

# The Witches



By

Roald Dahl

A Novel Study  
by Joel Michel Reed

# The Witches

*By Roald Dahl*



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**About the author:** Joel Reed has over 70 published novel studies and is the author of four novels. For information on his work and literature, please visit [www.reednovelstudies.com](http://www.reednovelstudies.com)

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on three chapters and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

### 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.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
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. Identify *anagrams*

### 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 *cliffhangers*
4. Identify the climax of the novel.

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Relating personal experiences

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write about personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Sheet
8. Create *Found Poetry*

### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

# The Witches

By *Roald Dahl*

## Synopsis

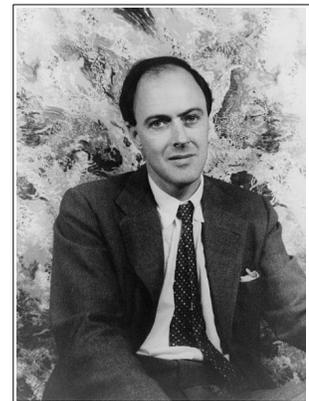
Witches really are a detestable breed. They disguise themselves as lovely ladies, when secretly they want to squish and squelch all the wretched children they despise. Luckily one boy and his grandmother know how to recognize these vile creatures – but can they get rid of them for good? (The Publisher – Puffin Books)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found on the following website:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Witches\\_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Witches_(book))

## 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*, *The BFG*, *James and the Giant Peach* and *George's Marvelous Medicine*. 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 more 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 widely celebrated as **Roald Dahl Day**.



# The Witches



*By Roald Dahl*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Chapters 1-3

*A Note About Witches – My Grandmother – How To Recognize a Witch*



## Before you read the chapter:

Write a brief summary about what you believe the plot-line of *The Witches* will be about.




## Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

gospel	pictures	pistol	canon	woman
pipe	cigar	ducks	joked	frightening

1. A witch, you must understand, does not knock children on the head or stick knives into them or shoot at them with a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. These magic powers are very \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A witch is always a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Kindly examine the \_\_\_\_\_ below. Which lady is a witch?
5. They were all true. They were the \_\_\_\_\_ truth. They were history.
6. My grandmother was the only grandmother I ever met who smoked a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. "There she is! That's Solveg feeding the \_\_\_\_\_!" He was pointing at the oil-painting, and sure enough Solveg was in it.
8. He laughed and \_\_\_\_\_ with them all the time he was giving them rides.

# Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story as Chapter One begins.


2. Why did the grandmother say it was difficult to tell who's a witch?


3. What happened to the boy's parents when he was only seven years old?

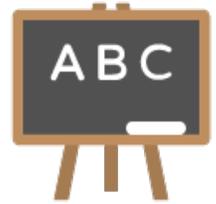

4. Name at least four methods the grandmother used in order to recognize a witch.


5. The grandmother told five different stories in the second chapter about witches who have taken children. Give a brief summary of at least three of the stories mentioned.


## Language Activities



**A.** The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example of an alliteration: "... **g**rouching, **g**rouching, **g**rumbling, **g**ripping about something or other."



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** using three out of the five following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

A plane taking off	
The sound of a car engine	
Waves crashing in the ocean.	

**B. PERSONIFICATION** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here is an example of personification: "*I could see the tremendous battle raging on high above our heads. The eagle began circling the small red object, over and over, almost seeming to taunt it's prey. He let out one final scream, which echoed swiftly around the canyon walls, then grasped the object firmly in it's razor sharp claws. All of a sudden, the nearly deafening sound of the balloon bursting in mid air sent the eagle into immediate cardiac arrest, and he plummeted down into the hard rocks below.*"

Why do you think personification is a popular literary device used by many authors?


Create your own example of personification.


**C. Exaggeration** is a literary device which often adds excitement to a passage. Here's an example of exaggeration: *"I've told you a million times not to exaggerate!"*

Why do you think exaggeration is such a popular literary device?

--

Think of an exaggerated way of describing these things:

The sound of laughter.	
A summer windstorm.	
Your choice.	

### D. Choose Wisely



If you had to go on a vacation with your family for an extended period of time, which three items would you choose to bring along, and why?

1	
2	
3	

## Extension Activity



### Storyboard

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



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first 3 chapters of *The Witches*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6