



BY ROALD DAHL ADAPTED BY DAVID WOOD

STUDY GUIDE

A MESSAGE TO EDUCATORS



Dear Teacher,

We have created the following study guide to help make your students' theater experience with *James and the Giant Peach* as meaningful as possible.

For many, it will be their first time viewing a live theatrical production.

We have learned that when teachers discuss the play with their students before and after the production, the experience is more meaningful and long-lasting.

Our study guide provides pre and post performance discussion topics, as well as related activity sheets.

These are just suggestions... please feel free to create your own activities and areas for discussion.

We hope you and your class enjoy the show!

Carrie Alexander Spina
Director of Outreach

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROALD DAHL



Roald Dahl (1916 – 1990) was born in Wales to Norwegian parents. In 1939, at the age of 23, he joined the British Royal Air Force and flew fighter biplanes in Africa, and later, Greece. In 1942 he was transferred to the United States, and his first essay was published in *The New Yorker*. For the first fifteen years of his writing career, he concentrated mostly on short stories for adults (with the exception of *The Gremlins*, a 1943 picture book adaptation of Dahl's script written for Walt Disney). It was not until he was a father that he attained his first notable success as an author of children's literature with *James and the Giant Peach*, published in the United States in 1961, and in England in 1969. Other works include *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (1970), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1986), and *Matilda* (1988). Upon his death in 1990 of a rare blood disorder, *The Independent* wrote that "Roald Dahl is, without question, the most successful children's book author in the world."

OTHER BOOKS BY ROALD DAHL:

For older students (grades 3-6):

The BFG
Boy: Tales of Childhood
Charlie & the Chocolate Factory
Charlie & the Great Glass Elevator
Danny the Champion of the World
George's Marvelous Medicine
Going Solo
Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes
Matilda
The Twits
The Witches
The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar
and Six More

For younger students (grades 1-4):

Dirty Beasts
The Enormous Crocodile
Esio Trot
Fantastic Mr. Fox
The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me
The Magic Finger
The Minpins
The Vicar of Nibbleswicke



EXPLORING FILM

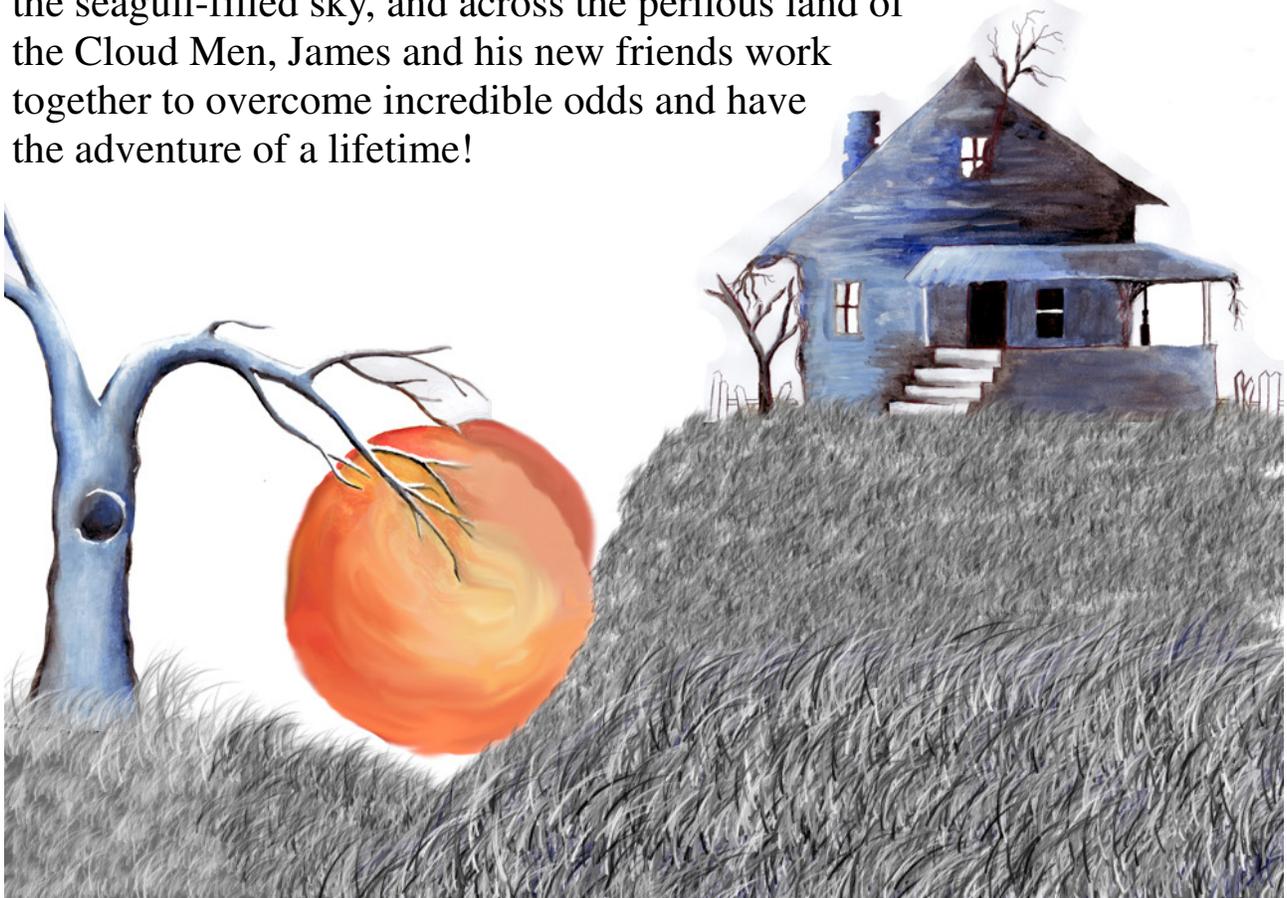
You may wish to share several other films with your class that explore the insect world and the relationship between humans and insects, including:

