

James and the Giant Peach

Grades 4-6

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ISBN 978-1-55035-351-8

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Revised September 2006

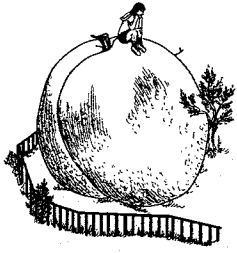
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Published in the United States by:
On the Mark Press
3909 Witmer Road PMB 175
Niagara Falls, New York
14305
www.onthemarkpress.com

Published in Canada by:
S&S Learning Materials
15 Dairy Avenue
Napawee, Ontario
K7R 1M4
www.sslearning.com



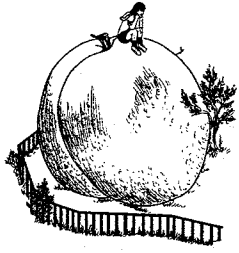
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by Roald Dahl



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Expectations

The students will:

1. be introduced to the writings of Roald Dahl.
2. develop an appreciation for the world of fantasy.
3. stimulate and develop their imaginations and creative thinking skills.
4. introduced and reinforce many skills and concepts through the use of good literature.

Synopsis of the Story

James and the Giant Peach

James Henry Trotter has a series of very unusual and exciting adventures. The story begins when James is only four years old. James' parents are eaten by a rhinoceros that has escaped from the London Zoo. James has to leave his home by the sea to go and live with his two cruel aunts, Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker. They both treat James very badly, calling him names such as "disgusting little beast" and "hideous brat".

James lives a lonely, unhappy life until one day something wonderful and magical happens in the garden. A little old man offers James a bag of magic green things and promises marvelous things will happen to James if he follows his instructions. Unfortunately, as James is running to the house with the bag of magic green things, he falls and before he can pick them up, they burrow into the ground around the old peach tree. As the little man predicted, whatever the green things come in contact with receives the full power of their magic. The peach tree begins to grow and grow, until it is the size of a house.

When James is alone in the garden that night, he discovers a hole in the side of the peach, large enough to crawl inside. James enters a room inside the peach stone and is greeted with an amazing sight. A centipede, grasshopper, earthworm, glow-worm, silkworm, spider and ladybug of human size are waiting for him there. James is very frightened at first, but soon discovers that they are friendly and often amusing creatures.

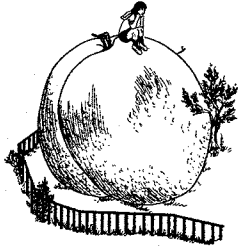
The creatures share James' dislike of Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker and the centipede chews through the peach stem so that their giant peach may roll free out into the countryside. Now the peach and its inhabitants begin a series of incredible adventures ending in their triumphant parade through the streets of New York City and the beginning of a new and happier life for James and his unusual friends.

Author Biography

Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl did not start out to be a writer. In fact, when he was fourteen his English teacher described on his report card how he had difficulty getting his thoughts on paper. But after serving in the Royal Air Force for a short while in World War II, Roald began to realize that he had stories to tell. The first books he wrote were based on his experiences during the war. Later he wrote a number of short stories for adults in addition to television and movie scripts, including the script for James Bond in the movie "You Only Live Twice".

It was not until Roald began to tell stories to his own children that he realized he knew what children liked to read. He believed they loved stories full of action, suspense, magic and humor. To successfully write such stories,



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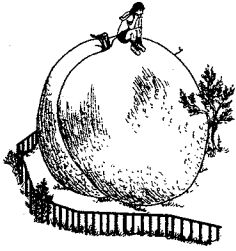
Roald had to think of exciting, original plots. He would keep a notebook to write down his ideas as they came into his head, for fear he would forget them later.

Roald found writing children's stories was hard work and it took him at least six years to write a story. After two hours of writing he felt completely drained. But being a writer had its compensations. By absorbing himself in his stories he was transported to many different worlds of make believe and fantasy.

Roald wrote *James and the Giant Peach* in 1961, followed by a number of children's stories, each with the kind of special humor Roald is known for. Roald lived in Buckinghamshire, England, though his parents were Norwegian. He died there in 1990.

