chic candelabras were placed throughout, and the stage furniture was incredibly elegant.

On July 3, 1845, Robert-Houdin premiered his 200-seat theatre in what he called “Soirées Fantastiques”. No critics covered Robert-Houdin’s debut, and in his memoirs, Robert-Houdin said that the show had been a disaster. He suffered from stage fright that caused him to talk too fast and in a monotone. He said that he did not know what he was saying or doing, and everything was a blur. He believed that a magician should not present a trick until it was mechanically perfected to be certain of avoiding failure, and this caused him to over-rehearse.

After the first show, he was about to have a nervous breakdown. He closed the theatre and had every intention to close it for good, until a friend agreed that the venture was a very silly idea. Instead of admitting defeat, Robert-Houdin, irked at his friend's impudence, used this insult to regain his courage,

and persevered in giving the show a long run at his little theatre. Although at first, the forty-year-old magician was unpolished, he soon gained the confidence required for the stage. With each performance, Robert-Houdin got better, and he began to receive critical acclaim.

Robert-Houdin's little theatre had become a mecca for magic enthusiasts. The public complained, because Robert-Houdin could not magically make his theatre bigger. It became the place for the Paris elite to go. Even King Louis Philippe rented out the room for a private performance. After the triumph he gave at the Royal Palace, in 1847, the king decided to take his entourage to see Robert-Houdin at the Palais Royal.

The theatre would remained packed every single show for years on end, and the magician who had been destined for a career as a clock-maker ended up giving command performances for European royalty.

Robert-Houdin felt that every magic program should be arranged so one trick builds upon each other. One surprise should lead to an even bigger surprise. Some of the tricks and illusions Robert-Houdin presented became classics. Here are a few of them.

Second Sight

When Robert-Houdin first opened his theatre, it was sparsely attended. Though his inventions were good, they needed a draw that would bring the public to his little theatre. So he came upon the idea of doing a two-person mind-reading act. He even concocted a silly story on how his son Emile created a game of hot and cold that resulted into Robert-Houdin utilizing that for the stage.

He took the title that was used by such magicians as John Henry Anderson, but the effect was entirely different. Anderson had a box into which items were inserted. The medium would then describe the contents inside. In Robert-Houdin's version, he walked into the audience and touched items that the audience held up, and his blindfolded assistant, played by his son, described each one in detail. It caused a sensation and brought the throng to see his Soirees.

Eventually. Robert-Houdin changed the method, so instead of asking his son what was in his hands, he simply rang a bell. This stunned those that suspected a spoken code. He would even set the bell off to the side and remain silent, and his son still described every object handed to his father.

Robert-Houdin even made the test difficult. He placed a glass of water into his son's hands, and Emile proceeded to drink from it. He was able to perceive the taste of the liquids that spectators from the audience merely thought of. Even then, the audiences were not entirely convinced. They tried to trip up Emile by bringing in books written in Greek. He even described odd tools such as a thread counter. Nothing seemed to puzzle him and his assistant

Inventions pirated!

Robert-Houdin's inventions were pirated by his trusted mechanic Le Grand, who was arrested for making and selling duplicate illusions.[3] Many of those illusions fell into the hands of his competitors, such as John Henry Anderson, Robin, Robert Heller, and Compars Herrmann. It is not known whether Herrmann or the others bought the illusions directly from LeGrand or from another source, but they willingly performed the illusions after knowing that they were invented by Robert-Houdin.

Have students learn the secrets of Robert-Houdin's Second Sight act and the one done subsequently by Robert Heller. Robert Heller saw Houdin give an exhibition of this feat of mental magic in London. His acute mind divined the secret, and he set about devising a code for working the experiment. Option: **Have students learn the fascinating secrets of second sight by researching and reading from the article at the following link:**

<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1903&context=ocj>

See a modern mind reading act with Billy Kidd <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmUEc156M5g> from the Magic of Science series. **Stop at 2:45 and see if the kids have figured out the trick, then continue to watch.**

The Ethereal Suspension

During Robert-Houdin's time, all of Paris was enthusiastically talking about the mysterious uses of



"ether" (*a colorless liquid which causes unconsciousness and had a reputation as a recreational drug in the 1800s. It was later used as a dental anesthetic for surgery, rather like Listerine started.*) He took advantage of this by presenting an illusion that appeared to use the pungent liquid. He told the audience that he discovered a marvelous new property of ether. "If one has a living person inhale this liquid when it is at its highest degree of

concentration, the body of the patient for a few moments becomes as light as a balloon," Robert-Houdin claimed.

