storytime™ PLAY & LEARN

ISSUE 144

AWESOME ADVENTURES:

UNLOCKING THE MAGIC

Unlocking the Magic is a story about the childhood of Ehrich Weisz – who would grow up to become the world-famous magician and escape artist Harry Houdini! This pack is about magicians, tricks and the history of entertainment!



LESSON IDEAS THIS MONTH!

1. LITERACY LESSON IDEAS

- Reading a new story gives pupils a chance to build their vocabulary, as they're likely to encounter new words and phrases. If they don't know what a certain word means, encourage them to look it up in the **Storytime Glossary**. Once they find out what it means, can they use it in a sentence?

- The **Class Discussion Sheet** is about magic (the kind that uses tricks and stagecraft). The questions encourage pupils to think about why stage magic can be compelling, why magicians don't reveal their secrets, and the importance of practising before a performance. There is also an activity in which children come up with ideas about how a certain magic trick might be performed and what a magician has control over when they perform a trick in front of an audience.

- The **Reading Comprehension Sheet** includes an extract from Ehrich's story and some questions about it. Pupils should spot the *direct speech*, *adjectives* and a *collective noun* – and draw a picture of a ringmaster that matches his description in the text!

- The events in Ehrich's story are listed on the **Story Sequencing Sheet** – but in the wrong order! Pupils should number the sections from 1–11 to show the order they should be read in. They should feel free to check the story if they're not sure when a certain event occurred.

- Pupils should write about what happened to Ehrich in their own words on the **Storyboard** page, which features colourful illustrations. They can write down words they associate with scenes, brief notes or more detailed sentences about the things they found most interesting in the tale.

- Magicians like Harry Houdini often appeared at travelling shows where many different entertainers did their acts. On the **Who Does What?** page, can pupils complete the sentences by using the correct verb to describe what each entertainer does?

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1. LITERACY LESSON IDEAS CONTINUED

- You don't need a magic wand to do magic – sometimes just a pencil will do! The **Magic Word Ladder!** activity lists several words that you have to turn into other words by changing just one letter at a time. Sometimes, you have to change a word several times to get to the final word! Once they've done this exercise, can your pupils come up with their own clever word ladder?

2. HISTORY LESSON IDEA

- The **Amazing Magicians!** page has profiles of six astounding performers who changed the way we look at magic! Pupils should discuss which ones they would most like to see perform and why! How do they think magical performances have changed over time?

3. DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY LESSON IDEAS

- Children can find out about different media on the **That's Entertainment!** page. Can they match each type with its definition and place each one on a timeline based on when it was invented? This could lead to a discussion about the technology behind different media.

- We use locks every day, and the **Unlocking the Secret of Locks** page is about these devices and how they work. There is a list of several kinds of locks, and pupils should decide which one should be used in different situations.

- Performing a card trick involves skill, cleverness and practice. The **Card Magic Trick!** page describes a simple trick that pupils can try. Can they master it and explain how it works?

Continued on page 3...

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4. MATHS LESSON IDEA

- Timing is very important in magic, and the **Trick Timing** page has some fun magic-based maths problems for pupils to solve! Can they add together the time it takes to do different parts of a trick to find out how long it will take in total? Pupils can expand on this to work out how long it will take them to perform different tasks during the day... such as how long it will take them to do homework for different subjects!

5. ART LESSON IDEA

- Your pupils learned about different types of media and performance on the **That's Entertainment!** page, and on the **Welcome to the Show!** sheet they should design a poster advertising some type of performance... it could be a music concert, a play, a podcast, a TV programme, a film or anything else they can think of! The poster should include a catchy name for the performance, some taglines to tell audiences what to expect, how people can access it, and of course some cool illustrations as well!

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STORYTIME GLOSSARY

Look up any words you don't know in this handy reference guide!

