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# Before the Book

Before you begin reading *James and the Giant Peach*, it will be beneficial for the students to discuss the setting in the south of England. Find England on the globe or world map. Look up books on England while doing research in the library. Students can work in groups and report their findings in a presentation to the class. Students can also ask their parents if there is any English ancestry in their family.

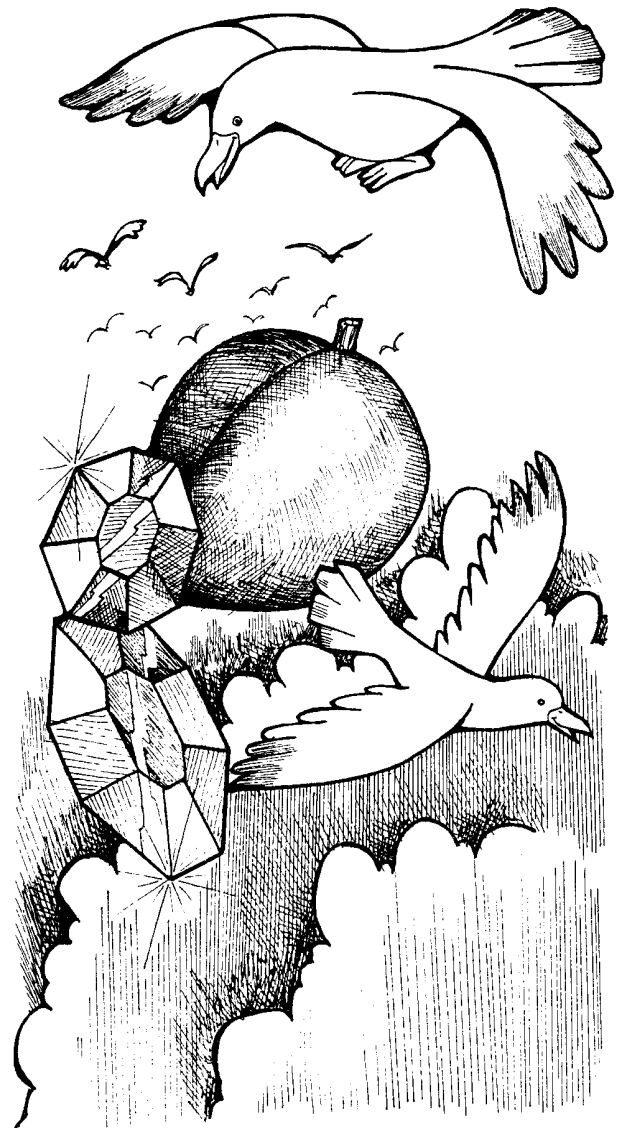
Even though England and Australia are both English-speaking countries, some of the words we use do not mean the same as they do in England. Throughout the book you will find other differences such as spectacles = glasses; chopper = axe; hayrick = haystack etc. Have the students write in their Writer's Workbooks, any of these words they come across while reading (see page 6).

There are also some generic pre-reading ideas that help students focus on literature. Here are some activities that may work well in your class.

1. Predict what the story might be about by hearing the title.
2. Predict what the story might be about by looking at the cover illustration.
3. Discuss prior knowledge that students might have about England, losing parents, living with relatives, being abused, insects and bugs, peaches, seagulls, flying, clouds, New York City, the Empire State Building, Central Park etc.
4. Discuss fantasy.
5. Discuss other books by Roald Dahl that students may have heard of or read.
6. Answer these questions:

Would you ever:

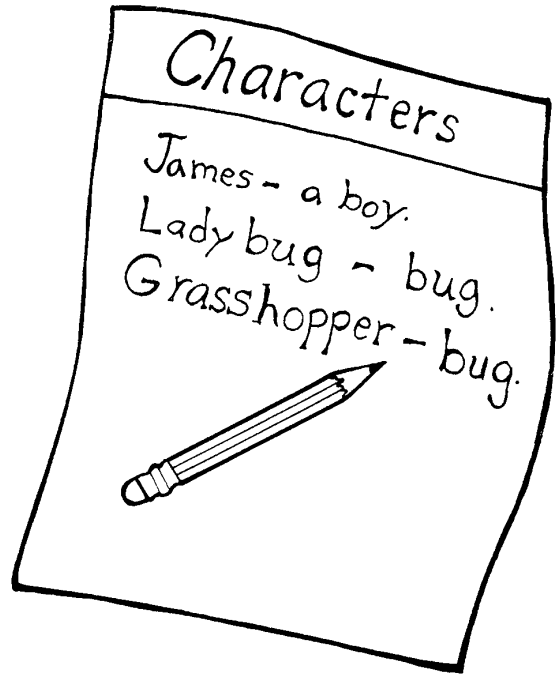
- eat some magic green crystals from a strange old man?
  - run away from home?
  - make friends with someone different than yourself?
  - risk your life to help a friend?
7. Discuss abuse and how it can affect you. Since this could be a touchy subject, it may be prudent to bring an expert into your room to discuss this matter with your students.
  8. Take quotes from the story and have students read them to predict what the story will be about. Students read the book to see if their predictions are correct.



