“Joe Learns to Count”

Roles:

Narrator 1
Narrator 2
Narrator 3
Narrator 4
Mrs. Jewls
Joe

NARRATOR 1: We’re going to tell you about some of the children in Mrs. Jewls’s class, on the thirtieth story of Wayside School.

NARRATOR 4: But before we get to them, there is something you ought to know. Wayside School was accidentally built sideways.

NARRATOR 2: It was supposed to be only one story high, with thirty classrooms all in a row. Instead, it is thirty stories high, with one classroom on each story.

NARRATOR 3: The builder said he was very sorry.

NARRATOR 1: Our first story is about Joe. One day, Mrs. Jewls kept him in from recess.
MRS. JEWLS: Joe, you are going to have to learn to count.

JOE: But, Mrs. Jewls, I already know how to count. Let me go to recess!

MRS. JEWLS: First count to ten.

NARRATOR 4: Joe counted to ten.

JOE: Six, eight, twelve, one, five, two, seven, eleven, three, ten.

MRS. JEWLS: No, Joe, that is wrong.

JOE: No, it isn’t! I counted till I got to ten!

MRS. JEWLS: But you were wrong. I’ll prove it to you.

NARRATOR 2: She put down five pencils.

MRS. JEWLS: How many pencils do we have here, Joe?

NARRATOR 3: Joe counted the pencils.

JOE: Four, six, one, nine, five. There are five pencils, Mrs. Jewls.

MRS. JEWLS: That’s wrong.

JOE: How many pencils are there?

MRS. JEWLS: Five.

JOE: That’s what I said! May I go to recess now?

MRS. JEWLS: No. You got the right answer, but you counted the wrong way. You were just lucky.

NARRATOR 1: She set down eight potatoes.
MRS. JEWLS: How many potatoes, Joe?

NARRATOR 4: Joe counted the potatoes.

JOE: Seven, five, three, one, two, four, six, eight. There are eight potatoes, Mrs. Jewls.

MRS. JEWLS: No, there are eight.

JOE: But that’s what I said! May I go to recess now?

MRS. JEWLS: No! You got the right answer, but you counted the wrong way again.

NARRATOR 2: She put down three books.

MRS. JEWLS: Count the books, Joe.

NARRATOR 3: Joe counted the books.

JOE: A thousand, a million, three. Three, Mrs. Jewls.

MRS. JEWLS: (bewildered) Correct.

JOE: May I go to recess now?

MRS. JEWLS: No.

JOE: May I have a potato?

MRS. JEWLS: No! Listen to me. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Now you say it.

JOE: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

MRS. JEWLS: Very good!

NARRATOR 1: She put down six erasers.
MRS. JEWLS: Now, count the erasers, Joe, just the way I showed you.

NARRATOR 4: Joe counted the erasers.

JOE: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. There are ten, Mrs. Jewls.

MRS. JEWLS: No!

JOE: Didn’t I count right?

MRS. JEWLS: Yes, you counted right, but you got the wrong answer.

JOE: This doesn’t make any sense! When I count the wrong way, I get the right answer, and when I count right, I get the wrong answer.

MRS. JEWLS: (in great frustration) Ooh!

NARRATOR 2: Mrs. Jewls hit her head against the wall five times.

MRS. JEWLS: (turning away and butting her head) Uh . . . uh . . . uh . . . uh . . . (turns back to JOE) How many times did I hit my head against the wall, Joe?

JOE: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. You hit your head against the wall ten times.

MRS. JEWLS: No!

JOE: Four, six, one, nine, five. You hit your head five times.

NARRATOR 3: Mrs. Jewls shook her head no and said,
MRS. JEWLS: (shaking head) Yes, that is right.

NARRATOR 1: Just then, the bell rang.

JOE: Oh, darn.

NARRATOR 4: . . . said Joe.

JOE: I missed recess!
NARRATOR 2: Our second story is about Becky. One day, Mrs. Jewls said,

MRS. JEWLS: Becky, I want you to take this note to Miss Zarves for me.