He proceeded to prove just that. He placed three stools on a wooden bench. His youngest son Eugène stood on the middle one. With the instructions from his father, he extended his arms. Robert-Houdin placed two canes on top of the stools and positioned them under his son's arms.

He took a vial of ether and opened it. The audience smelled it wafting through the theatre. He placed the vial under his son's nose, and he went limp. In reality, the vial was empty, with the odor being produced by his son Emile pouring real ether on a hot iron shovel.

Houdin led his handsome boy by the hand to the footlights to make the most mechanical of bows to his audience. The two slowly retired backwards, when the father fixed an upright rod under each arm of the son, who had ascended three steps for the purpose of raising himself from the stage. The father then expatiated gravely upon the marvels of ether, and pretending to administer it to the youth, a simulated slumber followed, and the steps being suddenly removed, the boy remained supported by the two rods only, his body retaining its vertical position, the feet eighteen inches from the stage. Houdin then very

carefully raised the body to the horizontal line without disturbing the slumber of the boy, and to the terror of many a spectator, the father suddenly kicked away rod number two, leaving Eugene's outstretched body apparently without a support, his right elbow only just in contact with rod number one which appeared to defy the laws of nature. This was always the final trick of the performance, and when the curtain fell, and was raised again in obedience to the recall, [the encore] father and son came walking most gravely forward, and the effect of this slow movement was to make half the world believe that the boy was not flesh and blood at all, but a marvelous automaton!



How clever was Robert-Houdin? He had invented a secret mechanical device which allowed his own son to seem to be suspended against the laws of gravity, but his ingenuity did not stop there. He used ether to make the audience believe he was performing a novel and possibly harmful medical experiment.

He then surprised his audience by suddenly kicking away a support, and his son did not fall. And when the trick was over, he created perverse doubt in his audience. Since his son was moving mechanically, was it possible that he was actually a clockwork automaton the entire time? But if that was true, how did the amazing Robert-Houdin create such a lifelike automaton of his own son?

This illusion is still being done in some form by magicians today! Robert-Houdin built up the surprise of spectators until, "... by gradually heightening it up to the moment when, so to speak, it exploded."

Watch a video of an attempt at recreating this trick at

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1qb3f_robert-houdin-extrait-rare-1966_creation

This brought letters of protest against Robert-Houdin, thinking he was putting his son's health in jeopardy, although the ether actually had absolutely nothing to do with the trick.

I Believe I Can Fly! Or at least Rise!

Levitation has become one of the most popular piece of magic across the world.

In this easy magic trick a finger ring that's resting on a pencil mysteriously levitates on its own. There's some preparation involved, but you should have fun with this one.

Materials:



A pencil
A finger ring
Clear Adhesive Tape
Black Thread

Preparation:

Using the clear adhesive tape, attach a bit of the thread to the top of the pencil, to the metal part that is just under the eraser.

Hold the pencil in your hand, eraser side up. Run the other end of the thread to a button on your shirt or to a belt buckle. You'll need to anchor the other end of the thread on your body. If you choose to use a button, you can form a loop in the thread and wrap it around the button.

If you like, you can also tape the thread to your belt buckle. Of course, you're free to attach the end of thread in any manner that you wish.

You'll have to experiment a bit with the length. Basically, you'll want the thread to be fairly taut when you partially extend your arm in front of your body.

The next steps will make this more clear.



Performing the Trick

With your thread in place, hold the pencil in your hand, as shown in the picture. You'll want the eraser side up.

Drop the finger ring onto the pencil until it's resting on your hand.