# Writer's Workbook

Before beginning, every student should have a notebook to use especially for this literature unit. While reading *James and the Giant Peach*, the students may use this Writer's Workbook in many ways. Here are some suggestions:

1. List characters as they appear in each section. Write descriptions.
2. Note the setting or settings of each section.
3. Note important events as they happen.
4. Note major changes that occur in characters or settings.
5. Note problems or goals that occur and if they are solved.
6. Note page and paragraph where vocabulary words (page 9) are found, along with a definition.
7. Note the feelings generated in reaction to the events in the story.
8. Make predictions of what may happen next.
9. Illustrate or write what is seen, thought and felt from the point of view of one of the main characters.



Another use for the Writer's Workbook is to record any writing assignment that may be given from 'Choose a Vocabulary Activity Idea' (page 10). If you decide to assign the Critical Thinking Questions (CTQ) as writing assignments, these can be written in the Writer's Workbook as well. You may also choose to encourage the students to write short stories or poetry that the reading selection inspires.

If a student has a question while reading, noting it in the Writer's Workbook will save constant interruptions until the appropriate group discussion period.

At first, taking notes while reading will slow the readers down, so allow ample time to finish each reading selection. Remind your students that inventive spellings and incomplete sentences are acceptable (in most cases) while taking notes. Plan to go over the notes during group discussion time after the reading is completed. This will give students an opportunity to learn from each other. The extra time you take in the beginning will be harvested as your students become more aware of the material they are reading. By the time you get to the fifth section, your students should understand what you expect of them.

Take some time to evaluate their Workbook entries. Non-judgmental responses will please and encourage the students to write more.

# *James and the Giant Peach*

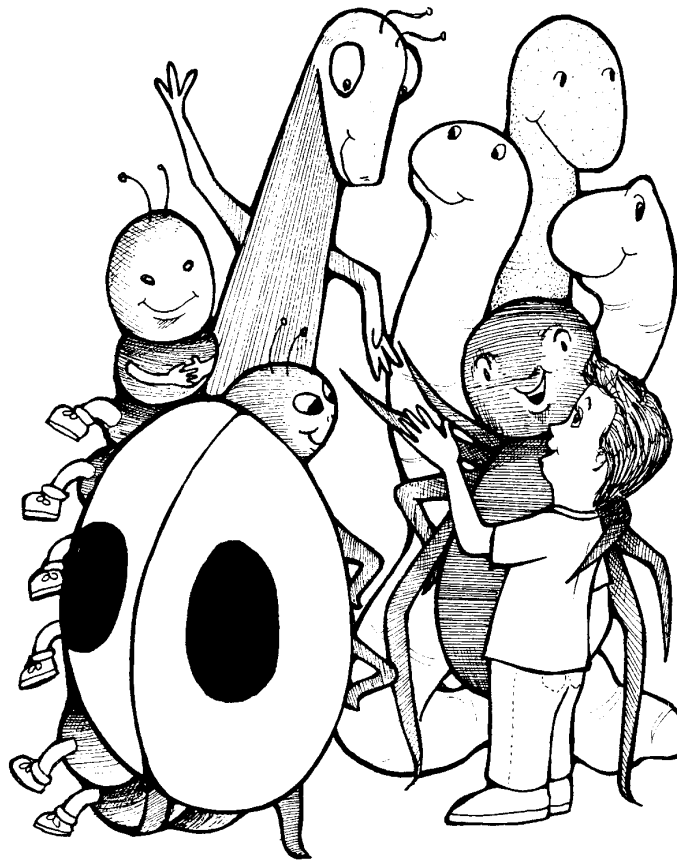
by *Roald Dahl*  
(Puffin, 1988)

James Henry Trotter led a happy, normal life with his parents in a beautiful house beside the sea. He had lots of children to play with, a sandy beach to run on and the ocean to play in. It was a perfect life for a little boy. Then one day a strange quirk of fate ended his idyllic life. His parents were eaten up by a rhinoceros which had escaped from the London Zoo.