The Many-Coloured Bat (Page 6)

- **Ancient:** from a very long time ago
- **Heavens:** the sky
- **Emerald:** a bright green colour
- **Plumes:** large or decorative feathers
- **Shimmer:** to shine with a soft, slightly changing light
- **Manakin:** a small, brightly coloured tropical bird
- **Swooping:** flying quickly downwards and then upwards again
- **Mammal:** an animal that has hair or fur and feeds its babies milk
- **Awed:** feeling wonder and amazement
- **Humble:** not thinking you are better or more important than others
- **Vain:** too proud of your looks or abilities
- **Mortified:** very embarrassed or ashamed

The Firefly Handbag (Page 10)

- **Velvet:** a thick, smooth-feeling fabric
- **Jetpack:** a device worn on the back that can push someone through the air
- **Seamstress:** woman whose job is sewing and making or repairing clothes
- **Netting:** material made from threads or wires woven with spaces between them
- **Seldom:** not often; rarely
- **Fireflies:** small insects that can produce light from their bodies
- **Creativity:** the ability to use your imagination to make or think of new things

Who Stole the Golden Cattle? (Page 14)

- **Grazed:** ate grass growing in a field
- **Infant:** a very young child
- **Woven:** made by crossing threads or other materials over and under each other
- **Strands:** long, thin pieces of something, such as hair or grass
- **Plucked:** pulled or picked at something
- **Strumming:** playing a stringed instrument by brushing fingers across the strings
- **Bellowing:** making a deep, loud sound
- **Herd:** group of animals like sheep or cattle
- **Mischief:** playful behaviour that can cause trouble
- **Hovering:** staying in one place in the air
- **Prank:** a trick played on someone as a joke
- **Bashful:** shy and easily embarrassed

Old Rinkrank (Page 20)

- **Crags:** steep, rough bits of a mountain
- **Peak:** the highest point of a mountain
- **Mountaineer:** person who climbs mountains
- **Challenging:** difficult
- **Company:** people to interact with
- **Descending:** moving downwards
- **Her attention wandered:** she stopped concentrating
- **Flared:** suddenly shone brightly
- **Irritated:** annoyed or slightly angry
- **Dangling:** hanging loosely from something
- **Disbelief:** feeling that something is too surprising to be true

Continued on page 2...

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STORYTIME GLOSSARY

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The Real Swan Lake (Page 28)

- **Winding:** bending and turning in different directions
- **Magnificent:** beautiful or impressive
- **Leaflet:** small piece of paper used for advertising things
- **Peered:** looked closely at something
- **Unforgettable:** so special or unusual that you will always remember it
- **Motorway:** wide road for fast travel
- **Roundabout:** circular road junction where traffic travels around a central area
- **Waddled:** walked with short steps, rocking from side to side
- **Ballet:** a type of dancing that uses graceful, carefully practised movements
- **Auditorium:** seating area in a theatre

The Witch Cat (Page 30)

- **Highlands:** mountainous area of northwest Scotland
- **Heather:** kind of low flowering shrub that grows on moors
- **Hound:** dog bred for hunting
- **Piteous:** making you feel sorry for someone because they are suffering
- **Blustery:** weather with strong blasts of wind
- **Nervous:** feeling worried or anxious about something
- **Bedraggled:** wet, dirty and untidy
- **Woebegone:** looking sad and unhappy
- **Pleadingly:** in a begging way
- **Hearth:** area around a fireplace
- **Menacing:** frightening-looking

Unlocking the Magic (Page 35)

- **Scarlet:** bright red
- **Troupe:** group of performers
- **Tumbling:** rolling or flipping over
- **Padlocks:** small locks that can be carried and fastened onto something
- **Deadbolts:** strong locks that use a solid metal bar to keep a door closed
- **Apprentice:** someone who learns a job by working with an experienced person
- **Locksmith:** person who makes, repairs and opens locks
- **Handcuffed:** having hands locked together with handcuffs
- **Telegrams:** messages transmitted long distances over wires
- **Memoirs:** books about someone's memories and experiences
- **Conjuror:** kind of stage magician

Keeping Count! (Page 40)

- **Overslept:** slept for too long
- **Tunic:** loose shirtlike piece of clothing
- **Oxcarts:** carts pulled by oxen
- **Barley:** kind of grain
- **Advisor:** someone whose job is to give advice or help make decisions
- **Tablets:** flat objects that were used for writing on
- **Civilisation:** a large, organised society with its own culture and way of life
- **Numerals:** symbols used to represent numbers

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CLASS DISCUSSION SHEET

LET'S TALK ABOUT...