BECKY: Miss Zarves?

MRS. JEWLS: Yes, Miss Zarves. You know where she is, don’t you?

BECKY: Yes. She’s on the nineteenth story.

MRS. JEWLS: That’s right, Becky. Take it to her.

NARRATOR 3: Becky didn’t move.
MRS. JEWLS: Well, what are you waiting for?

BECKY: She’s on the nineteenth story.

MRS. JEWLS: Yes, we have already established that fact.

BECKY: The nineteenth story.

MRS. JEWLS: Yes, Becky, the nineteenth story. Now take it to her before I lose my patience!

BECKY: But, Mrs. Jewls—

MRS. JEWLS: NOW, Becky!

BECKY: Yes, ma’am!

NARRATOR 1: Becky walked out of the classroom and stood outside the door.

NARRATOR 4: She didn’t know where to go.

NARRATOR 2: As you know, when the builder built Wayside School, he accidentally built it sideways. But he also forgot to build the nineteenth story.

NARRATOR 3: He built the eighteenth and the twentieth, but no nineteenth. He said he was very sorry.

NARRATOR 1: There was also no Miss Zarves.

NARRATOR 4: Miss Zarves taught the class on the nineteenth story. Since there was no nineteenth story, there was no Miss Zarves.

NARRATOR 2: And besides that, as if Becky didn’t have enough problems, there was no note.
NARRATOR 3: Mrs. Jewls had never given Becky the note.

BECKY: (sarcastically) Boy, this is just great! I'm supposed to take a note that I don't have, to a teacher who doesn't exist, and who teaches on a story that was never built!

NARRATOR 1: She didn't know what to do.

NARRATOR 4: She walked down to the eighteenth story,

NARRATOR 2: then back up to the twentieth,

NARRATOR 3: then back down to the eighteenth,

NARRATOR 1: and back up again to the twentieth.

NARRATOR 4: There was no nineteenth story.

NARRATOR 2: There had never been a nineteenth story.

NARRATOR 3: There would never BE a nineteenth story.

NARRATOR 1: Becky walked down to the administration office on the first story. She decided to put the note in Miss Zarves's mailbox.

NARRATOR 4: But there wasn't one of those, either. That didn't bother Becky too much, though, since she didn't have a note.

NARRATOR 2: She looked out the window and saw Louis, the yard teacher, shooting baskets.

BECKY: Louis will know what to do.

NARRATOR 3: Becky went outside.

BECKY: Hey, Louis!
LOUIS: Hi, Becky. Do you want to play a game?

BECKY: I don’t have time. I have to deliver a note to Miss Zarves up on the nineteenth story.

LOUIS: Then what are you doing all the way down here?

BECKY: There is no nineteenth story.

LOUIS: Then where is Miss Zarves?

BECKY: There is no Miss Zarves.

LOUIS: What are you going to do with the note?

BECKY: There is no note.

LOUIS: I understand.

BECKY: That’s good, because I sure don’t.

LOUIS: It’s very simple. You are not supposed to take no notes to no teachers. You already haven’t done it!

NARRATOR 1: Becky still didn’t understand.

BECKY: I’ll just have to tell Mrs. Jewls that I couldn’t deliver the note.

LOUIS: That’s good. The truth is always best. Besides, I don’t think I understand what I said, either!

NARRATOR 4: Becky walked back up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s class.

MRS. JEWLS: Thank you very much, Becky.
BECKY: But I—

MRS. JEWLS: That was a very important note, and I'm glad I was able to count on you.

BECKY: Yes, but you see—

MRS. JEWLS: The note was very important. I told Miss Zarves not to meet me for lunch.

BECKY: Don't worry.

NARRATOR 2: ... said Becky.

BECKY: She won't!

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NARRATOR 1: So now you know about Wayside School. Some people say these stories are strange and silly.

NARRATOR 4: That is probably true.

NARRATOR 2: But when the children at Wayside School heard stories about us, they thought we were strange and silly.

NARRATOR 3: And that’s for sure!