



Chicagoland's premiere Theatre for Young Audiences since 1987!

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STUDY GUIDE



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: Literature Based, Music & Dance, Facing Your Fears, Communication, Family

DEAR EDUCATOR,

As an organization that values the arts and education, we have created this Study Guide as a helpful resource. Our Study Guides are designed to be a valuable tool for teachers in two ways: helping you to prepare your students before the show, and enriching and extending their experience after.

Our goal is to serve principals, teachers and students in their pursuit of Illinois State Standards and to integrate the arts with your core curricular subjects.

– The ABS Team

ABOUT US: AlphaBet Soup Productions mission is to provide Chicago area youth, teachers and families a unique theatrical experience that will entertain, educate and inspire

- Winner of the Illinois Theatre Association Award for Excellence in Theatre for Young Audiences
- Winner of two National Children's Theatre Awards for their *Beauty & the Beast* and *Jungle Book* adaptations

Pre-Performance Questions

- **How many of you have experienced a live theater performance? What performance did you see?**

2. What are some of the differences between going to the theater and watching television or going to a movie?

- Theater features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times.
- The theater is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear clothing (or costumes) and make-up to help create the different characters they play.
- There is much more to live performances than actors. Special sets, lighting, music, costumes and (of course) the audience, add to the total experience.

3. Introduce your students to the following theatrical terms:

Play • Acts & Scenes • Producer • Program • Spotlights

Costumes • Props • Director • Stage • Curtain Call • Stagehand • Lobby • Usher

Musical Theater • Orchestra Pit • Playwright • Scenery • Makeup • Actor

4. Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.

- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything, and so that you will not disturb the rest of the audience.
- It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully.
- In long performances, there will be an intermission. There is no intermission in our production. This performance will run approximately one hour in length.
- Sing or participate if you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important!
- Listen to how the music sets the different moods and affects your own feelings.
- Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song, dance or joke, and of course at the end of the show!
- Most importantly... **have fun!**

About James and the Giant Peach

The Author:

Author Roald Dahl (1916 – 1990) was born in Wales to Norwegian parents. In 1939, at the age of 23, he joined the British Royal Air Force and flew fighter biplanes in Africa, and later, Greece. In 1942 he was transferred to the United States, and his first essay was published in *The New Yorker*. For the first fifteen years of his writing career, he concentrated mostly on short stories for adults (with the exception of *The Gremlins*, a 1943 picture book adaptation of Dahl's script written for Walt Disney). It was not until he was a father that he attained his first notable success as an author of children's literature with *James and the Giant Peach*, published in the United States in 1961, and in England in 1969. Other works include *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (1970), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1986), and *Matilda* (1988). Upon his death in 1990, *The Independent* wrote that "Roald Dahl is, without question, the most successful children's book author in the world".

The Story:

The Story James, an orphan, lives with his cruel aunts at the top of a steep hill in a rickety house with a barren peach tree in the garden. One day James is given a mysterious bag of crocodile tongues – if used properly, amazing, wonderful things will happen to James and he will never be sad or lonely again. James accidentally drops the bag at the roots of the old tree, and the tongues magically burrow into the ground. Soon, a peach starts to grow at the top of the tree, and continues to grow and grow until it becomes larger than the house. One night James crawls inside the peach and reaches the pit, where he meets a gargantuan Old-Green-Grasshopper, a tremendous Ladybug, an enormous Spider, and other huge insects. When the colossal Centipede chews through the stem of the peach, it detaches from the tree, and tumbles down the hill, across the countryside, and into the ocean – and the journey begins! Through shark-infested waters and into the seagull-filled sky, James and his new friends work together to overcome incredible odds and have the adventure of a lifetime!

The Characters:

There are six actors in our production, who play all the roles in *James and the Giant Peach*. Tell your students to be on the lookout for the same actors playing multiple roles including:

James

Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker

James' Mother and Father

The Enchantress

The Ladybug, the Old-Green-Grasshopper

The Earthworm, Miss Spider

and the Centipede

Post-Performance Questions

1. MUSIC

- Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? How could you tell? When was the music used? Why? Did it help develop the plot? What types of music was used, or were different types used?
- Can you describe how different kinds of music would make you have different kinds of feelings?
- When a play is a musical, an actor must have additional skills. Can you name some?
- A musical costs much more to produce. Can you name some additional expenses? (ie; music director, a practice piano, a choreographer etc.)

2. SETS

- Describe the sets used in the play you just saw. What props or details were used to suggest specific times or settings? How could lighting be changed to create a mood, season or time of day? What materials might have been used in building the sets? How were the sets and props moved on and off the stage? Describe a simple scene (ie; a day at school, a trip to the store, a ride in the car or on the bus), ask students to describe a basic set for the scene.