Magic! Skilled magicians and escape artists like Harry Houdini have amazed crowds by doing seemingly impossible tricks, but what makes their performances so entertaining?

1. Why do you think people like to watch magic tricks being performed?

2. Houdini practised his escapes thousands of times before performing them on stage. Why do you think practice matters so much for a magician?

3. Magicians never reveal how their tricks work. Do you think that's fair, or should everyone get to know the secrets?

4. If you could learn one magic trick, what would it be – and who would you show it to first?

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Look at the picture on the right of a classic magic trick where a rabbit appears from a hat. In pairs, talk for two minutes: how do *you* think the trick is really done? Write your best guess in the box below.



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READING COMPREHENSION SHEET

Can you spot the *adjectives*, *direct speech* and *collective noun* in this extract?

Bright lights lit up the ring in the middle of the big tent. A man with a scarlet coat and a big moustache took off his top hat and bowed to the audience.

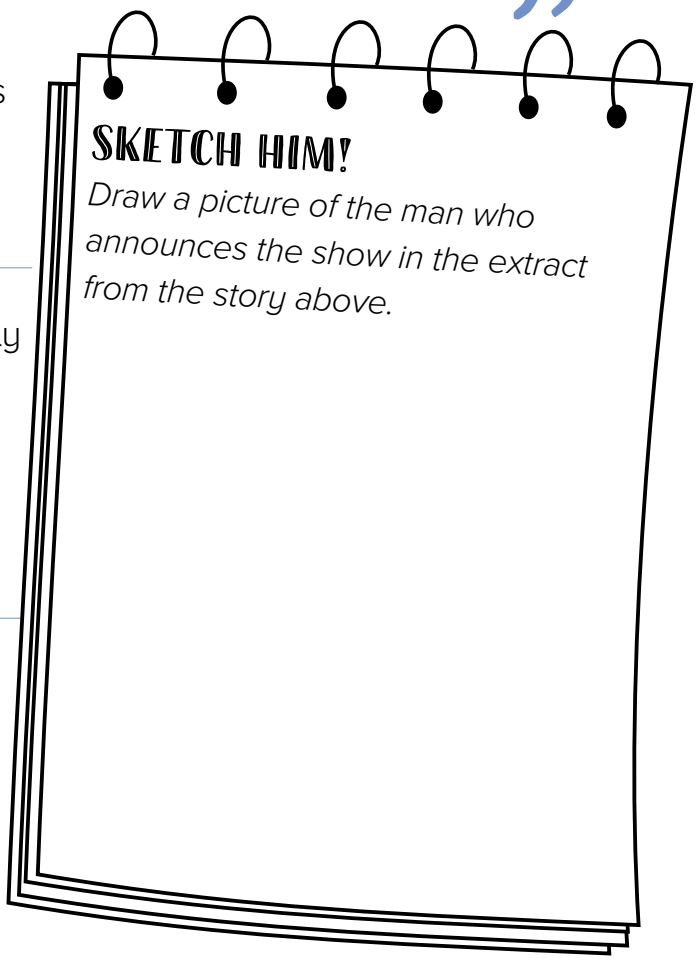
"Welcome to the Travelling Circus of Wonders!"

There was a blast of trumpets and a troupe of clowns ran out into the ring, tripping, tumbling and pulling funny faces.

1. *Adjectives* are words that are used to describe things. What are the adjectives in the first sentence that describe the lights and the tent?

2. *Direct speech* is text that records exactly what a person said. Direct speech is usually surrounded by quotation marks (“ and ”). Which sentence in the extract is direct speech?

3. *A collective noun* is a word used to refer to a group of people, creatures or objects. What is the collective noun in the last sentence of the extract?



ANSWERS: 1. *bright* and *big*. 2. The third sentence is direct speech. 3. *troupe*. **Draw Him!** The man should have a scarlet coat, a big moustache and a top hat.

