



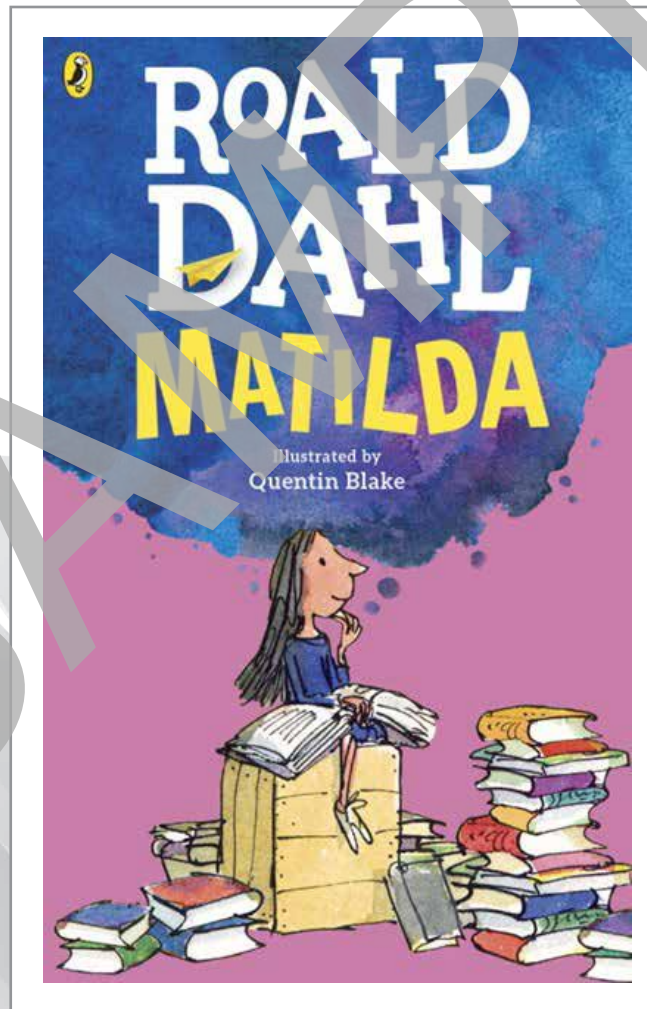
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Matilda

Roald Dahl



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Matilda

Roald Dahl

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, Research

### Comprehension

Predicting, Comparison/  
Contrast

### Writing

Descriptive, Prose, Report  
Writing

### Vocabulary

Word mapping,  
Comparisons

### Listening/Speaking

Drama, Role Play, Discussion

### Literary Elements

Characterization, Setting,  
Story Mapping

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## **Matilda by Roald Dahl**

### **Study Guide by Jean Jamieson**

#### **Summary**

Matilda is a precocious genius with a crooked-car-salesman father, a bingo-loving-telly-watching mother, and an older brother who takes after their father. Seeking revenge for the daily ridicule that she faces at home, Matilda devises brilliant practical jokes that defy detection. Presented with a new challenge at Crunchem Hall, Matilda rises to the occasion when Miss Trunchbull goes after Miss Honey, the one teacher who believes in Matilda.

#### **About the Author**

Roald Dahl was born September 13, 1916, in Llandaff, South Wales. He died November 23, 1990. He was a graduate of the British public schools, 1932. Dahl was a member of the Royal Air Force, fighter pilot, 1939-1945. He married actress Patricia Neal July 2, 1953. They were divorced in 1983, and he married Felicity Ann Crosland. Dahl and Neal had five children, Olivia, Tessa, Theo, Ophelia, and Lucy.

Dahl worked for the Shell Oil Company from 1933-39. He was the host of a series of half-hour television dramas, *Way Out*, during the early 1960s. Best known as the author of children's books, Dahl was also noted for his short stories for adults, and his enchanting autobiographical descriptions of growing up in England and flying in World War II. His children's fiction is known for its sudden turns into the fantastic, its wheeling, fast-moving prose, and its decidedly harsh treatment of any adults foolish enough to cause trouble for the young heroes and heroines. Similarly, his adult fiction often relies on a sudden twist that throws light on what has been happening in the story, a trait most evident in *Tales of the Unexpected*, which was made into a television series.

Dahl began making up stories for his own children, and these became the basis for his career as a children's writer. "Children are a great discipline because they are highly critical, and they lose interest so quickly. You have to keep things ticking along. If you think a child is getting bored, you must think up something that jolts it back. Something that tickles. You have to know what children like."

One way that Dahl delighted his readers was to exact often vicious revenge on cruel adults who harmed children. In *Matilda*, the Amazonian headmistress Miss Trunchbull is finally banished by the brilliant, triumphant Matilda. "Children don't relate the gruesome events to life. They enjoy the fantasy. My nastiness is never gratuitous. It's retribution. Beastly people must be punished."