3. COSTUMES

- What would you need to know to create costumes for a play (ie; Historical research, sewing, theatrical effects etc.)?
- Why is the right costume important to the character in the play?

4. DANCE

- Describe the kind of dancing in the play. How is it different from the kinds of dancing that the class might know? What purpose could dance have in a play?

5. PRODUCTION

- Make a list of all the personnel needed for a play or musical. (ie; directors, actors, musicians, playwrights, set designers, costumes designers, light & sound designers, stagehands, choreographers, producers, etc.)

Cross-Curriculum Activities

Geography

1. The Peach's Travels. James travels from England to New York City in the United States in this story. On a globe, locate England, and then find New York City. Trace James's path from Britain to the United States – what body of water did the peach cross over? With your students, plan other voyages for the peach – from England to Germany, Germany to India, India to China, China to Australia, etc. What countries, continents, and bodies of water are between the originating location and the final destination? Have your students describe the view from overhead – do they see deserts? Rain forests? Any physical landmarks like the Great Wall of China?

Math

1. A Centi-what??? (introducing the metric system) The Centipede brags that he has one hundred legs (even though centipedes really only have 42). Your students may have heard of the prefix “centi” – as in “centimeter,” which is 1/100 of a meter.

Your students' rulers are likely marked with feet/inches, as well as centimeters/ millimeters. Have them measure classroom objects in feet/inches. And then in centimeters/millimeters – they should note both sets of measurements. After a while, they may be able to estimate how many centimeters something is, based on its measurement in inches, and vice versa.

Language Arts

1. Postcards from a Peach. Have your students pretend that they are riding on top of the peach with James and his friends. Tell them to write a letter to their family or best friends about their experiences. They should describe how they felt when they met the creatures, the sensation of bobbing in the sea or flying through the sky. You may wish to have them create a postcard, with an illustration of their favorite scene from the play on the back. On the front they should be sure to use proper letter-writing skills (salutation, address format, etc.)

2. Bugs in a Peach Tree. Later in this study guide you'll find a crossword puzzle featuring the various bugs that rode inside the peach, as well as several other creepy-crawlies. Distribute this to your students. If you wish, you can assign each student, or group of students, a different creature to do research on – students should report on the duties of these bugs, as well as their physical characteristics as well as other interesting facts about them.

3. The five senses. When James crawls inside the peach, he uses his five senses to describe the experience: the silence of the night outside, the pink-orange massiveness of the peach itself, the soft mouse-like fuzz on the outside and the stickiness of the inside, the sweet smell of the juice, and the luscious taste of it. Review the five senses: sound, sight, touch, smell and taste. Have your students divide a piece of paper into five sections, one for each sense. Assign them an object to describe according to each of the five senses, using adjectives. Food would probably work best – for sound they can describe the sensation of unwrapping it, or the sound that happens when they bite into it. Students should be as descriptive as they can – how would they describe a chocolate candy to someone who's never experienced it?

Science

1. Will it float? (The Scientific Method) James and his friends are surprised

(and relieved) to discover that the peach floats in the Atlantic Ocean. You can introduce your class to the scientific method by testing whether other objects sink or float.

The seven parts of the scientific method, as applied to a pencil, are as follows:

Observation: Examine the pencil Question: Will the pencil float? Hypothesis (Educated guess): I think the pencil will sink. Experiment: Drop the pencil in a bucket of water. Analysis: Observe whether the pencil sank or floated. Conclusion: The pencil sank.

Your students can keep a chart of various classroom objects, writing down the object's name, the hypothesis, and the decision.

Resources:

- Going Bug-gy: Facts and Fun about Insects (teacher and student activities)
 - <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bugs/>
- Roald Dahl Fans: Teacher Ideas
 - <http://www.roalddahlfans.com/teachers.php#14>
- E-Mints Educational Center
 - <http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00001224.shtml>
- Roald Dahl: The Official Website (additional information on Roald Dahl, as well as online games)
 - <http://www.roalddahl.com>
- The Science Spot: Science Classroom (Introducing the Metric System)
 - <http://sciencespot.net/Pages/classmetric.html>
- Michigan Peach Sponsors (What Will Happen If I Plant a Peach Pit?)
 - <http://www.michiganpeach.org/facts/pit.html>

Other books by Roald Dahl:

For older students (Grades 3-6)

The BFG Boy: Tales of Childhood

Charlie & the Chocolate Factory

Charlie & the Great Glass Elevator

Danny the Champion of the World

George's Marvelous Medicine

Going Solo

Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes

Matilda

The Twits

The Witches

For younger students (Grades 1-4)