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STORY SEQUENCING SHEET

Someone has recorded the events in Ehrich's story below... but they're in the wrong order! Number them from 1–11 to show the order they *should* be read in!

Soon after that, Ehrich and his family moved to the city of Milwaukee. He sold papers and polished shoes to make money for his family. ☐

Young Ehrich wasn't too impressed... but then an acrobat began walking across a high wire. The boy was amazed. ☐

When he came home, he asked his mother to search him for coins... and money he had made as tips showered down as if by magic. ☐

After seeing the circus, Ehrich decided to try hanging from a rope in his yard by his teeth – but he lost his grip and two teeth, too! ☐

One day, a policeman came to the shop with a prisoner in handcuffs. Young Ehrich managed to pick the lock without using a key! ☐

He asked for extra tips by showing his customers a clever poem he had pinned inside his hat. This trick often worked! ☐

Bright lights came on in the circus tent! The ringmaster announced that the show was about to begin. Then, clowns came out! ☐

Then, Ehrich discovered a book by magician Robert-Houdin. The boy decided that he would be a magician, too! ☐

The boy became interested in a shop with lots of locks in the window. He got a job working there and became an expert at unlocking things. ☐

Not long after that, the boy and his father moved to New York City. Ehrich got a job as a telegraph boy and delivered messages. ☐

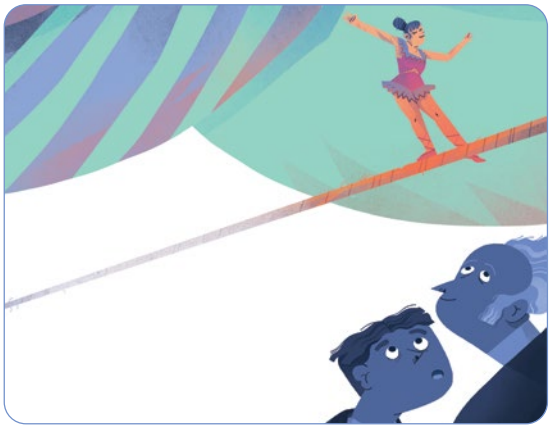
The lad was even more impressed when the acrobat lowered herself down and held onto the rope with her teeth... ☐

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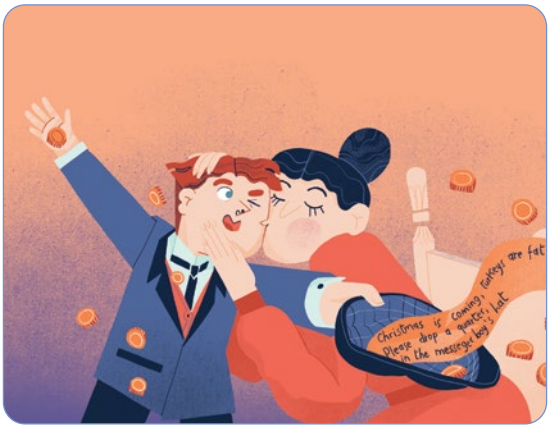
STORYBOARD

Write about what happened to little Ehrich under each picture below. You can use sentences, phrases or just words that the tale made you think of!









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WHO DOES WHAT?

In Harry Houdini's time, performers at a circus or fair would entertain the crowd with different acts and tricks. Can you complete these sentences using one of the verbs listed below to describe what different performers would do?

A. The wrestler would _____ any audience member who challenged him!

B. The strongman would _____ heavy objects!

C. The escape artist would be locked up in a straitjacket and would then _____ out of it!

D. The magician would _____ card tricks that would amaze the crowd.

E. The sharpshooter would _____ tiny targets... like the symbols on playing cards!

F. The acrobat would _____ on the tightrope!

G. The contortionist would _____ her body into strange shapes!

H. The fire eater would _____ out flames!

Word Challenge!
What do some other performers do... and what verbs would you use to describe their actions?