The Ant Bully
Antz
Bee Movie
A Bug's Life
Honey, We Shrunk the Kids
James & the Giant Peach

JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH

THE STORY

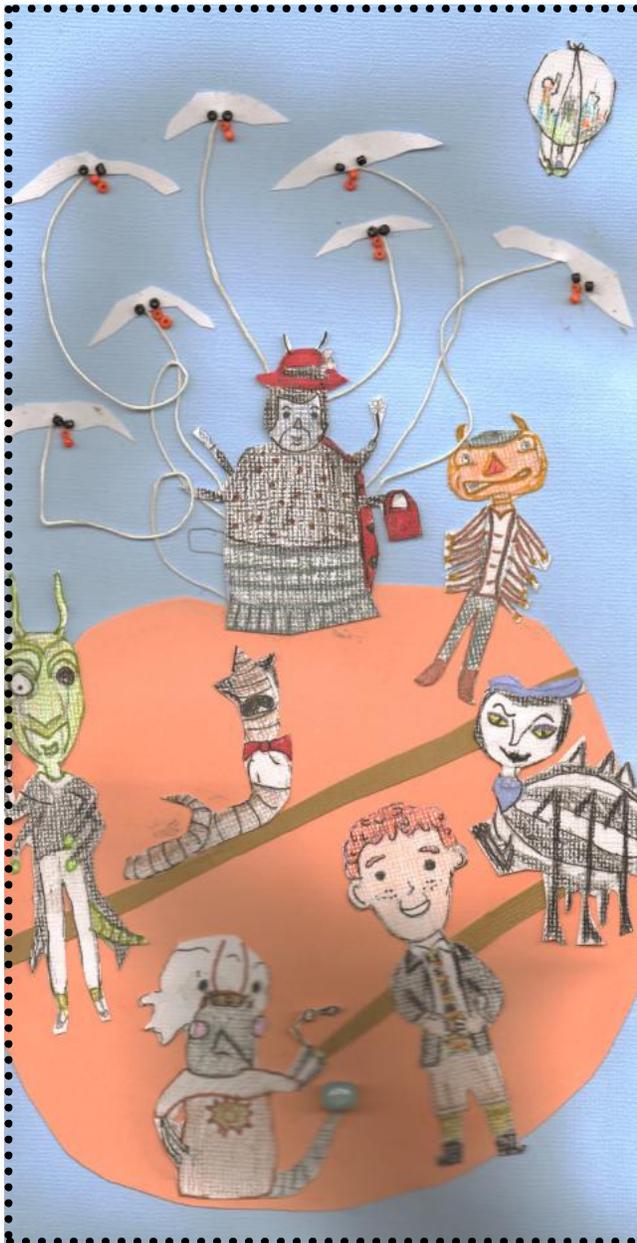
James, an orphan, lives with his cruel aunts at the top of a steep hill in a rickety house with a barren peach tree in the garden. One day a mysterious man gives James a bag of crocodile tongues – if used properly, amazing, wonderful things will happen to James and he will never be sad or lonely again. James accidentally drops the bag at the roots of the old tree, and the tongues magically burrow into the ground. Soon, a peach starts to grow at the top of the tree, and continues to grow and grow until it becomes larger than the house. One night James crawls inside the peach and reaches the pit, where he meets a gargantuan Old-Green-Grasshopper, a tremendous Ladybird, an enormous Spider, and other huge insects. When the colossal Centipede chews through the stem of the peach, it detaches from the tree, and tumbles down the hill, across the countryside, and into the ocean – and the journey begins! Through shark-infested waters, into the seagull-filled sky, and across the perilous land of the Cloud Men, James and his new friends work together to overcome incredible odds and have the adventure of a lifetime!



