

# JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT

LYRICS BY TIM RICE      MUSIC BY ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### MATHS

1. If Potiphar counted 523 shekels before letting out a mighty roar, which accidentally knocked 230 of them to the floor, how many shekels were left on the table?
2. If the hairy Ishmaelites gave the brothers 30 pieces of silver to buy Joseph as a slave, and if Benjamin took none of them, how many coins would each remaining brother get as his share?
3. While Benjamin remains in Egypt, the others return to Canaan to get Jacob. What fraction of Jacob's sons were then in Egypt? What percentage of sons would that be?
4. Archaeologists have discovered a small tomb in the shape of a right rectangular pyramid. The base measures 16m on one side and 20m on another; the structure is 24m tall. What is the volume of the pyramid?
5. Benjamin is less than 20 years old. The sum of the two digits of his age is even. The difference of the two digits is zero. How old is Benjamin?



## ENGLISH - Literature & Writing



### 1. You know Joseph's most prized possession; what is yours?

Write a description of your Favourite Object and explain why it is so valued or precious to you.

### 2. Jacob and his brother Esau were once rivals, and now Jacob's sons illustrate some serious sibling rivalry.

Describe a time when you felt jealous of a brother or sister—or when he/she was jealous of you. What did you do about it? Or how did your sibling(s) behave toward you? Consider reading another literary work depicting sibling rivalry, such as the brother rivalry between Cain and Abel, sons of Adam & Eve, in the Book of Genesis, or the sister rivalry in Katharine Paterson's appropriately-named *Jacob Have I Loved*. In a lighter work, a preteen brother & sister compete in Jacqueline Davies' *The Lemonade War*, and learn some basic economic & marketing lessons along the way.

Jane Austen's novels also involve a number of sister-pairs competing for the same male's attention, as in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Persuasion*, and *Mansfield Park*. Fanny Price, in *Mansfield Park*, also comes from a large family, as does Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*— see the next question below!

Would you say that the Bennets, a family of five daughters in *Pride & Prejudice*, is a "large family"?

### 3. Large Families: Jacob boasts a family of 12 sons.

The number of children typical to families of different places & times can vary greatly. How many children do you think makes a large, or larger than normal, family? What is the largest family you know?

- > Interview one or more members of a large family, to learn what they would consider the challenges and rewards of being part of a large family.
- > Read more about a famous "large" family from history, such as Benjamin Franklin's family, or that of England's Queen Victoria & Prince Albert; the real story of the Von Trapps; or *Cheaper by the Dozen*. (see also Jane Austen note above.) Consider vintage TV shows like *The Waltons*, *Eight is Enough*, and *The Brady Bunch*, and the 1977 TV special "*Who are the DeBolts and Where did they get 19 Kids?*" (some were adopted). Then compare these with contemporary reality shows featuring (Jon & Kate plus *Eight*, the Duggars (*19 Kids and Counting*), and now the *Gil & Kelly Bates family* (also with 19 biological kids). Why do you think people are so interested in stories and shows about large families?

### 4. Write out a memorable dream that you have had; what do you think it means?

Research Dream Interpretation, to see how others might try to interpret the dream.

- > Research and write a brief report about another individual or culture emphasizing the importance of dreams. (ex. Aboriginal Australian Dreamtime customs such as ceremonial body painting, storytelling song and dance; Native-American tribes with dream and/or vision rituals; the psychology of Sigmund Freud or Carl Jung; the Tibetan Book of the Dead; an artist who writes or paints from dreams.)

### 5. The Joseph musical, though not written as a mystery tale, includes at least three apparent crimes:

the human-trafficking of Joseph, covered-up by an alleged death-by-goat; the false assault charge made by Potiphar's wife, which lands Joseph in jail; and Joseph's framing Benjamin for the theft of a golden cup. Choose one of these crimes, and, considering the setting and milieu of the crime—either in Canaan or Egypt— Create a detective who could investigate the crime.

- > Will it be a member of the household or tribe, or someone called in specially to investigate the incident? What sort of personality will this detective have? (consider carefully how other literary detectives function in their environments, such as *Sherlock Holmes in Victorian London & its environs*, or *Brother Cadfael in Medieval England*. Who are your favourite "sleuths"? *Nancy Drew*, or the *Hardy Boys*? *Lord Peter Wimsey*? *Father Brown*? *Hercule Poirot*?) Write a Character Description for your detective.
- > Take some Creative Liberties with the Joseph story: Write a scene, or a short story, in which your new detective character investigates and/or solves the crime.

## HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES



### 1. Create a map of Israel, then & now

Does it appear that the “Twelve Tribes of Israel,” named for the brothers, once inhabited an area of land much larger than the present-day borders of Israel?

- > Learn more about the history & culture of Israel, then and/or now.
- > Research & discuss the social & political (& military) dilemma arising from the differing views of Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs.

