James and the Giant Peach

By

Roald Dahl

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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Table of Contents

Suggestions and Expectations	3
List of Skills	4
Synopsis / Author Biography	5
Student Checklist	6
Reproducible Student Booklet	7
Answer Key	70

About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 76 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses 2 chapters of ***James and the Giant Peach*** and is comprised of these activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature*, *Grade 5*, makes reference to

a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
c) compare and contrast two characters;
d) determine how characters … respond to challenges;
e) drawing inferences from the text;
f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include abandonment, child abuse, good versus evil, friendship, overcoming difficulty, southern England, peaches, grasshoppers, centipedes, glow-worms, earthworms, spiders, silkworms, New York City.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *personification*.
8. Use of singular/plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of *cliffhangers*.

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel.
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists and antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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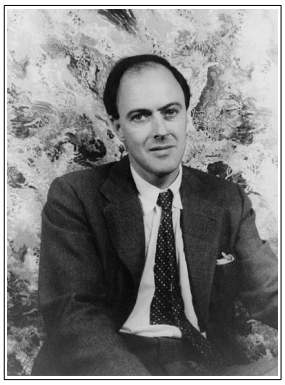
Synopsis

When James accidentally drops some magic crystals by the old peach tree, strange things start to happen. The peach at the top of the tree begins to grow, and before long it's as big as a house. Then James discovers a secret entranceway into the fruit, and when he crawls inside, he meets a bunch of oversized friends – Grasshopper, Centipede, Ladybug, and more. After years of feeling like an outsider in his aunts' house, James has finally found a place where he belongs. With a snip of the stem, the peach starts rolling away, and the adventure begins. ***[Courtesy of the publisher]***

Author Biography

Roald Dahl



Few authors of children's books have been as prolific or successful as **Roald Dahl** (1916-1990). His novels have been read and enjoyed by countless children the world over and include such classics as ***Charlie and the Chocolate Factory***, ***Danny the Champion of the World***, ***James and the Giant Peach*** and ***Matilda.*** Shortly before his death, the top five selling children's books in Great Britain were all authored by Dahl.

Born to Norwegian immigrants, Roald Dahl hailed from Llandaff, Wales. Despite losing his father when he was only four, Roald claimed to have had a most happy and eventful childhood. Although not a particularly good student, Roald did excel at athletics.

Dahl was married to the famous actress, **Patricia Neal,** for many years and they had five children together. The couple were, however, divorced after thirty years of marriage. Roald began his writing career as a short story writer, and didn't pen his first children's novel until 1961 – ***James and Giant Peach***. This was followed by several bestsellers. Roald Dahl passed away in 1990 at the age of 74. In Great Britain the anniversary of Dahl's birthday on 13 September has become **Roald Dahl Day**.

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

James and The Giant Peach

By Roald Dahl

Name: _____

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Chapters 1 - 3

Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or "good guy". The protagonist of ***James and the Giant Peach*** is a very likeable boy, James Henry Trotter, who goes to live with his two aunts when his parents are killed. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you've seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting protagonist?

Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

ramshackle	mildew	forbidden	wistful	peculiar
desolate	ghastly	extraordinary	luminous	adore

1. Going out after nine o'clock was _____ by Jenna's parents.
2. Jeremy received a _____ cut on his leg when he fell into the lion's den.
3. I just _____ a penthouse view. Darling I love you but give me Park Avenue.
4. My grandfather lives in a _____ old shack deep in the forest.
5. When Adrianna saw the little puppy a _____ look appeared on her face.
6. When my parents left for the holidays our home seemed very _____.
7. Garret receives _____ results on his tests when he applies himself.
8. Everyone thinks that just because my dog only has three legs he is _____.
9. I can tell by the musty smell that the house has a _____ problem.
10. Many wristwatches now come with _____ dials.

Questions

1. What is the setting for (most of) Chapter One? Give at least one detail.

2. **Foreshadowing** is a literary device wherein the author provides clues of possible future events in the story. How might the names of James's two aunts be an example of foreshadowing?

3. Describe what happened to James's parents.

4. What was the reason that James's aunts never let him out of the garden?

5. James's parents were killed when he was _____ years old. By the time the events of Chapter Two unfold he is _____ years old.

6. Describe the appearances of :

Aunt Sponge:	

Aunt Spiker:	

7. How might you describe the self-image of both women?

8. Describe what was in the bag that the little old man showed James.

9. What were they? Long, slimy _____ tongues boiled in the skull of a dead _____ with the eyeballs of a _____. Add the fingers of a _____, the gizzard of a _____, the beak of a green _____, and the juice of a _____.

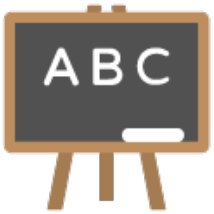
Language Activities

A. South England

Although we are not told the exact location of these opening chapters, we are given some clues. James's parents probably lived close to London, for they went shopping there. James moved to the south of England to live with his aunts, and from there could still see his parents' house far in the distance. His aunts' house, too, was fairly close to the ocean. It is therefore quite likely that he lived near the coast in one of the following counties: **Sussex**, **Hampshire** or **Kent**. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, investigate additional facts about <u>one</u> of these counties. Below record <u>three</u> fascinating facts from your research.

