

Spring 2021 Video Classes

English Competition: The Magic Number

In the video class 'Why are poems like spells?' one of the topics that Sammy explores is the occurrence, over and over again, of 'magic' numbers *two* and *three* in storytelling and literature – for instance, the binary opposition between good and evil (such as Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* films), or the need to choose between three different options (such as the three bowls of porridge that Goldilocks encounters in the fairy tale of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears').

Pick a story or text that you are familiar with, ideally one that you are studying in your English lessons at school. It could be a play, poem, short story, novel, film – anything! Can you find any examples or occurrences of these 'magic' numbers in this story or text? Or maybe there are other prominent numbers (hint: *seven* and *nine* are also very common 'magic numbers' in literature – think of seven Horcruxes in the *Harry Potter* books, or the proverbial 'nine lives' that cats are traditionally said to have). You might find them in anything from the overarching themes of the plot, as in the *Star Wars* and Goldilocks examples, right down to a single line of a poem, as in "Double, double toil and trouble" from *Macbeth*.

Thinking about the story or text you have chosen, write up to 300 words describing how 'magic' number(s) are used in your example, and why you think the author or storyteller has decided to use this device.

As you are thinking about this activity, you might also want to compare ideas with your Inspire classmates, to see if you can find any more examples – it is more common than you think!

How to enter

1. Complete your competition entry and make sure it follows the guidelines listed below
2. Fill out the [Competition Cover Sheet](#)
3. Email your entry and your cover sheet to us at inspire@sjc.ox.ac.uk

Terms & Conditions

1. You must complete the [Competition Cover Sheet](#) and submit it along with your entry to inspire@sjc.ox.ac.uk before the closing date. If we do not receive a completed cover sheet with your entry, we will NOT be able to consider the entry.
2. The competition closes at **5pm on Wednesday 21 April 2021**.
3. The work you submit must be entirely your own and must be 300 words or less.
4. Competition winners will be contacted via email about a week after the competition's closing date. The following prizes will be awarded:
 - a. 1st place: £20 Amazon gift voucher, entry listed on Inspire Digital
 - b. 2nd place: £10 Amazon gift voucher, entry listed on Inspire Digital
 - c. Up to 5 top entries: entry listed on Inspire Digital