LIFT
BEND
BLOW
SHOOT
WRESTLE
PERFORM
BALANCE
WRIGGLE

ANSWERS: A. *wrestle*. B. *lift*. C. *wriggle*. D. *perform*. E. *shoot*. F. *balance*. G. *bend*. H. *blow*.

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MAGIC WORD LADDER

The magician waves his wand and changes just ONE letter at a time – but the word must stay a real word at every step! Can you follow the spell?

A CAT ▶ ___ ___ ___ ▶ DOT

B HAT ▶ ___ ___ ___ ▶ ___ ___ ___ ▶ CUP

C BOX ▶ ___ ___ ___ ▶ FOG

D WAND ▶ ___ ___ ___ ___ ▶ CARD

ABRACADABRA ANAGRAMS! A magician has scrambled his spell words! Unscramble the letters to reveal each magic word.

1. GAMCI _____
2. TIBBRA _____
3. DIZARW _____
4. HANIVS _____
5. LEPSARK _____
6. RYMYSET _____

DID YOU KNOW? Word ladders were devised by Lewis Carroll, the author of *Alice in Wonderland*, in 1877. He published a word ladder game, which he called 'Doublets', in 1879.

ANSWERS: A. COT. B. CAT, CAP. C. FOX. D. WARD.
ABRACADABRA ANAGRAMS:
1. MAGIC, 2. RABBIT. 3. WIZARD.
4. VANISH. 5. SPARKLE. 6. MYSTERY.

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AMAZING MAGICIANS!

Meet six amazing entertainers who changed the way we look at magic! Cut out these fact cards and put them in order so the earliest one comes first and the most modern one comes last...

Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin (1805–1871)

From: France

Jean-Eugène was a clockmaker and he ordered some books on clockmaking to learn more about it. But he received books on magic instead and became a magician!

Jean-Eugène was amazing because... he turned magic from something performed on the street into entertainment suitable for fancy theatres.

Harry Houdini (1874–1926)

From: Hungary, then US

Houdini was a skilled locksmith, and was inspired to try magic after reading a book by Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin. His stage name is based on Houdin's!

Harry was amazing because... he was perhaps the greatest escape artist of all time! His tricks included escaping after being chained up and sealed in a milk can!

Tommy Cooper (1921–1984)

From: Wales

Tommy got into magic at age 8 when he was given a magic set. He soon mastered all the tricks in it! During World War II, he entertained soldiers with his comedy and magic.

Tommy was amazing because... he realised that getting tricks wrong could be very funny if he did it right! His speciality was tricks that didn't work in an entertaining way. Tommy collapsed from a heart attack on stage in 1984... but people thought it was part of his act!

Penn Jillette (1955–present) and Teller (1948–present)

From: USA

These two friends have been performing together for more than 50 years. They perform tricks and use science to challenge claims about psychic powers and paranormal phenomena. Penn talks a lot during shows, while Teller stays silent.

They are amazing because... their famous tricks include an illusion in which Teller appears to catch a bullet in his mouth!

David Blaine (1973–present)

From: USA

He became interested in magic at age 4 when he saw a magician perform on the subway. His acts mostly involve endurance... such as being buried alive for seven days!

David is amazing because... he turned his endurance stunts into public shows for people to marvel at. They included staying in a box over the River Thames for 44 days and staying in a globe of water in New York for 7 days.

Dai Vernon (1894–1992)

From: Canada

Dai learned his first card trick from his father at age 7 and became obsessed with mastering tricks! He became a performer at the Magic Castle, a magicians' club in Los Angeles.

Dai was amazing because... he was perhaps the world's greatest expert at close-up card tricks. He even came up with a trick so clever that Harry Houdini himself couldn't work out how it was done!

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THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

Can you match these eight forms of entertainment with their definitions and put them in the order in which they appeared?