James was sent to live with his two aunts, Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker. Both were horrible, selfish, lazy and cruel. Right from the beginning, they started beating James. For the next three years, James led a miserable existence. He was a virtual prisoner in a ramshackle house on the top of a high hill in the south of England. He had no toys, no books to look at, no friends to play with and no pets to keep him company. But then one hot summer day, an old man in a crazy dark-green suit brought hope into the sad little boy's existence. He was a very small old man, but he had a huge bald head and a face that was covered all over with bristly black whiskers. He gave James a small white paper bag. In the bag were green, glowing crystals. 'There's more power and magic in those things in there than in all of the world put together,' the old man said softly.

Before James could follow the directions the old man gave him, he slipped and fell. The paper bag broke, causing the thousands of tiny green things to scatter in all directions. But all was not lost. The full power of the magic went elsewhere. Before long, James would discover how strong that magic was.

The first sign that something strange was about to happen appeared in the old peach tree. It had never produced a peach! But now, what a peach! It didn't stop growing until it was the size of a small house. As if that wasn't enough excitement to last a lifetime, you'll never believe what else was caught up in the magic spell. James crawled inside the peach and met seven new friends, all giants! They were: Old-Green-Grasshopper, Ladybug, Miss Spider, Centipede, Earthworm, Glow-Worm and Silkworm. Together, with James and the giant peach, they embarked on an adventurous journey that carried them across the ocean in an unbelievable manner. Best of all, it took all of them away from the cruelty of the aunts and into a happier life.





# Vocabulary Activity Ideas

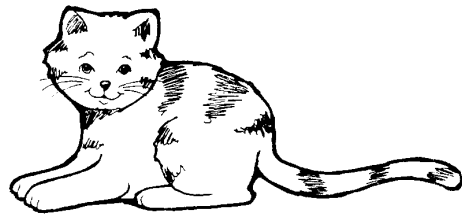
Each section contains several vocabulary words. You may wish to divide these words and assign them to small groups of students. The groups may define the words, find them in the context of the book and present the information to the class to record in a vocabulary notebook.

You can help your students learn and retain the vocabulary in *James and the Giant Peach* by providing them with interesting vocabulary activities. Here are a few ideas to try:

- Ask your students to make their own **Crossword** or **Wordsearch Puzzles** using the vocabulary words from the novel.
- Challenge your students to a **Vocabulary Bee**. This is similar to a spelling bee, but in addition to spelling each word correctly, the game participants must correctly define the words.
- Have your students practise their writing skills by creating **Acrostics** using each letter in a vocabulary word as the beginning letter in the first word of a sentence or phrase describing the word.

**Example:**

*Cats are felines that  
Always like to clean themselves.  
Tabbies are kinds of cats.*



- Ask your students to write **Sentences or Paragraphs** using as many vocabulary words as they possibly can.
- Play a **Board Game** using the words in the vocabulary list. Make a generic game board with every third or fourth space marked 'Draw a Word Card'. Put vocabulary words on suitable-sized cards. Place them in a draw pile. Use a die or spinner to determine the number of spaces to move. When players land on a draw square, they must give the correct definition for the drawn vocabulary word or go back to the start. This game can be played by any number of students or teams. In addition, the cards can be put in alphabetical order or organised by categories, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives etc.
- Play **True or False**. Divide the class into 2 teams. A vocabulary word is drawn from a hat by one team. A player on the opposite team must then give a definition. It can be either true or false. Then a player on the first team must decide if it's true or false. If correctly guessed, the first team gets a point. Each player on the team gets a chance to give a definition and to guess. The team with the most points wins.
- Try **Wear-a-Word**. Assign certain vocabulary words to the students. Have them put each one on a name card. They are to wear one each day attached to their clothing so it may be easily read by others. Whenever anyone in the classroom or throughout the school asks about it, the students must recite their wearing words, define it and use it in a sentence. Have them share it with their families also.
- As a group activity, have students work together to create an **Illustrated Dictionary** of the vocabulary words.
- Play **Vocabulary Charades**. In this game, vocabulary words are acted out!

You probably have many more ideas to add to this list. Try them! Practising selected words through these types of activities increases student interest in, and retention of, vocabulary.