

*Doctoral Dissertation for Irreligiosophy*  
*Why Playhouse Disney Is Better Than Mormon Primary*

## **Introduction**

Hello! My name is Michael Gagon. I live in Garden Grove, California. I am a locksmith. I am 26 years old and I typed this document myself on my own damn computer.

On a recent trip to Disney's California Adventure in Anaheim, California, I visited the Playhouse Disney. I heard that there was a puppet show in that theme park and I had to investigate. I was warned that it was a show for toddlers and pre-schoolers but, in order to see puppets, I was willing to pay the price.

Most of the puppetry was pretty good, but what impressed me more were the moral lessons and the educational value. As I watched it, I realized that we could replace Sunday school with Playhouse Disney and that the world would be much better off.

## **Summary of the Playhouse Disney Show**

### **Disney Gang**

The main story is that Mickey, Donald, Daisy, and Goofy are preparing a surprise birthday party for Minnie. Mickey decides to split up the work and give everyone a task. Daisy was going to make and hang up a birthday banner, Goofy was going to make a cake, and Donald was going to write a song for Minnie as a gift. Goofy tells the gang that he doesn't know how to make a cake, but he will give it his best try. Donald asks for song ideas, and Daisy asks the group what she should use to put up the banner.

There are a few things to note in here. We see characters planning and organizing an event. This can teach that special events require work. This might even help kids appreciate the work that is put in for their birthday parties. We see characters with the courage to, not only take on tasks, but also to ask for help when they need it. I think that these are great lessons to teach children. Kids are largely unable to do things for themselves and that can make them timid (not to mention stifle

self esteem and confidence). To see that kind of initiative from the protagonists, I think, serves as good role models for children.

To get ideas on how to perform their individual tasks, they tell stories about the Baby Einstein group, The Super Sleuths, and Handy Mani.

### **Baby Einsteins**

Baby Einstein is for the really little kids, and to be frank, there was not a lot of substance in this part. I recall there was a race between the baby Einstein rocket and some kind of F-16-Looking fighter jet. To win the race, we needed to say the words that appeared on the screen while clapping. The words happened to be musical terms, which are all Italian. The words were terms for “Tempo” (or the pace of a song) and they got progressively faster. The faster we clapped, the faster the rocket went and we won the race. It is a bit superfluous, but at least the kids get exposure to a few Italian words.

### **Winnie the Pooh and the Super Sleuths:**

The Super Sleuths, composed of Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, and some little girl, are walking down the road and find that the little kangaroo got his kite stuck in a tree. The Super Sleuths were on the case without delay. After a few different ideas and attempts, they got the kite back down to the ground. I forget how they got the kite down, but I did get these general impressions: Right off the bat, The Super Sleuths did not have any obvious superpowers and show that anyone can get organized and use his brain to help other people with practical problems. Kids learn a cool new word, “sleuth”. The theme of the episode is that thinking is good. They even sing a song about thinking problems through. Investigators are shown as positive role models, and you see that you can accomplish the task in the face of minor setbacks.

### **Handy Mani**

Handy Mani is a show starring a young Mexican handy man and his box of talking tools. Mani goes around fixing random things for people. Right away, the protagonist is assertive and helpful. During the first repair job, the hammer gets over zealous, starts whomping away, and screws up the job. He feels bad about it and hides in a corner. On the next job, the crew is fixing a motor that wont stay still. They need a hammer! They call out for hammer

saying, “Hammer, we need you!” The hammer comes out, timidly, and asks, “You guys need me?” Hammer comes back and was instrumental in fixing this motor. Hammer told the group that he felt bad about what he did and Mani reassures him by saying, “We all make mistakes”. The crew welcomed the hammer back with open arms. We see an example of forgiveness and redemption that required no torture or execution.

### **The Baby Einstein Controversy**

During a recent conversation with my mother, I told her about the Playhouse Disney Puppet Show. She immediately responded by saying that Baby Einstein had been shown to slow children’s development. After about a 15-minute google search I found the Publication from the University of Washington that published the famous “Baby Einstein” study and read what it said. The study concludes that Watching TV and DVDs, in general, led to slightly slower language development in 8 to 16 month olds. During the first few months of life, it is far more beneficial to have actual human contact for language learning and retention. The article goes on to say that TV is over-stimulating them and can cause short attention spans later in life.

