

The Day-Glo Brothers

Activity and Discussion Guide

Joe and Bob Switzer were very different brothers. Bob was a studious planner who wanted to grow up to be a doctor. Joe dreamed of making his fortune in show business and loved magic tricks and problem-solving.

When an accident left Bob recovering in a darkened basement, the brothers began experimenting with ultraviolet light and fluorescent paints. Together they invented a whole new kind of color, one that glows with an extra-special intensity—Day-Glo.

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Ages 7–10

Questions to consider before reading

- What stands out about this book?
- If you could create a new color, or a new kind of color, what would it be?
- Where have you seen colors like those on the cover of this book? How would you describe those colors?
- Can you name the inventors of any of the everyday objects that are in the room with you right now?
- Around what year do you think Bob and Joe Switzer invented daylight-fluorescent colors? What makes you think it was then, and not earlier or later?
- Before these colors were invented, what were some ways of getting people to notice something?
- What do you think makes these colors glow in the daylight?

Questions to consider after reading

- If not for the ketchup factory accident, what would Bob and Joe's lives have been like?
- Have you ever been involved in an accident that led to something good?
- If Bob and Joe hadn't been brothers, would they have had anything to do with each other?
- What do you think of the colors that Bob and Joe invented?
- What obstacles and setbacks did the brothers face in their pursuit of their various goals?
- *Popular Science* made Joe want to build his own black light. What have you been inspired to do by something you read?
- What questions did *The Day-Glo Brothers* leave you with?
- What problems has daylight fluorescence solved? Can you think of any problems it might have created?
- The Switzers named their new color of orange Fire Orange. What names would you give to the types of orange, yellow, and green used in *The Day-Glo Brothers*?
- The author and illustrator imagine the Egyptian pyramids, the Statue of Liberty, and the Switzers' home in daylight-fluorescent colors. What buildings, structures, or objects would you like to see painted these colors?
- What words does the author use to describe these colors and other bright things? ("eye-popping," "illuminating," etc.) What are some other words he could have used?
- Why do you think so many of the illustrations in this book are in black and white?
- Joe Switzer said, "If just one experiment out of a thousand succeeds, then you're ahead of the game." What did he mean? Do you agree with him?

Activities

1. Bob was born in 1914 and Joe was born in 1915. What were some of the more interesting things going on in the United States and in the world in those years? Make a timeline charting important events in the lives of Bob and Joe Switzer alongside important events in the world.
2. Using daylight-fluorescent art materials, illustrate a scene from Bob or Joe's life.
3. Make a chart comparing and contrasting Bob and Joe (personality, goals, appearance, pastimes, work habits, etc.).
4. Collect obituaries from the past week. Write a short story about the person you find most interesting.
5. Visit www.charlesbridge.com/day-glo-animation.html. Describe in your own words what is shown in the online animation.
6. Look around the classroom. What do you suspect glows under black light? Discuss why or why not you think certain objects would glow. Now turn off the lights and turn on a black light. Were you right?
7. Write a journal entry from the point of view of Bob or Joe at the end of one of these days mentioned in the book:
 - The Switzer family leaves Montana to move to California.
 - Joe reads about ultraviolet lamps in *Popular Science*.
 - Bob suffers his accident.
 - Bob recovers from his accident in the basement where Joe is building an ultraviolet lamp.
 - Joe and Bob explore their father's storeroom with a black light.
 - Bob and Joe begin making paints that glow under ultraviolet light.
 - Joe and Bob are surprised by their mother before they can completely clean her kitchen mixer.
 - Joe performs his "Balinese dancer" illusion.
 - Bob and his mother notice fabric samples glowing in the daylight.
 - Joe and Bob leave California to move to Ohio.
 - Bob borrows his wife's wedding dress.
 - Joe gets his own laboratory when he and his wife move into an old farmhouse.
 - Bob and Joe see the "flaming billboard."
 - Joe and Bob come up with the name "Day-Glo."
 - Day-Glo ink is used on the cover of *Popular Science*.





