Behind the Scenes --
James and the Giant Peach
A Resource Guide for Teachers and Parents

About the Book's Author...

Roald Dahl (September 13, 1916 - November 23, 1990) was born in Llandaff, Cardiff, Wales in 1916 to Norwegian parents. He grew up attending several boarding schools in England and there, was inspired to write one of today’s favorite children’s books, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Dahl was a novelist, short story writer and screenwriter who started writing books for children and adults in the 1940’s. His first work, A Piece of Cake, was published in 1942 in the Saturday Evening Post. Dahl became interested in writing children’s books when he started telling bedtime stories to his daughters. Some of his best known works for children today include The Twits, Matilda, The Witches, James and the Giant Peach and The BFG. Roald Dahl loved writing for children – he once said that “if you want to remember what it’s like to live in a child’s world, you’ve got to get down on your hands and knees and live like that for a week. You’ll find that you have to look up at all these giants around you who are always telling you what to do and what not to do.” His books are cherished by children around the world who love his sense of mischief and his wonderful, fanciful plots.

About the Playwright:

David Wood began writing as a student at Oxford University in the sixties. He wrote his first play for children in 1967 and has since written about fifty more. They are performed all over the world and include The Gingerbread Man, The Owl and the Pussycat Went to See, (co-written with Sheila Ruskin), The Selfish Shellfish The See-Saw Tree, Save the Human (from the story he wrote with cartoonist Tony Husband), The Ideal Gnome Expedition and The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner. His stage adaptations of well-known books include Dick King-Smith’s Babe, The Sheep-Pig, Roald Dahl’s The BFG, The Witches, The Twits, Fantastic Mr. Fox, James and the Giant Peach and Danny The Champion of the World, HRH The Prince of Wales’ The Old Man of Lochnagar, Michael Foreman’s Dinosaurs And All That Rubbish, Helen Nicoll and Jan Pienkowski’s Meg and Mog Show, and Eric Hill’s Spot’s Birthday Party. The award-winning Unicorn Theatre production of his adaptation of Philippa Pearce’s Tom’s Midnight Garden transferred to New York for a season in October 2001. He was dubbed ‘the national children’s dramatist’ by Irving Wardle in The Times and has published, to rave reviews, Theatre for Children: Guide to Writing, Adapting, Directing and Acting (Faber), co-written with Janet Grant. He has directed many of his plays for his own company, Whirligig Theatre (founded with John Gould in 1979), which toured to major theatres nationwide including Sadler’s Wells in London. He has written for film and television as well as children’s books. In the Queen’s Birthday Honours, 2004, David was awarded the O.B.E for his services to literature and drama, and in 2006 he wrote The Queen’s Handbag, a play to celebrate British children’s literature, performed at the Children’s Party at the Palace to mark the Queen’s 80th birthday and seen live on BBC Television by 8,000,000 viewers.

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**ACT I – Introducing the Play**

**SHOWTIMES...**

**OCTOBER 17 – NOVEMBER 1, 2008**

Saturdays – 1:00PM & 4:00PM  
Sunday, Oct. 26 – 1:00 PM  

**Main Characters in the Play....**

**JAMES:** Our young hero; from a downtrodden, lonely child, he develops into a brave “captain” of the insect band. He also serves as our narrator.

**OLD-GREEN GRASSHOPPER:** Elderly, genial, courteous, avuncular, musical (he plays the violin).

**MISS SPIDER:** Occasionally sharp, even a little sinister, but ultimately kind. Her marathon thread-spinning to help save the peach is truly heroic.

**CENTIPEDE:** A sparky, cocky, warm-hearted regular guy with 42 legs!

**LADYBIRD (LADYBUG):** Posh, though not prissy. Pretty, though not vain. Volatile though level headed.

**EARTHWORM:** Not only blind, but a pessimist, a doom merchant whose standing in the group and whose self-esteem improves no end, thanks to James.

**AUNT SPONGE AND AUNT SPIKER –** James’s cruel and mean aunts.

**Some Vocabulary Words:**

Some words in England are different than the words we use here in the United States! The following are a few you might come across in the play:

- **Fortnight** – a period of time which we would call two weeks.
- **Pound** – The money they use in England, instead of a dollar.
- **Coach** – a bus
- **Spuds** - potatoes

Can you think of more???

**The Story:**

After James’ parents are killed by a rhinoceros, he is forced to live with his cruel aunts, who make his life miserable. One day, James is given a bag of magic, which he accidentally drops near an old peach tree. Before long, James meets his new insect friends, and together they embark upon an amazing journey across the ocean to New York City inside of a giant peach!

**Theatre Golden Rules**

Before coming to the Lewis Family Playhouse, you may want to prepare your students for the experience by going over the basic rules of theater etiquette.