Dirty Beasts

The Enormous Crocodile

Esio Trot

Fantastic Mr. Fox

The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me

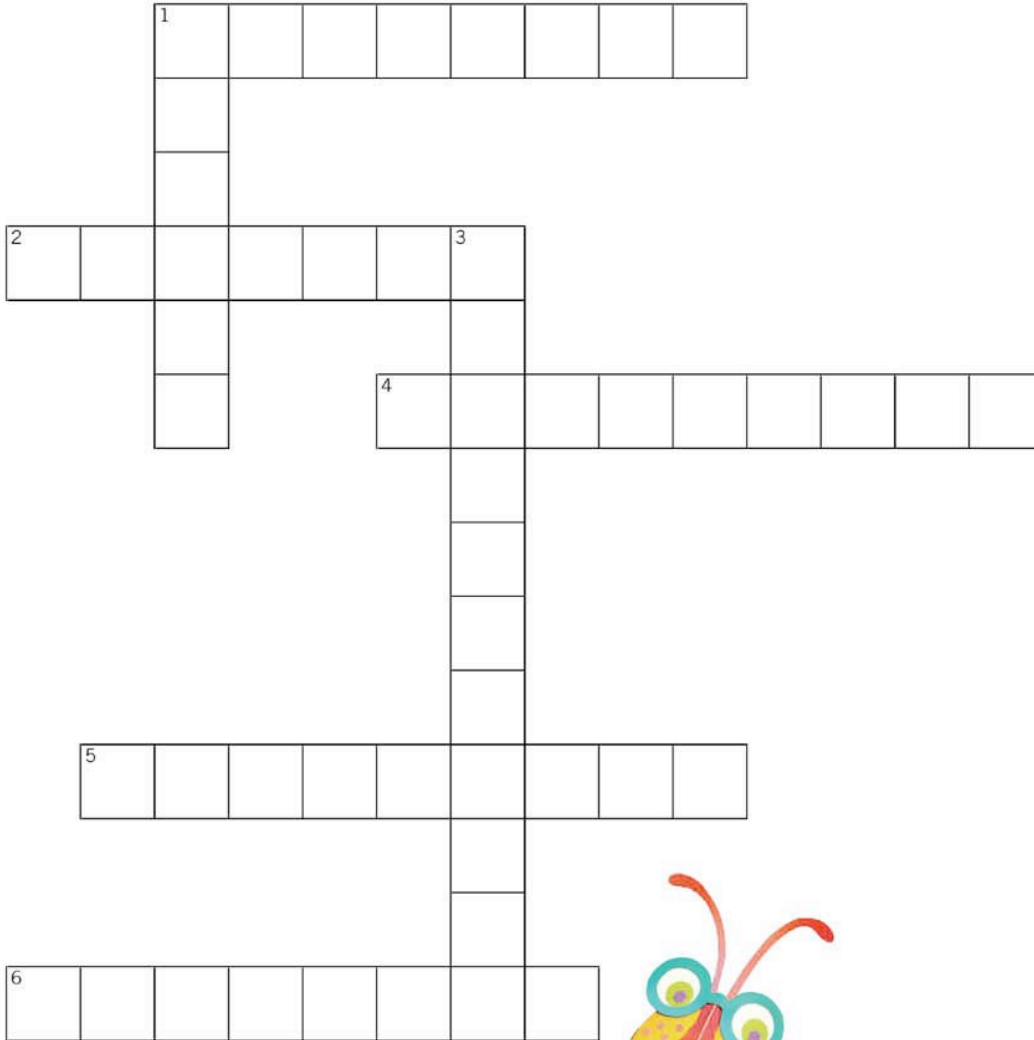
The Magic Finger

The Minpins

The Vicar of Nibbleswicke

Name: _____

How well do you remember the insect characters in the book *James & the Giant Peach*?
First, complete the riddles to the right. Using these clues, you can complete the crossword puzzle below.



ACROSS:

1. A tiny little worm is she,
Well-mannered and well-bred.
And if you ask her nicely,
She'll spin her silky thread.
She is a _____

2. A scarlet shell is on her back,
With several big black spots.
Is it true that you can tell her age
By counting all her dots?
She is a _____

4. A very wiggly fellow,
He's fat and pink and blind.
But which end is the front of him,
And which is his behind?
He is a _____

5. He says he has a hundred legs.
We know that isn't true.
If you catch him, you can count them:
He has only forty-two.
He is a _____

6. She has no wings to give her flight,
And yet she still gets by.
She is not a worm at all,
But a lady firefly.
She is a _____

DOWN:

1. You must never kill this creature
Or any of her ilk.
She catches lots of nasty pests
Within her web of silk.
She is a _____

3. An insect and a violinist,
He pulls out all the stops.
And when he isn't playing,
He hops and hops and hops.
He is a _____