- ☐ **A. Cinema** 
- ☐ **B. Stage shows** 
- ☐ **C. Streaming** 
- ☐ **D. Recorded music** 
- ☐ **E. Radio** 
- ☐ **F. Television** 
- ☐ **G. Talkies** 
- ☐ **H. Podcasts** 

1. Live performers act, sing, dance or do magic tricks in front of an audience.

2. Pictures and sound beamed straight into a box in your living room.

3. The first movies where you could actually hear the actors speak!

4. Recorded audio shows you can download or stream, then listen to whenever you like.

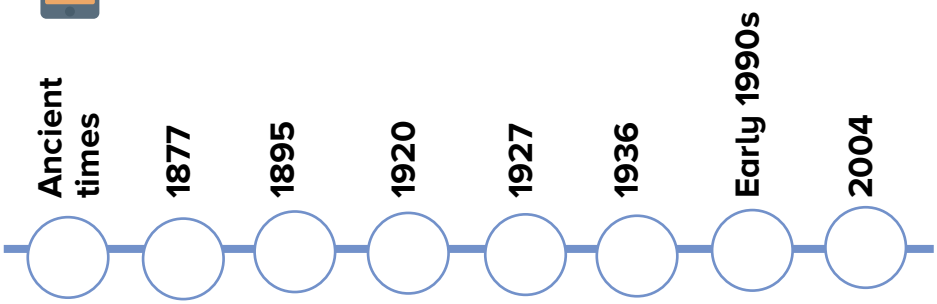
5. Moving pictures flashed onto a big screen using a projector.

6. Songs saved onto cylinders, records, tapes or CDs so you can play them again and again.

7. Videos and music sent to your device in little chunks over the internet.

8. Sound turned into invisible waves that zoom through the air to reach your device.

Now... can you put the letters next to the date when each of these first appeared?



ANSWERS: A 5, B. 1, C. 7, D. 6, E. 8, F. 2, G. 3, H. 4.
Timeline: Ancient times: B. 1877: D. 1895: A. 1920: E. 1927: G. 1936: F. 1990: C. 2004: H.

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UNLOCKING THE SECRET OF LOCKS

Harry Houdini was a lock expert... and knew the secrets to unlocking them, too! But how do locks actually work? Find out below!

HOW LOCKS WORK!

There are many different kinds of locks, but perhaps the most common is the *pin tumbler* type. The part that you put the key into is called the **plug**. If the plug turns, the lock will open.

Inside the lock are pairs of pins pressed down into the plug by springs. The jagged shape of a key lifts each pair of pins by just the right amount, lining up the gaps between them so the plug can turn! This allows the plug to turn and the lock to open. Then, you can turn the plug with the key and hey presto, the lock will open!

Different locks have different pins at different heights. The jagged shape of a key is designed to move each pin just the right distance to move the pins out of the plug!

THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF LOCKS!

Which one would you choose for different jobs?

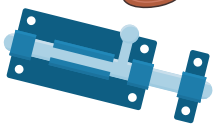
Bike Lock: designed to secure a bicycle's frame to a fixed object.



Padlock: a portable lock with a curved bar that can be passed through holes to lock things together.



Deadbolt: a lock that pushes a bar into the frame of a door, making it very hard to force the door open.



Card Lock: a lock that is opened with a code stored in a card. With many card locks, a building's computer system decides which cards can open which locks.



Combination Lock: a lock that is opened by turning dials or entering a sequence of numbers. You need the right code to open it.



Pick Your Locks

A. To lock up a bicycle I would use a...

_____

B. To lock a front door I would use a...

_____

C. To lock a hotel door I would use a...

_____

D. To lock up a garden gate I would use a...

_____

TALK ABOUT IT! A padlock keeps things shut. A password keeps your devices safe. Are they both 'locks'? Why do you think that?

Answers: A. bike lock, B. deadbolt, C. card lock, D. padlock.