Slowly draw your hand away from your body, which slowly tightens the thread. You'll

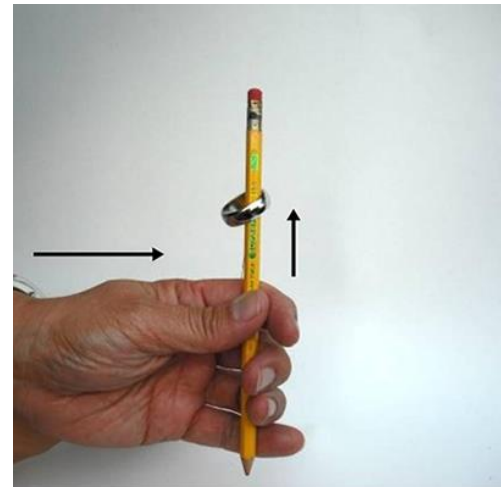
see the ring begin to rise up as it rests against the thread.

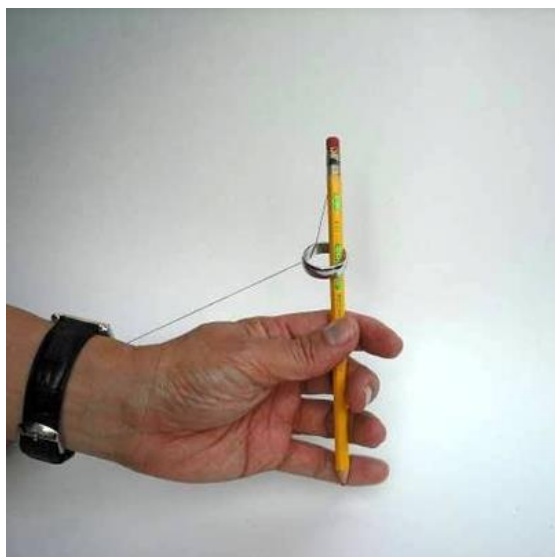
The picture shows how your hand moves forward, which makes the ring rise.

This picture shows how the thread runs from the top of the pencil to a button or your belt buckle. The thread has been exaggerated for demonstration purposes.

To make the ring descend, simply draw your hand toward your body and allow the thread to relax and drop the ring.

Make sure that you practice this one so you get the length of thread correct, as well as the motion of the hand to cause the ring to rise.





Rising Ring

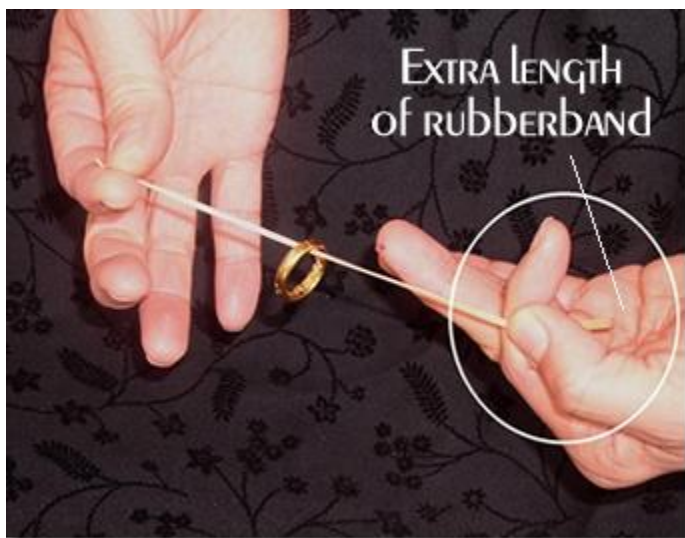
In this easy magic trick, a ring that's threaded onto a rubberband mysteriously rises on its own accord. This one is super easy and all you need is a rubberband and a ring. There's almost no preparation.

Materials: 1) A rubberband that has been cut into a single length and 2) a ring.

Secret: It's all in the way that you hold the rubberband, which we'll explain as we go along.

Thread the ring onto the length of rubberband. As you grasp the rubberband, allow a good length of the band to accumulate in the hand that the ring is moving away from.

In this example, we're making the ring rise from our left hand to our right. Thus, we want to have a length of rubberband that's hidden in our left hand. The illustration shows this extra length of band that's in the hand.