*“Rather than helping babies, the overuse of such productions actually may slow down infants eight to 16 months of age when it comes to acquiring vocabulary, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital Research Institute. The scientists found that for every hour per day spent watching baby DVDs and videos, infants understood an average of six to eight fewer words than infants who did not watch them. Baby DVDs and videos had no positive or negative effect on the vocabularies of toddlers 17 to 24 months of age.”*

*UW Press Release*

*August 7, 2007*

<http://www.washington.edu/alumni/uwnewslinks/200709/videos.html>

*From the Abstract of the actual study:*

*“Results*

*Among infants (age 8 to 16 months), each hour per day of viewing baby DVDs/videos was associated with a 16.99-point decrement in CDI score in a fully adjusted model (95% confidence interval = -26.20 to -7.77). Among toddlers (age 17 to 24 months), there were no significant associations between any type of media exposure and CDI scores. Amount of parental viewing with the child was not significantly associated with CDI scores in either infants or toddlers.”*

*Journal of Pediatrics [Volume 151, Issue 4](#), Pages 364-368 (October 2007)*

***Associations between Media Viewing and Language Development in Children Under Age 2 Years***

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This is what honest research looks like. People of faith don't seem to understand how this works. You find the source information and read it. Then you report what they actually said. I don't know any of these researchers personally, but I certainly trust their credentials over the ramblings of the Mormon's geriatric oligarchy.

**The Mormon Primary**

From the time you are old enough to hold your head up, you are taken from the Nursery and out into Primary where you will spend two hours a week until you are 12 years old.

The Mormon Primary experience is broken up into two parts. One is a class period in which you go into a private room with a teacher who teaches you Mormon doctrine and culture. The other part is called Sharing Time, in which you learn songs and give talks. In sharing time, the adults write the words to primary songs onto poster boards and make you sing all the songs line by line, over and over again, until everyone has it memorized. Every once in a while, you are called upon to give sermons to your classmates. Sometime during the course of the next week, you sit down with your parents at home and write little speeches about the church. When it is your turn to speak in Primary, one of your parents (often your mother) will come up to the little podium with you and talk you through your speech. At the end of a speech, you are supposed to bear testimony of the church. Since you are a child and don't know anything, your parent whispers into your ear and you repeat what you hear word for word. And that is your "testimony" If that isn't indoctrination, I don't know what is.

In the same conversation with my mother about baby Einstein, my mother asked, "What about primary? What is so bad about teaching children to be nice to each other and treat others as they would like to be treated?" "Well," I responded, "First of all, you don't need superstition to teach those morals. Second, you also taught that God and Jesus exist. What you are doing is instilling an invisible babysitter by the infusion of unnecessary guilt. You teach children that there is such thing as sin and that they will be punished for eternity if they don't reach the impossible goal of perfection." I went on to say that the Christian gospel sabotages children's mental well-being by warping their expectations.

Here are a few things you learn in Mormon primary that I think are awful.

1. God exists and is always watching over you. He knows everything and knows when you have been bad...like Santa Clause does.
2. You have to be perfect to go to heaven. God cannot allow even the smallest sin.

3. Jesus exists. You are inherently flawed and evil and he was tortured and killed because of you.
4. You are a member of the one true church. Everyone else is wrong and won't go to heaven.
5. God talks to people today and all of your leaders are inspired and have special powers.
6. The scriptures are true but only the Mormon scriptures, like the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine & Covenants, are perfect.

Kids are told that there is someone constantly watching them and judging everything they do. A child will believe that he is guilty if he does anything contrary to what you teach him. He is convicted of a crime, even if it is merely an unwholesome thought. It doesn't even require an action to be banished to hell. How anyone can support an organization that does this to children is beyond me. In primary, a child is encouraged to feel, rather than think. Seeking any information that is not published by the church is forbidden. Children are told that the teachings of the church is absolute truth and cannot be questioned, even demonstrably false ideas like the Earth being 6 thousand years old. To teach the distrust of facts and unbiased sources is a tremendous disservice and is immoral.

## **Conclusion**

I understand that the bar to be better than Sunday school is very low, but I was impressed by this recent experience. I have been comparing this show to my mother trying to convince me that my church upbringing was of any value.

Generally speaking, children by age 12 know that mice, ducks, and dogs don't talk. Once they are a few years old, they have at least a rudimentary understanding of fictional characters. They also know that three day expired corpses don't talk, but apparently a special exception must be made for Jesus.

When you are a child, your parents may do the whole "Santa Clause" thing during the Christmas season, but what parents want their children to believe in Santa Clause as adults? How many parents are heartbroken when little Timmy reaches his late twenties and leaves behind his belief in the fat man that brings

annual presents through the chimney? When you reach 11 or 12 years old you can graduate from Playhouse Disney and move on to more adult things, like Spiderman cartoons, and your family does not disown you.

Not only is there no value in Mormon Primary, but also it does immeasurable harm. I know from personal experience the pain of deprogramming the indoctrination and the social fallout from leaving the cult. I am not claiming that replacing Sunday school with Disney cartoons is the proper method of rearing children, but I truly believe that the world would be better if we did.