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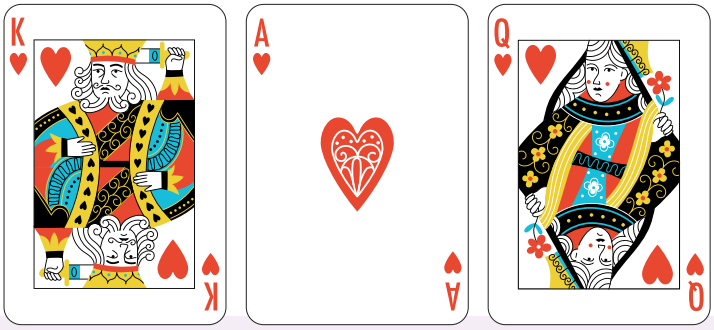
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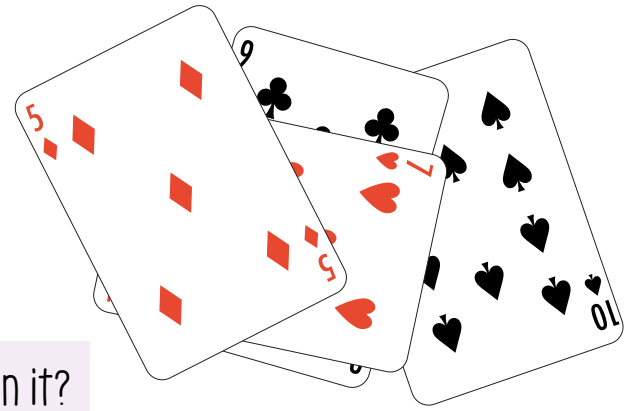
CARD MAGIC TRICK!

Harry Houdini performed card tricks as well as acrobatics and daring escapes! Here's a simple 'mind-reading' trick for you to master and try out on your family and friends.

You will need a deck of cards – take out the ace, king and queen of hearts. Place them on the table face-up with the king on the left, the ace in the middle and teh queen on the right.

1. Turn your back and ask an observer to think of one of those three cards.
2. Then, to secretly tell the other audience members what card they mentally selected, instruct them to pick up the two cards they DIDN'T select and swap their positions. (For example, if they chose the Ace of Hearts, they would swap the Queen of Hearts and King of Hearts). Once this is done, have your observer turn all three cards face down.
3. Turn back around and have them mix all three cards on the table. As they do this, carefully follow the centre card.
4. Once they're done shuffling, flip over the card you followed. If this card is the Ace of Hearts (the original middle card), then this was their selected card. If it is a Queen of Hearts, then their mental selection was the King of Hearts. And, if it's a King of Hearts, then they selected the Queen of Hearts. You should memorise this before doing the trick!
5. Flip over the other two cards and push their selected card towards them.





How do you think this trick works? Can you explain it?

Answers: The trick is that when the observer switches the cards they didn't pick, they give you a clue about which card they *did* pick. If they picked the middle card (the ace), it would still be in the middle. If they picked one of the side cards, then the card they picked is not the ace and not the card in the middle!

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TRICK TIMING

Harry Houdini was an expert at timing how long it would take him to do different tricks! Can you work out how long it would take him to do the ones listed below?



NOTE: These are not the actual amounts of time it would take to do these tricks – the numbers are made up for this exercise.



A. CARD SHUFFLE MAGIC!

The magician shuffles the deck and asks you to pick a card. It takes **6 seconds to shuffle the cards** and **9 seconds to guess your card**, so the trick would take _____**seconds**.

B. RABBIT IN THE HAT!

The magician taps the hat with his wand and out pops a fluffy rabbit. It takes **8 seconds to tap the hat** with the wand and **12 seconds for the rabbit to hop out**, so the trick would take _____**seconds** altogether.

C. MULTIPLYING SCARVES!

It takes **2 seconds to tie** the first silk scarf, **3 seconds to pull out** more scarves, and **4 seconds to reveal** the last scarf, meaning the trick would take _____ **seconds**.

D. DOVE RELEASE!

The magician waves his cape and doves fly out. It takes **7 seconds to wave the cape**, **14 seconds for the doves to appear**, and **20 seconds for them to fly away,** meaning the trick would take _____**seconds** in total.

E. VANISHING COIN!

The magician makes a coin disappear and reappear behind your ear. It takes **5 seconds** for the coin to vanish and **10 seconds** for it to reappear, so the trick would take _____**seconds** altogether.

Answers: A. 15, B. 20, C. 9, D. 41, E. 15

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WELCOME TO THE SHOW!

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