

**2020-2021 Theatre Season**  
**On the Air: Old Time Radio Theatre**

Blinn College Division of Visual/Performing Arts and Kinesiology  
Brenham Campus



# Popeye and Gang at the Zoo

## Resource Guide

This resource guide serves as an educational starting point to understanding and enjoying Popeye and Gang at the Zoo. With this in mind, please note that the interpretations of the theatrical work may differ from the original source content.

# Popeye and Gang at the Zoo

Based on the Characters Created by E. C. Segar

Originally Produced on the Radio Series Broadcast  
"Popeye the Sailor" in 1936



Directed by

**Brad Nies**

Technical Theatre Direction by

**Kevin Patrick**

Costume, Makeup, and Hair by

**Jennifer Patrick**

## Synopsis

Join everyone's favorite Thimble Theatre characters Popeye the Sailor, Wimpy, Olive Oyl, and Popeye's adopted son, Matey the Newsboy, as they all take a trip to the zoo. But when an elephant breaks loose, Popeye will need to muster all his strength, as well as all his spinach, to save Matey and Olive!



This staged audio drama will be recorded  
and available for viewing by

**March 5, 2021**

# E. C. Segar

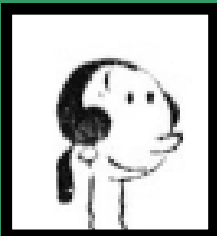
Born on December 8, 1894, E.C. Segar was raised in Chester, IL. His earliest work experiences included assisting his father with painting houses, as well as playing the drums for accompaniment to films in the local theater, the Chester Opera House. After opting to become a cartoonist, he moved to Chicago to begin working for the Chicago Herald. An editor for the Herald, William Curley, felt that Segar could succeed in New York City, so he sent him to King Features Syndicate. Segar worked for King Features for several years, and it was there that he began drawing his famed **Thimble Theater** for the New York Journal. The strip featured the characters of Olive Oyl, Castor Oyl and Harold Hamgravy, whose name was quickly shortened in the strip to simply Ham Gravy. In 1929, when Castor Oyl needed a mariner to navigate his ship, Castor picked up an old sailor on the docks named Popeye. The character stole the show and soon became the permanent star of the comic strip. Other notable characters Segar created included J. Wellington Wimpy and Eugene the Jeep. Segar died of liver disease and leukemia on October 13, 1938.



# Popeye and Gang



**Popeye** is best known for his squinting right eye, his huge forearms with two anchor tattoos, his skinny upper arms, and his corncob pipe. He is strong, but he obtains super-human strength after eating spinach. He is known to mutter when he speaks and mangle the English language. He is characterized as violent and uncivilized, however, he has a high moral fiber.



**Olive Oyl** is Popeye's eternal sweetheart and is often seen as the poster girl for the "damsel-in-distress" theme. She is tall, skinny, and her long black hair is rolled into a bun. She can be whiney and fickle, making viewers wonder why so many men find her appealing and are willing to resort to violence for her.



**Wimpy** is a short, round, tubby hamburger lover. He also possesses a deceptively high level of intelligence, and he is prone to making sharp quips. He is soft-spoken, cowardly, and will do whatever it takes to get a free hamburger. Known for his mooching ways, he often makes the promise, "I will gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today."