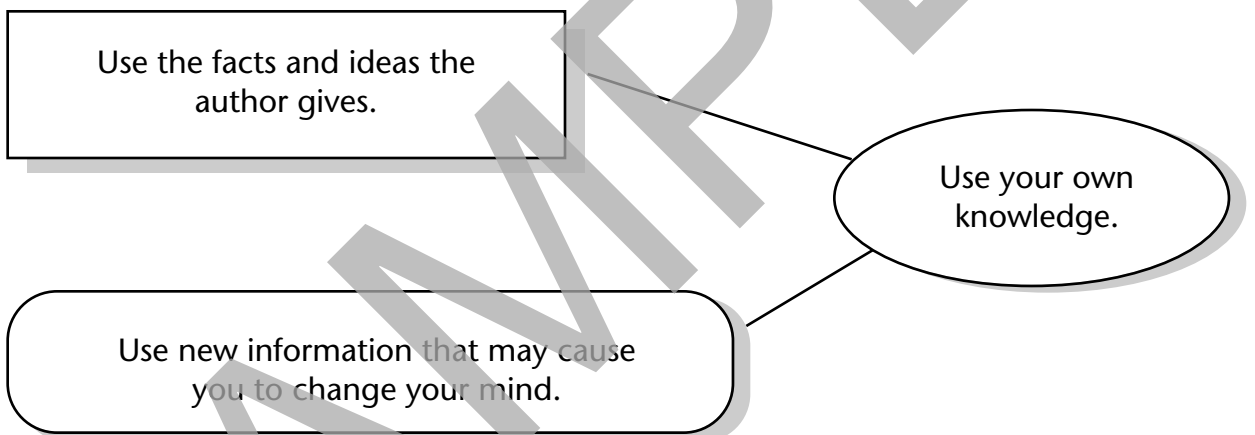
"Adults may be disturbed by the books because they are not quite as aware as I am that children are different from adults. Children are much more vulgar than grownups. They have

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## Using Predictions in the Novel Unit Approach

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how the conflict will be resolved, which details given by the author will be important to the plot, which details will help to fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses. As students work on predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give us to help us in making our predictions? Why are some predictions more likely than others?

A predicting chart is for students to record their predictions. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, you can review and correct previous predictions. This procedure serves to focus on predictions and to review the stories.



Predictions:

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## “The Reader of Books”

Pages 7-21

### *Please Note*

Several of the words in this book have the European spelling. You may wish to have the students make a list of the words for comparison purposes. Also, some of the words may not be found in the dictionary. In such cases, request that the students define the words from the context clues of the material.

### *Vocabulary*

disgusting 7	revolting 7	twaddle 8	scorchers 8
delve 9	chrysalis 9	gormless 10	hankering 11
unaccompanied 12	devouring 13	fascination 13	instinctively 15
mooch 16	compassionate 18	formidable 18	transported 21

### *Vocabulary Activity*

Complete each of the following comparisons using a vocabulary word. (Sample: GOOD is to BAD as HOT is to COLD.)

1. UP is to DOWN as \_\_\_\_\_ is to DELIGHTFUL. (*DISGUSTING*)
2. GLAD is to HAPPY as \_\_\_\_\_ is to SYMPATHETIC. (*COMPASSIONATE*)
3. DAY is to LIGHT as \_\_\_\_\_ is to AWESOME. (*FORMIDABLE*)
4. MORE is to LESS as \_\_\_\_\_ is to APPEALING. (*REVOLTING*)
5. UNHAPPY is to SAD as \_\_\_\_\_ is to CONSUMING. (*DEVOURING*)
6. BETTER is to WORSE as \_\_\_\_\_ is to STATIONARY. (*TRANSPORTED*)
7. NIGHT is to DARK as \_\_\_\_\_ is to CRAVING. (*HANKERING*)
8. GOOD is to KIND as \_\_\_\_\_ is to BABBLE. (*TWADDLE*)

### *Discussion Questions and Activities*

1. How is Matilda compared to a scab? (Page 10, “...the parents looked upon Matilda in particular as nothing more than a scab”; She is something to be picked off and thrown away.)
2. At what age does Matilda go to the library to read books? (pages 11-12, the age of four) Matilda goes to the library unaccompanied by a parent or anyone else. What is your opinion of this fact? Would your opinion be the same for other children? Why? Why not?
3. What is Matilda’s favorite book from the children’s section of the library? Why? (Pages 13-15, Matilda likes *The Secret Garden* best of all because of the mystery of the room)

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*behind the closed door, and the mystery of the garden behind the big wall.)* What book from the adult section is Matilda given to read by the librarian? (page 15, *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens) (See Postreading Activity #2.)

4. What advice does the librarian, Mrs. Phelps, give Matilda regarding the things that she doesn't understand in the books that she is reading? (Page 19, "And don't worry about the bits you can't understand. Sit back and allow the words to wash around you, like music.") What do you think of Mrs. Phelps' advice?

### **Postreading Activities**

1. On pages 8 and 9 the author tells about the reports that he would write for some children at the end of the term. Write an end-of-the-term report for you. You may make the report fact or fiction, staid or humorous.
2. Make a survey of the favorite books of the students in the class. You may wish to extend this by grade level, and then expand the survey to include several different levels. The results could then be summarized in the form of a graph for easy reference by the students. Some students may volunteer to write brief summaries of the books that they especially like, and include reasons why others may enjoy reading them. The librarian may wish to be involved in the survey, so that the books that are recommended by students are readily available for check out by others.
3. Matilda was transported into new worlds and introduced to amazing people through the books that she read. Choose one book that you have read that did something similar for you, and share your experience with others. You may wish to use art media, poetry, prose, music, etc. or a combination of these to express your ideas.

## **"Mr. Wormwood, the Great Car Dealer"**

**Pages 22-29**

### **Vocabulary**

twit 22                      diddled 23                      crookery 24                      tremendous 24  
compartments 26      idiocies 29

### **Vocabulary Activity**

Make up your own definitions for the words *twit*, *diddled*, *crookery*. The sentences given below are from the book, and may help to form the definitions.

—Page 22, "That's because you're an ignorant little *twit*."

—Page 23, "No one ever got rich being honest...Customers are there to be *diddled*."

—Page 24, Young Michael "seemed to have inherited his father's love for *crookery*."