To perform the trick, pull the band taut and rotate it at a slight incline, making sure that the ring is resting on the lower part of the band. Pull the band taut and slowly release the extra band that's in your left hand. The rubberband will creep out and carry the ring with it, making it look as if the ring is rising. In reality, it's the band that's slowly moving.

This one will take some practice. Also, be sure to stand far away enough from spectators so they don't see the rubberband slowly moving. You want them to focus on the ring.

Now it's Your Turn: Levitate Yourself

Popular musicians like David Blaine and Criss Angel perform some form of the Levitation illusion.

Watch an example at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZS4fxPri_0

Levitation Illusions by Criss Angel:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drIfzj5Aivg> and another at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EypeO8dmNQQ> How do students think he did it?

The successful completion of the Levitation illusion convinces the audience that the magician is floating several inches above the ground. Accomplishing these feats of magic usually need expensive set ups, and some fancy camera angles. HOWEVER with King Rising all you need is yourself and something like the ground to stand on. This magic act sounds simple, but it requires physical strength and showmanship.

King's Rising Levitation, a modified version of the Balducci Levitation was created by a 15 year-old kid with a soft spot for magic and a vast imagination and is just as entertaining but has a bigger "wow" factor because the King Rising Levitation is an extraordinary effect in which BOTH feet of the performer apparently rise several inches off the ground! It takes practice, but just looking in the mirror at yourself you'll be astounded at what you're apparently doing.

The biggest advantage of this levitation effect is that it is (like the Balducci levitation) impromptu. It can be performed anytime, anywhere, as long as the performer is wearing pants and shoes. It is more believable than the Balducci levitation because both feet are clearly seen in the air. However, it does require a small set-up that must be done under some kind of cover (an obstruction or misdirection).

There are several methods. One without a gimmick/help [watch: <http://www.videojug.com/film/how-to-levitate-2>] and one with a gimmick to help you until you get the hang of it.

The following shows using gimmick, but also describes how to do it without one:

Begin the trick by first dressing in baggy pants and sneakers beforehand, but make sure the shoes are in full view. Declare what you are about to do with enthusiasm. This will key the audience into focusing on your feet.



Draw in an audience by announcing that you will perform the Levitation magic illusion. This illusion is popular among street magicians who convince shoppers, professionals and families that levitation is possible.

Walk around the staging area for the Levitation magic illusion to find the right spot. This step requires some acting on your part, since the illusion can be performed on any flat surface.

Take off your shoes and show them to the audience to examine.



Go away a few steps, so your audience stands on the side furthest from your dominant foot, perpendicular to your body, and can look down at your feet at an appropriate angle. Stand at least 15 feet away from the audience and stand sideways in front of them. The audience sees only your right side. Use a light jacket to lower down and cover you from your waist to your feet at your side. This will act as a curtain of sorts.



When you bow down to put on your shoes again, secretly connect them with a clip or magnet. Lower the jacket across your feet, while still holding it at your waist, then slip a foot out of the sneaker that is

farthest away from the audience's line of vision. Do this quickly and rest your foot immediately flat onto the floor next to the now empty shoe.



Put on the shoe on the foot next to your audience, but only pretend to put on the other shoe, placing your foot right beside it. Long trousers are necessary to hide this. From the spectator's perspective it is impossible to tell that the performer's foot is out, because it is hidden by the leg closest to the viewers.

The key to this illusion is that the spectators assume that there is a foot inside of the shoe, which is only natural. When both shoes are seen above the ground, it is then assumed that both feet are above the ground, and the performer is levitating.



If not using a clip/gimmick: Angle the heel of your foot against the curvature and/or heel of the shoe in a manner comfortable to you but that hides the toes of your foot. You can even angle your foot at a near 90-degree angle, if you can, similar to the outward pointed toe stance of a ballet dancer. Your toes are hidden due to the angle of your foot and the distance between you and the audience, creating an

illusion. *Stretch your toes, feet and lower legs out prior to performing this illusion to ensure that your body weight can be sustained during the trick.*

Tighten the grip on the empty shoe between the shoe the audience sees clearly and the heel of your foot. Shift your weight to the toes of the uncovered foot, and lift the covered foot completely off of the ground. You have now shifted your weight to the shoeless foot, but try to go straight up into the air and not lean to your left.

