

James and the Giant Peach

Written by Roald Dahl

STORY SUMMARY

In a small, quiet English village beside the sea, a fantastic tale begins. As in many fairy tales, there is a mean, nasty adult that is related to the main character. In fact, in this story there are two!

One fine day, four-year-old James Henry Trotter's parents go off to shop, and his happy life is changed completely! As a result of a very unusual incident, he becomes an instant orphan. Suddenly, he is without the love and devotion of his parents and he must leave his seaside home and playmates. James is plucked from an idyllic existence and submerged in a virtual prison, where his two cruel aunts are the jailers. Living with them, James is denied not only love, friendship and recreation but also sufficient food and sleep. His is a harsh life, to say the least. After three years, however, his world is once again turned upside down, both literally and figuratively!

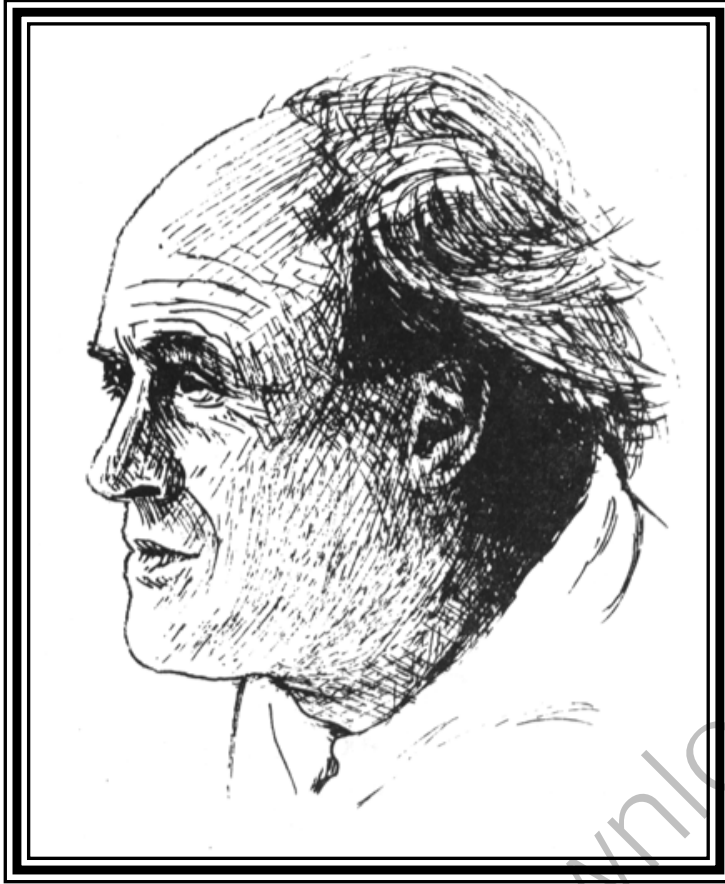
A strange little man visits James in the aunts' garden and tells him of a wondrous secret ingredient that offers great hope for James. In his excitement, James loses the secret ingredient and thinks all is lost! Magical things start to happen in the garden, however, and James becomes a part of the magic. He makes friends with garden creatures that have many human qualities. All of them escape the aunts' garden for adventures unknown.

After an odyssey filled with many adventures, James and his friends find themselves in New York City. At first the citizens of New York are terrified by the strange sight; however, James soon rids them of their fear, and they begin to treat James and his friends as heroes. There is even a ticker-tape parade in their honour. James is thrilled by all of the children who appear. James and each of his travelling companions live long, successful and happy lives in America.



Meet the Author

Roald Dahl



Roald Dahl was born in Llandaff, Wales, on 13 September, 1916. His childhood was marred by tragedy. His father and sister both died when Roald was three. He attended Repton School, where he was often beaten; in later years wrote stories about children who took revenge against adults for their cruelty.

