



## James and the Giant Peach Teacher's Guide

### **About the Author**

Roald Dahl was born in Llandalff , Wales on September 9,1916. His mother was a vivid storyteller, recalling stories from Norwegian folklore, thus plowing rows for Roald's fertile imagination. His father died when he was three, but left behind diaries of his daily life during World War I. Roald started writing his own secret diaries at age 8.

After his school career, Dahl became a salesman for Shell Oil Company. War broke out and Roald enlisted in the RAF. He saw active duty and sustained injuries that eventually led him to transfer to Washington, D.C. in 1942. his career as a serious writer began when he wrote an account of his war experience for the Saturday Evening Post.

His popularity among children began with *James and the Giant Peach*, his first bestselling children's book. Published in 1960, the plot was inspired by the bedtime stories he told his daughters. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* followed to even greater success in 1964. Bestsellers continued with *The BFG*, *Danny the Champion of the World*, *The Twits*, *The Witches*, *Boy*, *Going Solo* and *Matilda*.

Roald Dahl died at the age of 74 on November 23,1990.

Find out more about his interesting life and legacy on the Official Roald Dahl website at [www.roalddahl.com](http://www.roalddahl.com).

## **About the Book**

A young orphan named James is forced to live a miserable existence with his cruel aunts. One day, James meets a strange, tiny old man who gives him a bag of magic crystals. The crystals are supposed to make his life marvelous. But James accidentally drops his bag, scattering the crystals under an old peach tree. A lone peach at the top of the tree starts growing, and growing, and growing until it is as large as a house! Seeing a hole on the side of the peach, James crawls inside to the very center where he finds the peach pit is inhabited by a peculiar group of oversized bugs! With a snip of the stem, the peach starts rolling downhill, and the adventure begins!

## **Character List**

James Henry Trotter- protagonist

Aunt Sponge- extremely overweight and mean

Aunt Spiker- extremely skinny and mean

Small old man – mystery man who gives James the bag of magic crystals

Creatures living in the peach stone:

Old- Green Grasshopper

Spider

Ladybug

Centipede

Earthworm

Silkworm

Glow-worm

## **Vocabulary Words**

1. **amble** – to walk in a leisurely manner
2. **beckon** – to call or signal to a person
3. **blunt** – having a thick edge or point
4. **crafty** – sly; clever
5. **deluge** – a drenching rain; huge flow
6. **desolate**- isolated, barren
7. **imbecile** – of very low intelligence; very stupid
8. **luminous** – giving off light; glowing
9. **malevolent** – acting with evil intent
10. **mammoth** – huge
11. **martyr** – one who sacrifices something of great value for a principle
12. **peculiar** – strange, different from the usual
13. **nuisance** – annoyance, bother, pest
14. **pandemonium** – chaos; wild confusion

15. **shilling** – a former unit of British money
16. **sinister** - threatening disaster; evil
17. **spellbound** – condition of total attention, fascination
18. **stealthy** – sneaky; slow, quiet movement to avoid observation
19. **stupor** – condition of dulled senses, lethargy
20. **tapered** – to make or become gradually smaller toward one end
21. **wistful** – sad thoughtfulness

## **Short answer Questions**

1. What happened to James' parents?
2. What did Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker call James?
3. Where did the magic crystals come from?
4. Write 3 adjectives that describe James.
5. What do the aunts do to prepare for the sightseers?
6. Who did James find inside the peach?
7. What caused the peach to separate from the tree?
8. What happened to the aunts?
9. Write 3 adjectives to describe the Earthworm.
10. How many feet did Centipede have?
11. How is Glow-worm described?
12. Why didn't the sharks damage the bottom of the peach?
13. Who was the "bait" to lure the seagulls so that James could slip a string around their necks?
14. What sort of grasshopper was Old-Green-Grasshopper?
15. Where was Old-Green-Grasshopper' ears?
16. In what American city did the peach land?
17. Where was the peach pit at the end of the story?

## **Discussion Questions**

The following questions or activities may be used to explore the book. They may be used as writing or group discussion prompts. Sunshine State Standards specific to the prompt are listed in parentheses. Other standards may apply, depending on the format used in the classroom.

1. The aunts are very mean to James. If they had been nice to him, how would it affect James and the story? (LA.A.1.3 ,LA.E.1.2 , LA.E.2.2 , LA E.1.3, LA.E.2.3)
2. Compare James' past life with his parents to his present life with his aunts. (LA.E.2.2 ,LA.E.2.3)

3. If you had been along on the journey, what would have been the scariest part? Why? (LA.A.1.2 , LA.A.1.3, LA.E.2.2, LA.E.2.3)
4. Earthworm seems quite pessimistic. Why do you think he might be this way? (LA.A.1.2, LA.E.2.2, LA.A.1.3, LA.E.2.3).
5. Why do you think Miss Spider is “not loved at all”? Should she be loved? Explain how this might apply to human relationships. (LA.A.2.2 , LA.E.2.2 , LA.A.2.3, LA.E.2.3)
6. At what point does James become the leader on the journey? Why do you think he became the leader instead of one of the others? (LA.E.1.2,LA.E.2.2, LA.E.1.3, LA.E. 2.3)
7. Which insects were used in the story and what made them good choices? (LA.A.1.2, LA.A.1.3, LA.E.2.2, LA.E.2.3)
8. If you could add another insect, what would it be and what would be its part in the story? (LA.A.1.2, LA.B.2.2, LA.E. 2.2, LA.A.1.3, LA.B.2.3, LA.E.2.3)
9. What if James had swallowed the magic crystals, as he was told to do, instead of dropping them under the peach tree? (LA.B.2.2 , LA.E.2.2, LA.B.2.3, LA.E.2.3)
10. The peach finally landed in New York City. What if the peach had landed in Miami? How might its reception and final destination have been different? (LA.E.2.2, LA.E.2.3)