Lift the empty shoe off of the ground simultaneously with the grip you have on it between both your feet. Flap your arms, scrunch your face and wobble a bit to really sell the idea that you are struggling to lift yourself off of the ground. Hold this position for at least 3 to 5 seconds or longer if you can while spectators marvel at successful levitation. Keep your body from shaking and shifting to avoid suspicion that your far foot is supporting your weight.



Bend your knees and elbows as you finish the Levitation magic illusion. This subtle positioning of your body for a landing helps complete the illusion that you were suspended in air. Hit the ground hard when your feet drop to give the impression that you were really levitating and slip your shoe on your uncovered foot.

Pretend that you are disoriented and weakened by your act of levitation. Develop symptoms like dizziness, exhaustion and thirst as you perform this illusion in front of different audiences. Immediately afterwards the effect is complete, and the performer (you) (particularly the performer's clothing) and the area around the performer can be thoroughly examined.

Practice King's Rising Levitation several times before a mirror to get timing and the angle of your uncovered foot just right. You can also hold your coat or other piece of cloth so that it obstructs your legs (waist down to your feet), to do the same effect in frontal view.



Tips:

- If you have a picture camera with video on it, place it where the person's point of view is to see what they would see.
- Maintain a steady stream of patter and hand tricks while you perform the Levitation magic illusion. The audience will pay attention to card tricks, anecdotes and other distractions if these activities are performed throughout the show.
- Practice makes perfect! Use a mirror to watch your progress.

The Marvelous Orange Tree

On one of Robert-Houdin's side tables, he had an egg, a lemon, and an orange. He went into the audience and borrowed a lady's handkerchief that was in style then. He rolled it into a ball. He rubbed the ball in between his hands, and the handkerchief got smaller and smaller until it disappeared, passing through to the egg on the table.

Carefully, he picked up the egg. The audience expected him to crack it open and produce the spectator's handkerchief. Instead, he made that disappear too. He told the audience that the egg went to the lemon. This was repeated with the lemon and the orange. When he made the orange disappear, all that was left was a fine powder. This was placed into a silver vial. He soaked this vial with alcohol and set it on fire.

A small orange tree planted in a wooden box was brought forth by one of his assistants. The audience noticed that the tree was barren of any blossoms or fruit. The blue flame from the vial was placed underneath it. The vapors from it caused the leaves to spread and sprout orange blossoms from it. Robert-Houdin then picked up his magic wand and waved it. The flowers disappeared and oranges bloomed forth.

He plucked the oranges from the tree and tossed them to the audience to prove they were real. He did this until he only had one left. He waved his wand again, and the orange split open into four sections revealing a white material of sorts inside of it. Two clockwork butterflies appeared from behind the tree. The butterflies grabbed the end of the corner of the white cloth and spread it open, revealing the spectator's handkerchief.

The Marvelous Orange Tree trick was used by the eponymous conjurer in Steven Millhauser's short story, "Eisenheim The Illusionist", subsequently filmed as *The Illusionist* (2006), where a more complex variant is



shown, **see the lovely performance at:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbaFEKyLw64>. *Fun fact: So that the crew would not have to use CGI to "fake" the magical illusions seen in the movie, Norton received intensive training in sleight of hand and other stage magic techniques from British magician James Freedman and American magician Ricky Jay.*

Have students also watch it performed live by magician Paul Daniels on his BBC Tv Series on a set very similar to one Robert-Houdin himself would have used and see how the original orange tree would have really worked! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yeb75Pn9i8w>

Robert-Houdin's Portfolio

Robert-Houdin brought in a large portfolio used for holding documents or art work under his arm. The portfolio was only about one and three quarters of an inch thick, too small or too thin to hold anything but pictures.

He set it on two thin trestles to hold the case with the spine facing the audience. He removed the expected drawings from it. One of those pictures showed a bareheaded woman. Then, he produced two lady's bonnets decorated with flowers; one for winter, the other for summer. He lowered the flap for each production. Then, he showed a picture of birds, followed by a stuffed bird flat as a pancake. With that, he proceeded to produce from the portfolio four live turtle doves.