### 2. Create a map of Egypt, then & now.

Learn more about the history & culture of Egypt, then and/or now.

- > Consider a fieldtrip to the Australian Museum’s Ancient Egyptian Archaeology Collection in Sydney. Visit the website to know what’s currently on display.  
(<https://australian.museum/learn/cultures/international-collection/ancient-egyptian/ancient-egyptian-archaeology-collection/>)

### 3. Create a map of the Australia and the early stock routes.

Learn more about Drover culture: when and where was it important, in its heyday?

- > Make a map showing the major routes of cattle drives.
- > Refer: “Early Drover Stock Routes of Australia” (<https://livinglandscapeobserver.net/the-long-paddock/>; <https://ehive.com/collections/3492/objects/479826/stockmans-newslettervol-4-the-drovers-stock-routes-opened-up-a-nation>)

### 4. Select and research a “noteworthy” famine from history;

Note especially the causes which are man-made, rather than natural.

(examples: Ethiopia. Somalia. British controlled Bengal [India] in the 1770s. The Ukraine under Stalin. 19th century Ireland’s Potato Famine (two memorable resources: Marita Conlon McKenna’s historical fiction *Under the Hawthorn Tree*, and the ‘pop-up’ book *Life on a Famine Ship*.)

### 5 Learn more about the history of slavery.

(Consider researching & comparing two different societies – such as ancient Egypt or Rome versus China, or versus America in the 1700s/1800s; or the lives of imported African slaves in North vs. South America. Consider modern trafficking, as in Asia, or the plight of domestic slaves in the Caribbean [“restavec”s].)

### 6. Inspired by Pharaoh, learn about the nature (the advantages & disadvantages) of monarchy, versus other forms of government. Compare the Australian form of Government with a monarchy.

## SCIENCE, HEALTH, & SAFETY

### Possible Research Topics



#### 1. CSI: Middle East!

Learn more about Forensics/Crime Scene Investigation from a book such as *Forensics for Dummies*, Alex Frith's *Usborne Forensic Science*, Walker & Wood's *Crime Scene Investigations: Real-Life Science Labs* (Gr 6-12) or watch the show *Crime Investigation Australia*.

Consider how you might apply modern forensics to investigate one of the crimes depicted in the musical—such as the alleged death of Joseph, the false assault charge made by Potiphar's wife, or Benjamin's alleged theft of the golden cup.

#### 2. Disaster Preparedness Plan (for famine, severe weather, natural disaster, or terrorism).

Joseph helped Egypt plan ahead! Pick an emergency; consult sources such as the Australian Red Cross or the Australian Department of Home Affairs to help your family—or your students, on behalf of their families—develop a plan and/or try to collect the supplies recommended.

#### 3. Joseph is beloved because he reminds Jacob of his favourite wife, Rachel.

Learn more about DNA/genetics, especially traits passed from parent to child. Also learn about sex selection (*How did Jacob get those 12 sons?*).

#### 4. Desert habitats: hallmarks of the terrain, and how organisms survive there.

- > Sheep & goats; shepherding
  - > Camels
  - > Rats
  - > Cattle
  - > Corn. Wheat. Did you know that the ancient Egyptians sort of pioneered dentists/dental care, because the sand which so often got into their flour/bread wore away the tooth enamel?
  - > "Pharaoh said, 'Well, stone the crows...'" Research crows.
  - > Research stones – rock types (sedimentary, igneous, metamorphic), and rock identification.
  - > Learn more about the elements of gold ("One of you has stolen my precious golden cup!") and silver ("silver coins for Jacob's favourite son").
- #### 5. In honour of Joseph the dream interpreter, research Sleep—especially its stages, REM, dreaming. Learn more about sleep disorders as well.

#### 6. Discuss basic Sun Safety: sunscreen/ultraviolet protection; water intake/dehydration; heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Consider going a step further and learning about Desert Survival strategies (possibly from the *Worst-Case Scenario Survivor Handbook*, or [cancercouncil.com.au](http://cancercouncil.com.au) for Australian Sun Safety Measures.

#### 7. Do we see colour with our eyes, or with our brains?

Learn more about these special conditions: Colour blindness & synaesthesia.

Those who are colour blind, due to a difference in their eyes, cannot discern certain shades of blue and green, which presumably "really exist" in the visible light spectrum. On the other hand, certain types of synaesthesia trigger the "colour" region of the brain while someone is listening to music, tasting flavours, experiencing feelings, or reading numbers, letters or words; so these synesthetes see colours—associated with music, feelings, letters, etc.—when no colours are present externally to others. (Visit the "Synesthesia for Kids" website; teens & adults could also read Cytowic & Eagleman's *Wednesday is Indigo Blue: Understanding the Brain of Synaesthesia*.)