

Teacher Guide

Grades 3–4

The BFG

Roald Dahl

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THE BFG

by
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Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this novel for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
About the Author	3
Characters.....	4
Initiating Activities	4
Vocabulary Activities	5
Five Sections	6
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions.....	16
Post-reading Extension Activities.....	18
Assessment	19
Scoring Rubric	28

Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Creative thinking, brainstorming, inferences, opinions, predictions, researching, evaluating decisions

Comprehension

Story mapping, compare/contrast, cause/effect

Literary Elements

Symbolism, character analysis, themes, setting, point of view, tone

Vocabulary

Definitions, application, synonyms/antonyms, word maps

Writing

Essays, poetry, reviews, journals, letters, narrative, descriptive, short stories

Speaking/Listening

Discussion, oral presentation, poetry performance, acting

Across the Curriculum

Literature—dream journals, Dahl’s other novels, Jack and the Beanstalk; Geography—maps, England, countries of the world; Social Studies—charities, forms of government; Art—cover art, advertisements, drawing, painting, collage, posters; Drama—plays, films, TV interviews

The Witching Hour–The Marvellous Ears

Unable to sleep, Sophie looks outside and sees a giant carrying a trumpet and a large suitcase. He stops walking and blows something into a window. Sophie hides under her blanket, but the giant reaches through the window and plucks her out of bed. The giant flees to a distant cave. Sophie fears the giant will eat her, but he explains that he is the BFG (Big Friendly Giant) and he does not eat “human beans.” However, the other giants do.

The BFG says he cannot let Sophie go because she might tell people about him. He says the other giants are stronger than him. He warns her to stay out of sight; otherwise, the other giants will eat her. Sophie tells the BFG that she is orphaned at the orphanage, and the BFG cries. He tells her that he collects dreams, which he can hear with his enormous ears.

Vocabulary	Discussion Questions
travel cloak glance fierce stride blaze match remark fishy cellar curious soil forgive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is “the witching hour,” and what is Sophie doing at this time? (<i>Someone told Sophie that the witching hour was “a special moment in the middle of the night when every child and every grown-up goes in deep deep sleep” [p. 10]. “Dark things” come out from their hiding places and roam the earth. Sophie has trouble sleeping, so she watches the moon beams come through her window. She eventually looks outside.</i>) 2. Describe the figure Sophie sees on the street. What does the figure do? (<i>The figure is tall “its head was higher than the upstairs windows of the houses” [p. 12], and walked like a person, but clearly is not human. The figure wears a black cloak and carries a large suitcase and a long thin trumpet. The figure opens the suitcase, pours something from a glass jar into the trumpet, and blows the trumpet into the upstairs window of a house. No noise comes out of the trumpet, but whatever the figure poured into it is blown into the room.</i>) 3. What is different about the way the giant speaks? Why do you think the author had him speak this way? (<i>The giant’s speech is strong but creative. His grammar is correct, and he uses a lot of unusual, funny, descriptive words that sound made-up. Many of these are similar to real words but spelled differently. Answers will vary. This might show that the giant is not formally educated and may have learned his vocabulary on his own. Or, the author may have given the giant a strange vocabulary to add a sense of fun or humor to the character or to make it clear that he is not from the regular world.</i>) 4. How is the BFG different from other giants? What do you think this says about his character? (<i>The BFG says, “All the others is gobbling up people] every night, but not me. I’m a nice and jumbly Giant in Giant Country” [p. 31]. Unlike the other giants, he does not eat humans. The BFG also has enormous ears and is 24 feet tall, yet he is the smallest of all the giants. He wears what appear to be normal clothes, he is cleaner than the other giants, and he lives in a cave with normal furniture. The other giants are at least twice his size and wear only short skirts. They are ugly, with large bellies, long arms, and big feet. Answers will vary, but this suggests that the BFG is a “good guy” and the other giants are “bad guys.”</i>) 5. Why won’t the BFG let Sophie go home? (<i>The BFG will not let Sophie go home because he cannot let her tell people that giants exist. He feels that people will “be catching [him] and locking [him] into a cage to be stared at” [p. 31]. He does not want to be put in a zoo.</i>)

6. Describe Sophie's life. How does the BFG react to her story? (*Sophie's parents died when she was a baby. She dislikes living in an orphanage, especially because Mrs Clonkers punishes the children by locking them "in the dark cellar for a day and a night without anything to eat or drink" [p. 39]. Sophie hates the rats in the cellar, but she also does not like Giant Country and is sad to be trapped there. The BFG cries because her story is sad. He also feels guilty for kidnapping Sophie and keeping her in a place she dislikes.*)
7. What does the BFG collect? How does he collect them? (*The BFG collects dreams, in particular "dreams that is giving the dreamers a happy time" [p. 41]. The dreams are "very mysterious things" that are "floating around in the air" [p. 41]. He cannot see them, but he can hear them with his enormous ears. He catches them in a net "the same way [humans] is catching butterflies" [p. 47] and collects them in bottles.*)
8. What is special about the BFG's ears? (*His large ears allow him to "hear absolutely every single twiddly little thing" [p. 41]. He says Sophie is deaf because of a "thing," and he can hear the "secret whisperings of the world" [p. 43], such as ants talking to one another. He can move his ears in any direction to help him hear. The BFG says he knew Sophie was watching him from her window because he could hear her heart beating.*)
9. **Reflection:** If the BFG does not eat humans, what does he eat?

Supplementary Activities

1. **Creating Analogies:** On pages 25–30 of the novel, the BFG describes how people from specific countries taste to giants, e.g., "Turks from Turkey is tasting of turkey" (p. 26). Choose ten cities or states from a U.S. map, and make unusual associations for what people from those places might taste like to giants. Examples include, "Texans taste like cactus" and "People from Boston taste like beans."
2. **Sequencing:** Fill in the first two boxes of the Create a Timeline activity on page 22 of this guide to illustrate major events in this section. Continue to fill in the boxes as you read.
3. **Writing:** Keep a journal of the dreams you have as you read the novel. Record as many details about the dreams as you can. Are most of them good? Do you remember any details after you wake up? Where do you think each dream comes from? (You do not have to share your journals with the class.)

Thought Bubble

Directions: In the graphic below, write what the BFG may have been thinking when the other giants were tossing him in the air. Write from the BFG's point of view.