He showed a picture of a cartoon of two cooks fighting with pots. This was followed by three enormous copper pots. One was filled with beans, another with flames bursting forth, and the third pot was filled with boiling water. As an afterthought, he lifted the top flap of the portfolio and pulled out a large cage filled with birds.

He walked forward towards the audience with the square cage, and they applauded thinking the trick was over. "Nothing here now - neither anything, nor anybody," he said as he knocked on the upright flap. For a finale, he closed the portfolio one last time and produced his young son from it.

The Light and Heavy Chest

The amount of tricks he invented for his theatre was extensive, but his most remarkable one was the Light and Heavy Chest. He took advantage of the infancy of the usage of electricity, especially the then-

novelty of Hans Christian Oersted's discovery of electromagnetism, to his advantage. Robert-Houdin brought on a small wooden box about a foot wide. He said that he had found a way to protect it from thieves. He asked a spectator to lift it, usually a small child. The child lifted it with ease. Then, he brought an adult male up from the audience and asked 'him' to lift the same box. The adult male was unable to lift the box.

Too Heavy to Lift?

While you can still get those special boxes, they're a bit expensive, and there's something magical right at hand that you can use! You!

This is a very old magician's stunt which was once incorporated into "electric girl" acts - in which a fragile-looking young girl invites a burly man onto the stage and proceeds to defeat him in a variety of contests of strength. The key to making yourself impossible to lift is to subtly control the other person's movements, as great magicians always do.

Watch as Billy Kidd on the Discovery TV show Breaking Magic uses a simple trick of science to turn gravity against some strong men. **[Watch the episode clip "Lifting Against Gravity-Breaking Magic" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ix9Om81pMQ>] Watch carefully! Can you spot the key to the trick? Stop at 1:48, did students notice what was happening? What are their theories of how she did the trick? Write them down.**

The demonstration is pretty convincing! None of the macho men could lift her once she activated her "powers." She had all the would-be lifters stumped!

Another Variation with another technique: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKJsOSdFOTQ>

What did the lady do? She stepped in very close to the lifter's body and lets him proceed (if you watch the video above closely, you can even see her push off a bit on the lift). She is lifted easily!

In the second position she is impossible to lift. Four or five guys fail to do so. What changed?

How does she do it? Penn and Teller get the physics right, but leave some stuff out. What changes from the first lift to the second is that the woman moves her weight further away from the lifter. Penn and Teller say that she is harder to lift when her "center of gravity changes," but that's not the whole story.

What we are really dealing with here are *moments*. We don't always realize how much a force can change depending on its distance. A moment is a rotational force that increases or decreases with distance. For example, you can easily hold up a gallon of milk, but try holding up a gallon of milk for even a few seconds with a fully extended arm. The further the milk is from your shoulder, the more rotational force you have to generate in your shoulder to lift the jug. This is because a moment is force multiplied by distance.

So there are two reasons why the bodybuilders couldn't lift the woman. First, as she moves her body further away during the second attempt, she is effectively tripling her weight. For example, if she is six inches away from the lifter's shoulders in the first attempt and a foot and a half away in the second, the rotational force needed to lift her up goes from 56 foot-pounds to 168 foot-pounds.

168 foot-pounds doesn't sound like that much for a body builder to generate, but that is where the physiological reason she is "impossible" to lift comes in. In the first attempt, the lifter's arms are bent enough that he can use his biceps to aid him. In the second attempt, his arms are extended so that all the rotational force has to come from the smaller muscles in the shoulder instead. The combination of increased forces and smaller muscles is what makes the woman stick to the ground, nothing supernatural.

Now it's your turn! Try it! (and be careful not to overstrain if you are the lifter)

The "impossible to lift" trick is a simple one if you can perform it effectively. As we know, the trick works by having someone stand facing you, and lift you off the ground by placing their hands under your arms. The first time they try it, they of course have no problem lifting you.

Remember that the lifter must be unaware that you are positioning yourself further away from him or her or changing the angle of your elbows on the second go. Now apply the secret! Whilst making a show of "focusing" - step backwards slightly or move the angle of your elbows depending on the method you are using. If stepping back, you need to be arms' length away.