- Please remain quiet (silent) and seated during the performance. Remember, the actors on stage can hear you. Of course, laughter and applause at appropriate times are always greatly appreciated!

- Photography or any type of recording is not allowed inside the theatre at any time. This is not only against our union agreements, but it can be dangerous to the performers.

- Please leave all food, candy and drinks (including water) outside of the theater. Eating during a performance is very distracting and could be very messy.

- Because the theater will be dark during the performance, if you need to use the restroom, leave the theater or come in late, please alert an usher who can help you find your way during a break in the action on stage.

- PLEASE turn off all pagers, cell phones and other electronic devices as they may interfere with theater equipment and everyone’s enjoyment of the performance.

- After the show, please stay in your seats until an usher guides you out. Your bus may not be in the same place it dropped you off!
ACT II – BRINGING THE PLAY INTO THE CLASSROOM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When James’ parents die, he is sent to live with his very mean aunts. They don’t allow him to have any friends, or to play with toys. Discuss how different life might have been for James if his aunts had been nice instead of mean.

2. James and the Insects become good friends during their journey to New York, even though they are all very different from each other. Discuss some of the qualities it takes to be a good friend. Perhaps students can talk about their friends and what makes them special.

3. James and his friends encounter lots of scary things during their journey, but they learn to overcome their fear and to work together. Discuss what James and his friends were afraid of. What are the students afraid of? What are some good ways to overcome fear?

4. James is a shy boy at first but becomes the leader of the insect gang during their journey. What makes him change? Ask the students to describe a time where they learned how to overcome shyness or to become a leader.

AFTER THE SHOW ACTIVITIES

1. The Insects in our story grow unusually large! Have students pick their favorite insect in the story, and make a list of their insect’s characteristics. Do some research: how large is the insect supposed to be? What kind of environment does it need to live? How does the insect adapt to different environments or circumstances? Draw a picture of the insect. (Science: Life Sciences)

2. When James and his friends are hungry, James realizes that they can eat the peach! Make a simple peach pie. (You can use pre-made crust or make your own – recipe can be found on page 5). Have students measure the ingredients, and discuss the various measuring units. Don’t forget to time how long it needs to bake! (Mathematics: Measurement and Geometry)

3. The book and the play incorporate various funny rhymes to help tell the story. Have students write their own simple poems or paragraphs describing a scene from the play. (English/Language Arts: Writing Strategies)

4. Can a peach really float? Have students investigate this for themselves. With a peach and a bowl or bucket of water, have students observe and record (in words or pictures) what they learn. Does it make a difference if the peach is large or small? What happens if a different liquid is used? (Science: Investigation and Experimentation)

5. The Giant Peach flies over the ocean from England all the way to New York City! Have students look at a map of New York City and identify various locations mentioned in the story: Central Park, The Empire State Building, 5th Avenue. Students can make their own maps of their community, identifying familiar locations, such as their school, local landmarks, etc. (History- Social Sciences: 2.2 Map Skills)
**ACT III – EXTENDING THE LEARNING**

**HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME STAR READERS**

Parents are the biggest influence in a child’s life. Here are some tips from the United States Department of Education, to guide parents as they assist their children to be better readers.

- Pick a special place for your child’s books so that she knows where to look for them. A cardboard box that you can decorate together might make a good bookcase. Or you might clear one of the family bookshelves and make a special place for her to put her books.
- Help your child to arrange her books in some order—her favorite books, books about animals, holiday books. Use whatever method will help her most easily find the book she's looking for.
- Borrow books from the library. Go to the children's section and spend time with your child reading and selecting books to take home and put in her special place. You might even have a box or space just for library books, so that they don't get mixed up with your child's own books.
- Encourage family members and friends to give books to your child as presents for birthdays and other occasions.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Rancho Cucamonga Library is home to three amazing libraries?

- Our newly remodeled Archibald Library is home to an outstanding array of materials for children, adults and teens including computer software and an updated selection of contemporary favorites.
- The Paul A. Biane Library at Victoria Gardens is currently in its third year of operations offering unique programming and collections. Part of the Victoria Garden’s Cultural Center, the Biane Library is home to a unique performing arts collection for both children and adults.
- The Virtual Library offers 24/7 access to a wealth of newspaper and magazine articles, downloadable ebooks and the library’s catalog.