MAIN CHARACTERS

JAMES HENRY TROTTER

is the hero of our story. He is described as the saddest, loneliest boy in the world, but ends up surrounded by friends and play-mates. James is resourceful, clever, loyal, and kind.



OLD GREEN GRASSHOPPER

is the oldest of the group. He is a musician, rubbing his back legs together to create the most beautiful music.

CENTIPEDE

is boastful, proud, crass, and rude, but like the other creatures, cares deeply for James. He is proud of his classification as a pest.

EARTHWORM

on the other hand is proud of his usefulness to farmers and gardeners. He is helpful, but given to anxiety and hopelessness.

LADYBIRD

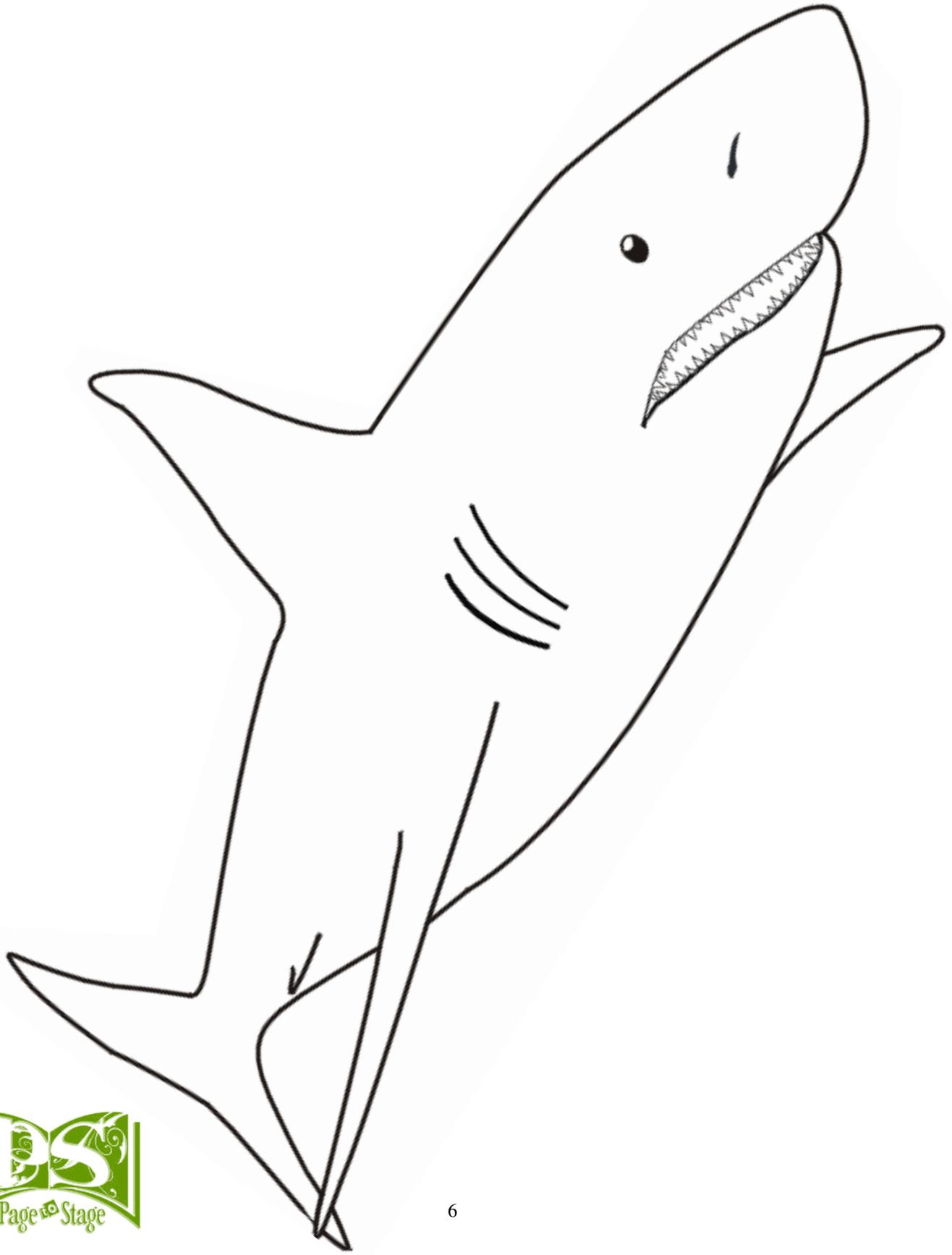
is referred to by James as “my greatest comfort since this trip began”. She is mother to four hundred children and mothers James on their journey.