Roald did have some happy times, too. A particularly fond memory was that of the neighbourhood sweet shop, which he once described as the centre of his life. Another experience—also having to do with sweets—had a great influence on his writing of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory!* When Roald was a teenager, Cadbury, the large chocolate manufacturer, sent boxes of chocolate bars to the school boys to be tested for taste and quality.

Roald used to dream about working in one of Cadbury's chocolate-inventing laboratories.

Roald did not attend a university. In 1932 he began a career with the Shell Oil Co of East Africa. He worked for them until 1939, when the outbreak of World War II prompted him to enlist in the Royal Air Force. He became a fighter pilot and was seriously injured in a crash landing. In 1953 Roald Dahl married actress Patricia Neal. They had four children, one of whom tragically died at age seven.

Roald always enjoyed writing. In 1943 an account of his adventures in the Royal Air Force was published by *The Saturday Evening Post*. His first book, *The Gremlins*, was published in 1943. Dahl continued to write and became extremely popular. Although he wrote many wonderful children's stories, he is just as well known for his adult suspense and horror stories. Dahl also wrote many movie scripts, including the James Bond movie *You Only Live Twice* and the children's film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Among his most popular children's books are *James and the Giant Peach* (1961) and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), which was made into the films *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* in 1971 and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in 2005.

Roald Dahl died in Oxford, England, on 23 November, 1990.

Pre-Reading Information

In *James and the Giant Peach*, most of the main characters are non-human. They are a centipede, an earthworm, a silkworm, a spider, a glowworm (firefly), a grasshopper and a ladybird. Research each and write at least three scientific facts about each species.

As you read the book, check off any facts that are mentioned in the story. Add any new facts that you learn from your readings.

Centipede

Earthworm

Silkworm

— Cooperative-Learning Activity —

Story Heroes

Throughout the story, there are many examples of courageous acts. With members of your cooperative-learning group, judge which two story characters should be awarded the heroes' medals on this page. When you have made your group decision, fill in the heroes' names and tell why each deserved the award. Compare your awards with those of other groups.

NAME OF HERO

Reason for the award:

NAME OF HERO

Reason for the award:

— Glossary of Literary Terms —

Alliteration: Repetition of initial (beginning) sounds in 2 or more consecutive or neighbouring words.

Analogy: A comparison based upon the resemblance in some particular ways between things that are otherwise unlike.

Anecdote: A short account of an interesting, amusing or biographical occurrence.

Anticlimax: An event that is less important than what occurred before it.

Archaic language: Language that was once common in a particular historic period but which is no longer commonly used.

Cause and effect: The relationship in which one condition brings about another condition as a direct result. The result, or consequence, is called the effect.

Character development: The ways in which the author shows how a character changes as the story proceeds.

Characterisation: The method used by the author to give readers information about a character; a description or representation of a person's qualities or peculiarities.

Classify: To arrange according to a category or trait.

Climax: The moment when the action in a story reaches its greatest conflict.

Compare and contrast: To examine the likenesses and differences of two people, ideas or things. (*Contrast* emphasises differences. *Compare* may focus on likenesses alone or on likenesses and differences.)

Conflict: The main source of drama and tension in a literary work; the discord between persons or forces that brings about dramatic action.

Connotation: Something suggested or implied, not actually stated.

Description: An account that gives the reader a mental image or picture of something.

Dialect: A form of language used in a certain geographic region; it is distinguished from the standard form of the language by pronunciation, grammar and/or vocabulary.

Dialogue: The parts of a literary work that represent conversation.

Fact: A piece of information that can be proven or verified.

Figurative language: Description of one thing in terms usually used for something else. Simile and metaphor are examples of figurative language.

Flashback: The insertion of an earlier event into the normal chronological sequence of a narrative.

Foreshadowing: The use of clues to give readers a hint of events that will occur later on.

Historical fiction: Fiction represented in a setting true to the history of the time in which the story takes place.

Imagery: Language that appeals to the senses; the use of figures of speech or vivid descriptions to produce mental images.

Irony: The use of words to express the opposite of their literal meaning.