

# Synopsis

Richie Cunningham rides into view and introduces us to his hometown and to the one spot in town where anyone goes to find out what's happening... Arnold's Malt Shop.

During this opening number, we meet Richie's friends (Potsie, Ralph, Chachi) his mom and dad (Howard and Marion), his sister (Joanie) and the town's most remarkable character... Arthur Fonzarelli: The Fonz.

But all is not perfect at Arnold's, because the land on which it sits is to be sold to a large construction company that plans on tearing down Arnold's and putting up something called a "mall." If Arnold cannot come up with enough money to make a counter offer, he will have to go into the restaurant business with a guy named Denny. Never one to shrink from impossible challenges, Fonzie declares that he will come up with a plan to raise the money and save Arnold's, because, after all "I'm the guy the kids can turn to, I'm Milwaukee's answer man."

As serious as Arnolds' issues are, these are matched by the girl problems that Richie and his friends have. No whining, Fonzie tells them. You gotta have a rockin' rhythm to give girls shivers and get 'em where you want 'em. And that's the right attitude, because tonight there'll be a dance contest at Arnold's. All money raised is to go to the Save Arnold's Fund. Fonzie's idea, but he's the last to know that his ex-main squeeze, Pinky Tuscadero, will be a celebrity judge.

Other citizens are also doing their part to raise money. Howard Cunningham and his fellow Leopard Lodge members figure the best way to guarantee lots of people coming to an event that will raise lots of cash is to have the notorious Malachi Brothers—the world's biggest and meanest stars—wrestle Fonzie at the annual Lodge picnic. This will guarantee TV coverage. Howard is selected to ask Fonzie to take up the challenge.

Pinky rides into town on her pink Harley and brings her own star power to the events. After nearly two years apart, she and Fonzie share a wary and awkward meeting. Later, at his garage, Fonzie reminisces with Chachi (his cousin) about where he and Pinky met, but steadfastly maintains that the relationship is over. He then gives Chachi a lesson in love and chases him off when Mr. Cunningham enters. Howard asks him to help out the cause by wrestling the Malachi's, but Fonzie, uncharacteristically, only gives a qualified "maybe."

The night of the dance contest arrives and everyone at the Cunningham household is busily preparing for it. Howard, distracted by the "half answer" that Fonzie gave him about wrestling the Malachi's and content in knowing that he has his business and his wife has the home, dismisses Marion's suggestion that she could help out down at the hardware store. In *What I Dreamed Last Night*, she and Joanie reveal how much more they really want out of life.

The dance contest not only raises a bit of money, it also rekindles Fonzie and Pinky's recently absent but continuously smoldering relationship. When she tells him that she would gladly watch him wrestle the Malachi's, he gets off the fence and declares that he is ready to take on the meanest wrestlers in the business. Richie, who knows that Fonzie has a bad knee that could be permanently damaged if he hurts it in the match, threatens to tell everyone about it. This Fonzie cannot allow, for that would mean he was "weak," something he could never admit. When Richie persists, even to the point of destroying their friendship, Fonzie decides that it is time he moves on and out of town.

Without the Fonz to wrestle, the Lodge picnic will never be put on TV and Arnold's is doomed. Unless... "I've decided, to wrestle the Malachi's," says Richie, "and my tag-team partner will be Ralph." No time to wait for Fonzie to save the day, though Ralph is not so sure that he isn't better off being a coward. (Run) There is concern that no one can find Fonzie, nor has anyone heard from him. Pinky worries that it was something she might have said to him, but she also realizes that Fonzie "belongs to no one. Not me. Not anybody. He blows like the wind." But this doesn't mean that she can forget him.

Meanwhile, Fonzie is stranded on the side of the road with his motorcycle, Delores. He's beginning to worry that a lot has just simply passed him by. (Aaay'mless) And whether he likes it or not, he misses Pinky. Miles apart, Pinky and Fonz finish their musical numbers together.

Jumpy and Count Malachi show up at Arnold's and, though disappointed that the Fonz will not be in the ring with them..."Clearly he took the coward's way out..." they'll go through with the match. It's not often that they get to do the famous "Malachi Maria-chi Crunch" on opponents as hapless as Richie and Ralph.

While Jumpy and Count Malachi are terrorizing their opponents and giving them "wedgies," Pinky pays a visit to the Cunningham house. Marion and Joanie can't believe that Pinky doesn't find life in Milwaukee hum-drum compared to a life on the road. Marion is a "rock," a person that she has always admired.

That afternoon, Marion discovers Fonzie in his room above the garage. She encourages him to talk about his troubles, not avoid them. The day of the picnic arrives, the wrestling ring is set up, and Richie and Ralph prepare to be mashed by the Malachi's. In true hero fashion, however, Fonzie shows up, and with Richie's help, defeats the brothers. He promises Pinky that he would like to start over (*Dancing on the Moon*), but first, Richie announces that his unappreciated journalistic probing has uncovered a way to save Arnold's. With only five "yea" votes, the town council can declare the building an historic landmark, and, it so happens, Harold and the Leopard leadership are all on the council.

At the prom before graduation, Richie wraps things up by getting engaged and noting that they will all probably never be together again quite like this. But when they all look back, they'll realize that these high school years were truly HAPPY DAYS!

## Review Activities

1. Describe the major plot of *Happy Days* in one or two sentences.
2. Using the synopsis, identify the five most important plot points in *Happy Days*. Explain the importance of each event to the story in one sentence and create a chronological timeline using pictures to illustrate each event.
3. Become familiar with the meaning of exposition. In *Happy Days*, what information was given that helped you understand the action of the story? If the information were not given, how hard would it have been to understand the plot? Explain something you wouldn't know if you hadn't seen the exposition.
4. Read the lyrics to "Message in the Music." What is the main message behind this song? Can you see yourself relating to the lyrics at some point in your life? Why or why not?
5. Become familiar with the meaning of resolution. Identify and describe events in the story that can be considered part of the resolution. Why do you think the ending happened the way it did?

## Writing Exercise

Think back through the whole performance and find the character you are most like. In a journal entry, explain why you are similar to this particular character. What types of problems do they get into? Could you see yourself getting into a similar position? Write about how you would handle the situation differently, or why you would do the same.

Finally, no one is going to be exactly like the characters in this musical, so talk about what makes you different from the character. Afterwards, talk as a class to find out who was the most and least likely character to be chosen.