**TAKE A BITE OF THESE WEBSITES**

Celebrate Roald Dahl in gloriumptious style with the great crafts and activities honoring the beloved children’s author.

http://www.puffin.co.uk/static/cs/uk/15/minisites/dahlday/index.php

Travel all the way to Buckinghamshire, UK and take a virtual tour of one of the most amazing museums you’ve ever seen.

http://www.roalddahlmuseum.org/

No online journey would be complete without a visit to the Official Roald Dahl site, home to the Dahl-y Blog, sound clips of interviews with the author and a great section filled with lessons and activities specifically for teachers.

http://www.roalddahl.com/
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**Peach Pie Recipe!**

**Ingredients**
- pastry for a double-crust 9-inch pie
- 5 cups fresh peaches, sliced
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3-1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4-1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons sugar

**Directions**
1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Stir together flour, 1 cup sugar, and cinnamon and set aside.
3. Wash, peel, and slice fresh peaches.
4. Mix together peaches with the combined dry ingredients.
5. Turn into pastry-lined pie pan and dot with butter.
6. Cover with top crust, cut slits in it, and seal the edges.
7. Sprinkle top with 2 tablespoons of sugar.
8. Cover the edges with foil to prevent over browning; remove foil for the last 15 minutes of baking.
9. Bake 35 to 45 minutes or until crust is brown and juice begins to bubble through the slits in the crust.

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**About The Theatre...**

**Theatre Related Activities:**

♣ Have students write a “review” of the show, using theatre vocabulary to describe the set, lighting, costumes and performances. How do the sets and lighting make us believe that the peach is flying? How do the costumes help to define all of the insects? And don’t forget to send us your reviews! We’d love to read them. (Artistic Perception/Aesthetic Valuing)

♣ Each of the insects in the play and in the original book has very distinctive human characteristics. Have students pick their favorite character to act out. Have them act out the characters using only their bodies, without words. See if the rest of the students can guess who they’re attempting to portray! How does their character change if they add language? (Creative Expression)

♣ Theatre Designers always draw pictures of what they want the set or costumes to look like before they’re realized on the stage. Have students draw their version of a scene from the play. How is their version different from what our designers created? (Creative Expression/Aesthetic Valuing)

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**Some Theatre Vocabulary:**

**The Fourth Wall:** A term to describe the invisible wall between the audience and the actors on-stage. This is because in proscenium theaters, like the Lewis Family Playhouse, the set is usually three walls of a room. The audience is therefore “The Fourth Wall,” and ignored by the actors. In James and the Giant Peach, James and the insects talk to the audience directly, therefore “Breaking the Fourth Wall.”

**Exposition:** Detailed explanation revealing the facts of the plot. The early scenes in the play which describe how James came to live with his aunts are Exposition.

**Crisis:** A decisive point in the plot of a play on which the outcome of the remaining action depends. Can you give examples of when a crisis occurs in James and the Giant Peach?

**Motivation:** A character’s reason for doing or saying things in a play. What is the old man’s motivation for giving James the magic? What is the Aunts’ motivation for keeping James away from other children?
HELPFUL HINTS FROM THE LIBRARY!

Making the Classroom Come Alive!
Performing Arts are important in every child’s life. Researchers say that using art in the classroom has a positive impact on a child’s cognitive, social and emotional development.

Teachers are working hard on ways to incorporate arts in the classroom. Kathy Schrock’s Guide for Educators is a categorized list of sites useful for enhancing curriculum and professional growth. It is updated often to include the best sites for teaching and learning.

With the California Standards at the forefront of teaching, many educators may find it difficult to integrate performing arts into their classroom. PBS has a standards based resource list that makes integrating the arts in the classroom easy!

Incorporating Performing Arts in the classroom inspires new ways of teaching and learning. Differentiating the learning environment enhances the learners’ experience while tapping into their individual talents.

BOOKS @ THE LIBRARY
If you have any questions about any library resources, call the reference desk at 909.477.2720.

The following books (and more!) can be found in the Paul A. Biane Library at Victoria Gardens under the call number:

J FICTION DAHL
The BFG
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
Danny, Champion of the World
The Enormous Crocodile
Esio Trot
Fantastic Mr. Fox
George’s Marvellous Medicine
The Giraffe, the Pelly and Me
Matilda
James and the Giant Peach
The Minpins
The Twits

These books about Roald Dahl can be found under the call numbers:

J 921 DAHL
Boy
My Year

J 823 D
D is for Dahl

LIBRARY TOUR INFORMATION
As part of your class visit to the Lewis Family Playhouse, why not take a tour of the Victoria Gardens Cultural Center Library? The second of two physical branches of the library (RCPL also offers an extensive virtual library), the facility has over 100,000 volumes housed in a beautiful, 23,000 square foot facility. Among the facility’s unique features are its 20 seat technology center, teen study area and a special performing arts collection.

Pre- and post- show tours last approximately 15 minutes and are scheduled on a first come, first served basis. To arrange a tour, call Lorena Espinoza, (909)477-2720 ext. 5059.

This Curriculum guide was prepared by the staff of the Lewis Family Playhouse. Library information compiled by Library staff. For questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Mireya “Murry” Hepner at (909) 477-2775 x3734.