



## James and the Giant Peach Teacher's Guide

Spartanburg Youth! Theatre  
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## ***James and the Giant Peach*** **Teacher's Guide**

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

#### **Roald Dahl**

Roald Dahl was born in Llandaff, Cardiff, Wales in 1916, to Norwegian parents, Harald Dahl and Sofie Magdalene Dahl (*née* Hesselberg). Dahl's father had moved from Sarpsborg in Norway and settled in Cardiff in the 1880s, and his mother came over to marry his father in about 1910. Roald was named after the polar explorer Roald Amundsen, a national hero in Norway at the time. He spoke Norwegian at home with his parents.

When he was sixteen, Dahl joined an expedition which explored Newfoundland. Several years later he went to East Africa in Tanzania to work for the Shell Oil Company. While flying as a fighter pilot for the Royal Air Force during World War II, he was seriously wounded. When he was sent home from the hospital, he became an assistant air attaché to the British Embassy in Washington, D.C.

The first story he wrote, about his war experiences, was published in *The Saturday Evening Post* and earned him \$1,000. As time went on, he developed his own unique style of writing which was both humorous and fantastical.

Dahl began to write children's stories to entertain his own children, and once published, his children's books became popular with readers of all ages. His two best known stories are *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Roald Dahl died November 23, 1990.

## **About *James and the Giant Peach***

James Henry Trotter led a happy, normal life with his parents in a beautiful house beside the sea. One day, his parents were eaten by a rhinoceros which had escaped from the London Zoo. James' life was changed forever.

James was sent to live with his two aunts, Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker. Sponge and Spiker were very mean, selfish, and quite lazy (as far as aunts go). James led a very unhappy life for three years because his aunts beat him and made him do all the work. The three of them lived together in a house on the top of a high hill in the south of England. One day, a tiny little man gave James a small bag of green crystals. He told James that the crystals were magic and explained to James how to use them.

Before James had a chance to try out their magic, he tripped and fell. The bag burst open and the crystals were scattered everywhere. James was sure that he had lost the magic forever. But the magic was working on an old peach tree. A huge, gigantic peach grew to the size of a small house. When James crawled inside he met and made friends with seven extraordinary (not to mention gigantic) insects: a grasshopper, two ladybugs, a spider, a centipede, an earthworm, a glow-worm, and a silkworm. The group embarks on an adventurous journey, travelling to all parts of the world and meeting strange and unusual creatures.

## **Before the Play**

1. Discuss with students that the play is an adaptation. Tell them the common qualities of an adaptation, then ask them to name other examples they may know.
2. Much of the play takes place in a giant peach. Ask your students if they could live in any fruit, which fruit would they choose? Have them write an essay explaining their choice demonstrating why their particular fruit would make the best home.
3. James Henry Trotter is trying to escape from his mean relatives, Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker. Students can create a chart detailing ways some people are mean to others and how they can be better. They can compare and contrast mean behavior with good behavior.
4. James is given some magic beans by a mysterious old man. He is given specific instructions on how to use the magic beans and what to do with them. Have your students create a recipe for magic beans. Tell them to write down specific steps in an effort to use the beans effectively. If you so choose, you can require that each step build on the preceding step.
5. In the peach, James befriends a myriad of insects, including a grasshopper, glowworm, earthworm, centipede, and ladybug. Familiarize your students with each insect. The actors in the production will be in costumes created to resemble the insects. Make sure your students know what to look for.

## **After the Play**

1. Students can discuss their favorite parts of the play. Have them write an essay about what they enjoyed the most. You are welcome to share the best essays with us at SYT and we'll even be willing to supply prizes to the best writers.
2. Ask your students to tell us which insect they liked the most. Then have them create a story where they go on an adventure with their new insect friend.
3. Students can discuss in class the ways in which James' aunts were mean and rude to him, and can talk about ways they could have been better adult guardians.
4. The interior of the peach in our production is a massive set piece. After your students have seen the play, have them draw a picture of the inside of a fruit, as they would like to live in it. Make sure they include all the necessary living arrangements, including a kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, etc.

## Emergency Procedures

The Spartanburg Youth Theatre and the Chapman Cultural Center request all teachers to advise the students and adults of the theater layout, pictured below.

Please be sure that an adult is sitting on the aisle in order to direct your group to the appropriate exit.

Your class should understand the importance of:

1. being quiet so directions can be heard
2. **walking** quickly, and
3. staying with their group.

Refer any questions about emergency evacuation to the staff on arrival at the theater.