8. Use a spotlight to recreate Joe’s black art illusion by painting an object half black and half white. Compare the effect of using an ultraviolet bulb vs. an incandescent one.

9. Take a black-and-white photo and color parts of it using daylight-fluorescent highlighters. Compare it to the original version and to other students’ versions.

10. Put these events from *The Day-Glo Brothers* into the proper sequence:

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| a. Joe and Bob moved from California to Ohio. | 1. _____ |
| b. Joe read about ultraviolet lamps in <i>Popular Science</i> . | 2. _____ |
| c. The Allies used the Switzers’ daylight-fluorescent colors during World War II. | 3. _____ |
| d. Joe and Bob explored their father’s storeroom with a black light. | 4. _____ |
| e. Bob recovered from his accident in the basement where Joe was building an ultraviolet lamp. | 5. _____ |
| f. Day-Glo ink was used on the cover of <i>Popular Science</i> . | 6. _____ |
| g. A printing company in Cleveland, Ohio, began using the Switzers’ fluorescent ink for movie posters. | 7. _____ |
| h. Bob and his mother noticed fabric samples glowing in the daylight. | 8. _____ |
| i. Bob and Joe saw the “flaming billboard.” | 9. _____ |
| j. Joe and Bob deliberately created colors that glowed in the daylight. | 10. _____ |
| k. Joe got his own laboratory when he and his wife moved into an old farmhouse. | 11. _____ |
| l. Bob and Joe began making paints that glowed under ultraviolet light. | 12. _____ |
| m. Joe’s “Balinese dancer” illusion got the attention of customers interested in the Switzers’ fluorescent paints. | 13. _____ |
| n. Bob’s wife (along with her wedding dress) moved in with the Switzer brothers. | 14. _____ |



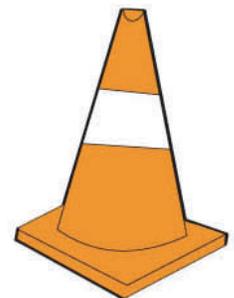
Glossary

Allies	concoction	fluorescence	illusion	sleight of hand
Andy Warhol	daylight fluorescence	freewheeling	jazz up	souped-up
anthracene	drum up	gruesome	mortar and pestle	spiritualists
barricade	emit	gullible	seizure	uanine
buoy	exerted	illuminating	shellac	ultraviolet



Web Resources

- <http://www.chrisbarton.info/books/dayglo.html>
- <http://www.switzernetwork.org/>
- <http://www.dayglo.com/>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/29/business/robert-switzer-co-inventor-of-day-glo-paint-dies-at-83.html>





Chris Barton

“When I was a teenager, I loved writing with my friends, whether it was making up parodies of superheroes and soap operas or putting out an award-winning student newspaper.”

“My toddler son began asking me again and again to tell him the story of how I had installed a smoke detector. One morning, it struck me: If I could make *him* happy with *that* story, I could come up with other stories, and maybe other kids would like them, too,” says author Chris Barton.

Chris grew up eighty miles from Dallas, in the small town of Sulphur Springs, Texas. In elementary school, he wrote his first story: “The Ozzie Brothers Meet The Monsters,” based on movie-monster books he checked out from the library. He continued to write with his friends throughout high school. During college Chris studied history and joined the staff of the University of Texas newspaper, *The Daily Texan*, where he met his wife, who also wrote.

After school Chris worked as an editor and content analyst for Hoover’s, a database about companies, executives, and industries. In 1997 he stumbled across the *New York Times* obituary of Bob Switzer, who with his brother invented Day-Glo fluorescent colors. Fascinated by this story, Chris started researching the history of Day-Glo, and developed his first children’s book. Currently, Chris lives in Austin, with his wife, two sons, and a variety of animal friends. He is working on his next children’s book.