Teacher Planning Guide

1. Depending on the level of independence of your students you may wish to have them read and complete the Chapter Questions as a whole group or small group activity. Alternatively, you may wish to have students read and work on the Chapter Questions and Follow Ups at their own pace.
2. Answers to the Chapter Questions may be compiled into a student response booklet along with the follow up activities for evaluation.
3. Distribute copies of the Chapter Summary chart to students and instruct them that they are to complete the chart in point form as they read each chapter under the headings Chapter, Characters (we meet in this chapter), Events (in order), and the Results of these Events.
4. Display a world map and plot the route from the cliffs of Dover, England to New York City, U.S.A.
5. Copy and display the rhymes and songs from the story and have groups of students perform and read each one. You may also wish to brainstorm additional verses based on the familiar pattern. As a small group or independent cloze activity, give students copies of a story rhyme with the ending of each line left blank for them to complete.
6. The words listed in the Vocabulary Word List may be copied in chart form for student reference, and sentences composed by the students to illustrate the meaning of each one. This could be completed in a small group or individual context, with students researching the meaning of each word in the dictionary, composing sentences and writing a short story using the new vocabulary.
7. Create character charts using an enlarged outline of each character. Have students offer descriptive words and phrases for each story character as they learn more about them.
8. Discuss the real causes of the different types of weather that the creatures observed the Cloud Men creating e.g. hail, rain, snow, rainbows, tornadoes, and cyclones. You may wish to have students illustrate the fictional and factual reasons for such weather in the form of a comparison chart.
9. The idioms Roald Dahl has used in the story may form the basis of an art activity, by having students illustrate the literal interpretation of each one e.g. "pulling his leg" (p. 31).
10. Discuss the expressions "you're a peach" and "peachy keen". List the characteristics of a person described in this way.
11. Use the magic green things as a springboard to the study of crystals. Create a crystal garden with your class.
12. Research hot air balloons and discuss the sights James and the creatures would have seen on their voyage from Dover to New York.



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13. Discuss the term "pest". Ask students to define the term and list the creatures it is applied to in their story. Centipede says he is a pest and proud of it. Miss Spider tells James how spiders are seen as pests, but they are really useful. Discuss these two statements and have students decide if they are true or false and research facts to support their decision.
14. Have a peach food feast. Students may create peach sundaes, peach cobbler, etc. Have students brainstorm a list of peachy foods before hand and select the dishes they will prepare.
15. James is compared to the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" as he leads the parade in New York City. Read this story to your students and discuss the comparison.
16. The creatures all found new jobs suited to their talents in the final chapter of the story. Use this chapter as a springboard to the subject of careers. Have students list their talents and create matching job opportunities, either real or fictional, creating an advertisement and a personal resume for the position.
17. The creatures in the story may provide the basis for individual or group research topics. Have students research and present their reports, focusing on how these different animals are defined as pests or helpers. Display the student projects on a bulletin board entitled "Creature Features" or "Helpers or Pests?"
18. Before reading:
 - a) Have students look at the cover and illustrations in the book. Discuss the title, possible characters, settings and events. You may wish to make a list of class predictions.
 - b) Ask students what they would like to find out about James and the Giant Peach. Make a chart of student questions and use this chart as a focus or purpose for reading throughout the novel study. Complete the chart as students discover the answers to each question.

Note: Page numbers throughout activities in this resource are based on Puffin Books edition, 2001.
ISBN 0-14-130467-7

Vocabulary Word List

Chapter one: ancient, nuisance, desolate, forbidden, wistfully, ramshackle

Chapter two: peculiar, fantastically, observe, gorgeous

Chapter three: hobbled, musty, extraordinarily

Chapter four: fabulous, marvelous, unbelievable

Chapter five: swerved, frantically, vanished, hideous

Chapter six: bulging

Chapter seven: hallelujah, mammoth, cautiously, murmur

Chapter eight: miraculous, millionaires

Chapter nine: dazzling, breathe, tremendous

Chapter ten: mysterious

Chapter eleven: squatting, magnificent, absolutely

Chapter twelve: disagreeable, slither

Chapter thirteen: gossamer, shimmered, gigantic, wretched

Chapter fourteen: lurching, journey, tremor, dilemma

Chapter fifteen: gaped, panicked