Place their hands back where they were...and unless they step forwards, there simply won't be enough leverage for them to move you. The more convincing the display you put on prior to the second lift, the less likely they are to notice that you're further away, because they'll really believe you can do this feat and won't bother thinking about the "secret".

The second time (to their consternation, if they're bigger than you) you remain firmly rooted to the ground, no matter how much they strain to lift you.

Magic Trick = Political Fix!

Robert-Houdin even helped prevent a rebellion with his magic tricks!

After Robert-Houdin retired, he devoted himself to his inventions with electricity and his writings. His home, le Prieuré (the Priory), was a marvel in advancement.[3] His home was run entirely by electricity.

In 1856, he was asked by Louis-Napoleon to pacify the tribes in French Algeria. During this period, the French Army commanders maintained order in the newly pacified region. They supervised local Muslim administrations and the bureaux arabes. These areas were closed off to colonization by the Europeans.

Napoleon III was worried about a religious tribe called the Marabouts. The Marabouts were able to control their tribe with their faux magical abilities and by fake miracles performed by their religious leaders. They advised their leaders to break ranks with the French and rebel against the French colonists. Napoleon wanted Robert-Houdin to show that French magic was stronger.

In 1856, Napoleon III's Second French Empire brought Robert-Houdin out of retirement to Algeria, hoping that he might perform tricks that were far more impressive, thereby dissolving the excitement of the rebels. Robert-Houdin's tricks, it is said, succeeded in breaking up the influence of the mullahs. Moreover, the Arabs became afraid of Robert-Houdin.

He used *The Light and Heavy Chest* during these performances, but instead of playing it for comedy as he had in Paris, here he played it straight. Robert-Houdin once invited the strongest tribesman on stage and asked the Arabian to pick up the light wooden chest with an iron bottom placed on stage. The Arabian picked it up with no problem. Then Robert-Houdin announced that he was going to sap his strength. He waved his wand (by turning on an electro-magnet hidden under the floor, he made it immovable) and declared, "*Contemplez! Maintenant vous êtes plus faible qu'une femme; essayez de soulever la boîte.*" ("Behold! Now you are weaker than a woman; try to lift the box.") The Arabian pulled on the handle of the chest, but it would not budge. He tried and tried until he tried to rip it apart. Instead, he screamed in pain, as Robert-Houdin had rigged the box to give the Arabian an electrical shock if he tried to rip the handles off. The Arabian let go of the handle, ran off into the aisle, and ran screaming out of the theatre.

In another trick, he allowed an Arab to shoot at him with a marked bullet, but instead of killing him, the bullet was found between his teeth. After that, they believed he could do anything. Robert-Houdin was not the first illusionist to perform the bullet catch, and many since him have adapted their own version of the effect.

Robert-Houdin went back to France with the mission accomplished. "The blow was struck," Robert-Houdin said, "...henceforth the interpreters and all those who had dealings with the Arabs received orders to make them understand that my pretended miracles were only the result of skill, inspired and guided by an art called prestidigitation, in no way connected with sorcery." He went on to say, "The Arabs doubtless yielded to these arguments, for henceforth I was on the most friendly terms with them." He was rewarded for his services of the French government by suppressing any possible rebellion.

Large Productions

Towards the end of the 19th century many famous magicians launched huge magic shows, which were either traveling or attached to permanent theatres such as the Mystery Egyptian Hall in London. These large-scale productions incorporated stage illusions (levitations, decapitations, appearances and disappearances of people, etc) or classic tricks from the magician's repertoire put in Oriental packaging (the gypsy thread, bullet-catching, etc.) These shows competed to come up with original formulas, as can be seen from the posters of the era, designed to drum up public interest. Performers of the era showed few scruples about copying the most successful tricks of other magicians.

So that technicians had time to prepare between each large illusion, magicians performed manipulation routines with the accessories that would later become central to close-up: cards, coins, ropes, scarves, etc. In time, some artists gained celebrity by transforming what were originally simple interludes into specialized acts. For example, a man named Nelson Downs performed coin manipulations under the stage-name, "the King of Koins."

Samples of Sources and Resources

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