1.	
2.	
3.	

B. Alliteration



The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration –** a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. An example from Chapter Three is "… **s**poonfuls of **s**ugar."

Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of <u>three</u> words.

The chirp of a sparrow	
The clink of a prisoner's chains	
From your imagination	

C. Who is going to help the poor old action word?

An **adverb** is a part of speech defined as *a modifier (or helper) of a verb* (usually an action word). Often an adverb will end in the letters ***ly*** (i.e. ***slowly***). Our novel features a good many creative adverbs.

1. He lived peacefully with his mother and father in a beautiful house beside the sea.

   → In this sentence, which verb does ***peacefully*** modify? _____

2. The lovely house by the seaside had to be sold immediately.

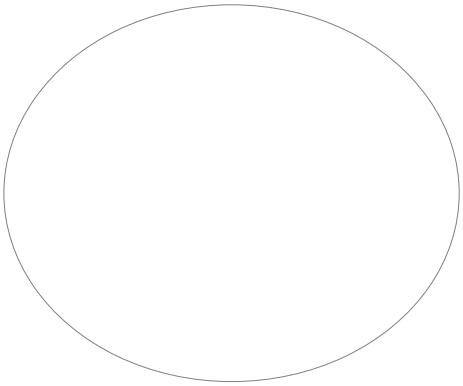
   → In this sentence, what verb does ***immediately*** modify? _____

3. Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker were sitting comfortably in deckchairs.

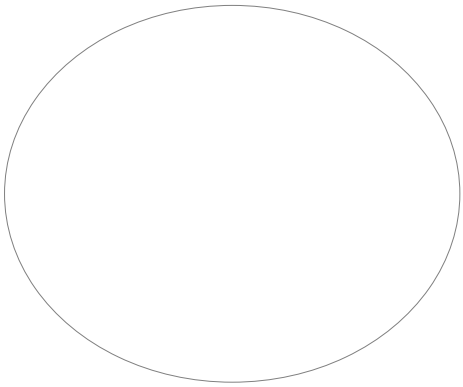
   → In this sentence the adverb _____ modifies the verb _____

D. 5 Ws and an H.

Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



WHO?



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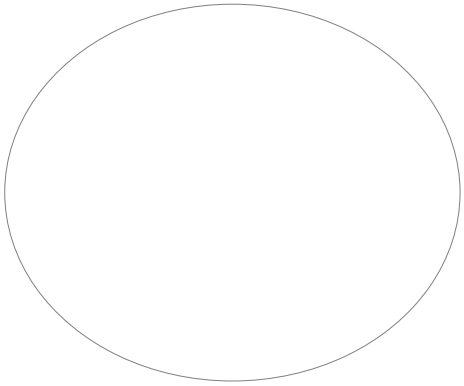

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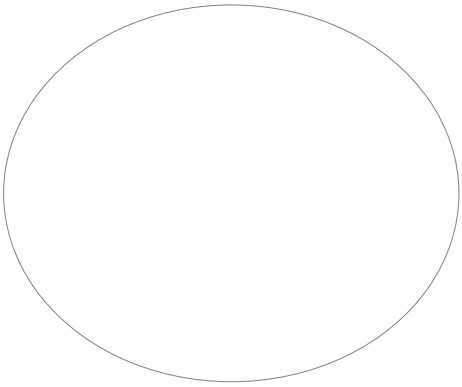
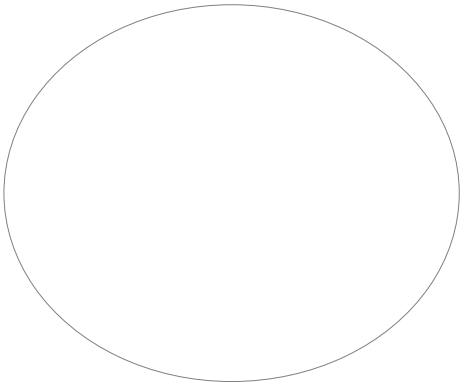
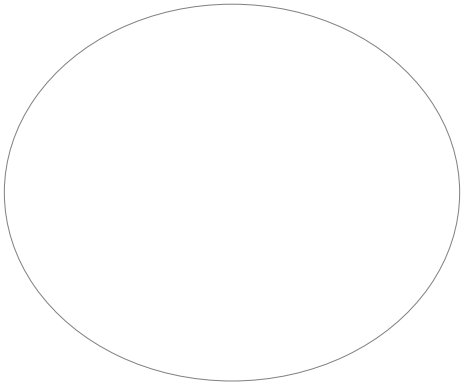


WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activities

Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene - or the entire novel.

Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first three chapters of ***James and the Giant Peach***. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6