## **Classroom Activities**

### **Classroom Scavenger Hunt**

(LA.A.2.2, LA.B.2.2, LA.A.2.3, LA.B.2.3)

Send students on a scavenger hunt to find book titles and web sites in the media center that support each topic below. The first student who completes the hunt receives a prize.

Topics to scavenge:

Weather-Hailstorms

Insects

Centipedes

Ladybugs

Earthworms

Spiders

Grasshoppers

Glow-worms  
Silkworms  
Seagulls  
Peach trees

## **Cloud in a Bottle**

(SC.A.1.2, SC.A.1.3, SC.B.1.3)

The Cloud men are always interested in causing havoc with people. Amaze your students by creating your own clouds in a bottle. All that is needed is a 2 liter plastic bottle, warm water, and matches. Follow the directions from Steve Spangler's website below, then have students record their observations.

[www.stevespanglerscience.com](http://www.stevespanglerscience.com)

## **Creature Research**

(LA.A.2.2, LA.B.2.2, SC.G.1.2, LA.A.2.3, LA.B.2.3, SC.G.1.3)

Research each creature in the peach. Tell about their life cycles, body parts, habitat, food, and if each creature is considered harmful or helpful. Present your findings to the class.

## **Vocabulary Research**

(LA.A.1.2, LA.A.1.3)

Look up the words, "anthropomorphism" and "entomologist". Write a short paragraph describing how each word relates to the story.

## **Compare and Contrast**

(LA.E.1.2, LA.E.1.3)

At the beginning of the book James is a boy who appears to have everything going wrong including wicked aunts, being an orphan, missing his home and family and dropping the magical green crystals that could have made his life happier. Write a paragraph comparing James at the end of the story to James at the beginning.

## **Bobbing for Peaches**

(SC.C.2.2, SC.G.1.2, SC.C.2.3, SC.G.1.3)

According to James the sharks have a difficult time eating the peach because their noses were longer than their mouths and they were trying to bite a round, bobbing object. Demonstrate to your class how difficult it is to bite a round, submerged object and go bobbing for apples. First, show them how nearly impossible it is to grasp a moving object in deep water without their hands. Then have them bob in a shallow amount of water and have them record the difference in difficulty.

What tools do we have that sharks don't? (Hands)

Explain that sharks are equipped with barbed teeth to help them grasp their food. Sharks can have up to 5 rows of teeth, and the Great White shark actually arches his back when he attacks his prey, giving him a better biting angle to grip and tear.

## **Make a Cloudscape**

(LA.A 2.2, SC.D.1.2)

You will need:

- 1 sheet of blue construction paper

- 4 cotton balls

- crayons

- cloud formation website such as:

- <http://asd-www.larc.nasa.gov/SCOOL/cldchart.html>

Fold the construction paper to form 4 equal sections. Using one cotton ball for each section, show four different kinds of clouds, such as cumulus, stratus, cirrus and cumulo-nimbus. Use crayon to show the relationship each type has to the ground.

## **Centipede's Restaurant**

(LA.E.1.2, LA.E.2.2, LA.E.1.3, LA.E.2.3)

Centipede, with his mouth full of peach, and with juice running down his chin, burst into song about the many dishes he loved to eat. Use the song to create a menu for a centipede restaurant. You will need a creative name for the restaurant and a description of each dish with its price!

## **Bug Search**

(LA.B.2.2, SC.G.1.2, SC.H.1.2, LA.B.2.3, SC.G.1.3, SC.H.1.3)

You will need:

Bug guide book from the library

A magnifying glass

A journal

Search your home, backyard or neighborhood for bugs. Remember, some bugs like to be out at night. Some like to hide under rocks, in crevices or other dark places.

Draw a picture in your journal for each bug that you find.

Try to identify it using the bug guide. Enter its name in your journal. Then write as many facts as you can about it.

Classify each bug as “helpful” or “harmful”.

## **Interview with a Bug**

(LA.B.2.2, LA.C.1.2, LA.C.3.2, LA.D.2.2, LA.E.2.2, LA.B.2.3, LA.C.1.3, LA.C.3.3, LA.D.2.3, LA.E.2.3)

Each creature in the peach had its own perspective about their journey. As a class, or individually, write parts for each creature which would show the unique personalities and perspectives of each bug. Then have students role play, using an interviewer to interact with each bug.

## **Picture Journal**

(LA.B.2.2, LA.B.2.3)

Choose five events from the story. Draw a picture for each event and arrange them in sequence as they happened. Relate the story to the class.