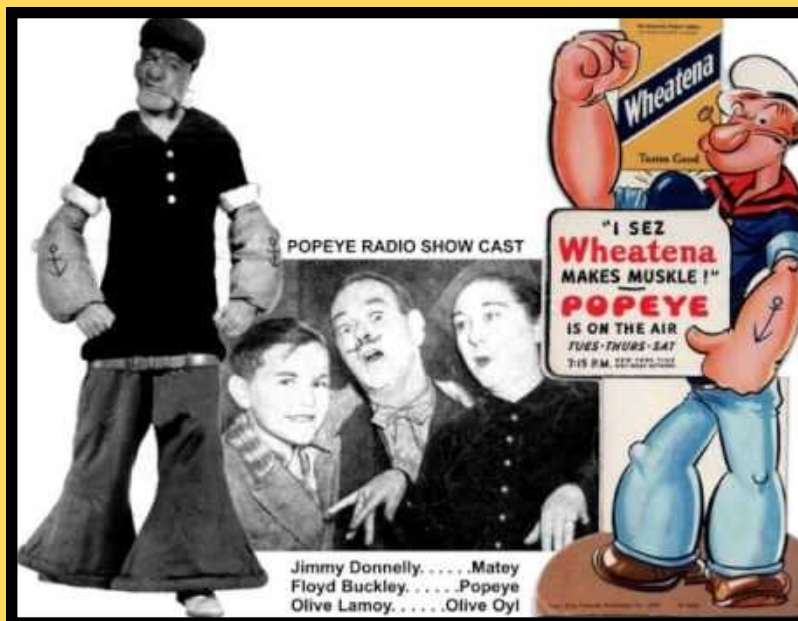


**Matey the Newsboy** was a character created for the 1930s radio show. He was adopted by Popeye and, just like his foster father, Matey gains super-human strength after eating spinach. Like Popeye, he is a good person with a tendency to think of others first. His existence would indicate that his parents either died, or he was abandoned by them.



# Popeye the Sailor: The Radio Series Broadcasts

By the time Popeye hit the air waves with tales adapted from E.C. Segar's **Thimble Theatre** comic strip, the squinty-eyed sailor had appeared in several animated cartoons shown in movie houses across the U.S. The radio show, entitled **Popeye the Sailor**, was a series of broadcasts over three different networks by two sponsors that ran from 1935 to 1938. Popeye and his friends were originally featured in a 15-minute radio show that ran three times a week. In this series, Popeye was played by Detmar Poppen, Olive Oyl was played by Olive Lamoy, Wimpy was played by Charles Lawrence, and Matey the Newsboy was played by Jimmy Donnelly. This program was broadcast on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights, and the show ran from September 10, 1935 through March 28, 1936 on NBC. It was sponsored by Wheatena, a whole-wheat breakfast cereal, which would routinely replace Popeye's references to spinach. Music for the program was provided by Victor Irwin's "Cartoonland Band," and the show was hosted by Kelvin Keech. The series was later broadcast on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays on WABC, and this show ran from August 31, 1936 to February 26, 1937. In this series, Floyd Buckley played Popeye and Miriam Wolfe portrayed Olive Oyl. The third series was sponsored by the makers of Pop-Ice Popsicles and ran three nights a week on CBS for 15 minutes from May 2, 1938 through July 29, 1938. Of the three series, only 20 of the aired 204 episodes still exist today.



# Safety is Our First Concern

Staged radio plays are performed straight out, into microphones, and do not regularly involve actors conversing face-to-face with each other.

All shows will be produced with in-person rehearsals using appropriate PPE.

All shows will be performed with an adherence to social distancing of actors (a minimum of 6' away from each other) and remote audiences.

Actors will not share microphones, costumes, or props during a taping session.

Performances will be filmed in a closed studio environment without live audiences.

# Sources

- \*Gabbatt, A. (2009). The London Guardian. "E.C. Segar, Popeye's Creator, Celebrated with a Google Doodle." December 8th Edition.
- \*Grandinetti, F. (2004). Popeye: An Illustrated Cultural History. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- \*Internet Source, [www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com](http://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com), "Popeye and Gang at the Zoo" Script.
- \*Internet Source, [www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com](http://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com), Popeye the Sailor Radio Show.
- \*Internet Source, [www.popeye.fandom.com](http://www.popeye.fandom.com), "Characters."
- \*Internet Source, [www.radioechoes.com](http://www.radioechoes.com), "Popeye the Sailor."
- \*Internet Source, [www.ttdyradio.com](http://www.ttdyradio.com), "Popeye Visiting the Zoo" Script.
- \*Internet Source, [www.waterloggproductions.blogspot.com](http://www.waterloggproductions.blogspot.com), Audio Classics Archives.
- \*Internet Source, [www.web.archive.org](http://www.web.archive.org), "The Little Man and the One-Eyed Sailor" by Ed Black.
- \*Maresca, P. (2018). Thimble Theatre and the Pre-Popeye Comics of E.C. Segar. Palo Alto, CA: Sunday Press Books.
- Sager, E.C. (1929). New York Journal. "Thimble Theatre." January 17th Edition.
- \*Waugh, C. (1974) The Comics. New York, NY: Luna Press.