MISS SPIDER

seems threatening, but is quick to point out that her kind are much more helpful than harmful. Her ability to spin her thread is frequently called into play on the journey.

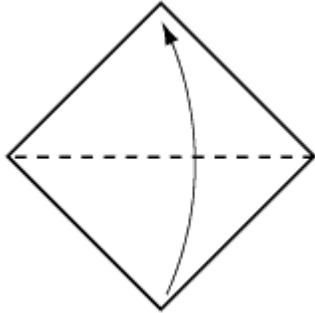
CREATE A SHARK PUPPET

Make a SHARK puppet by coloring, cutting, and pasting on a stick.

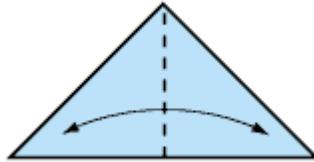


SEAGULL ORIGAMI ACTIVITY

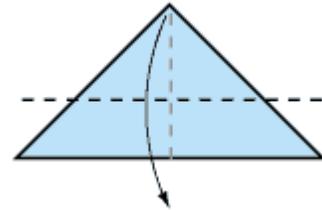
Make a SEAGULL to help save James and his friends from the sharks.



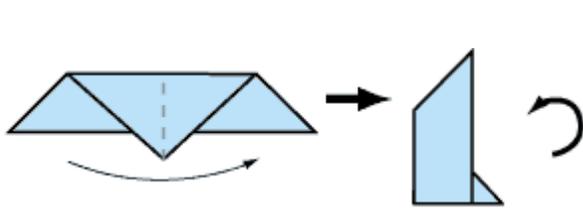
1. Start with your paper white side up. Fold in half, as shown.



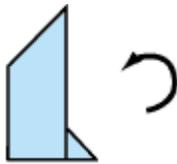
2. Fold in half again, crease and open.



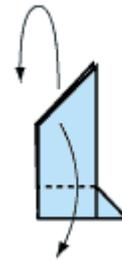
3. Now fold top of model down past the baseline of the model.



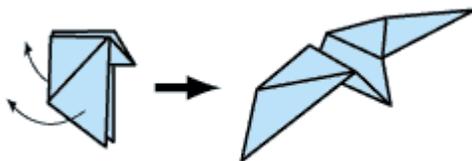
4. Fold whole model in half



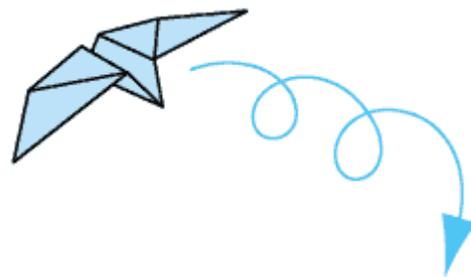
5. Rotate model so it is now standing up.



6. Fold down the top flap along the line shown. Then repeat the same thing on the flap behind.



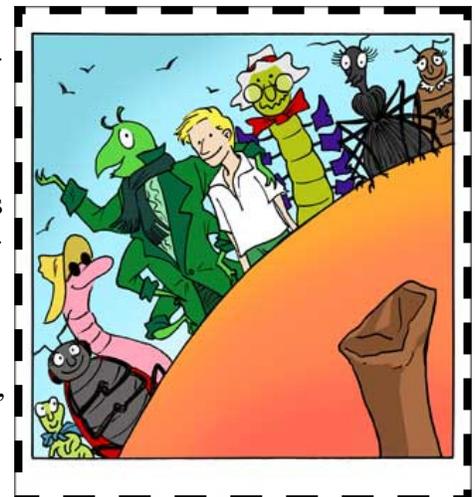
7. Now fold the wings back upwards so they sit horizontally, as shown



8. Your seagull is complete! Attach to a string and a popsicle stick so you can help save the day!

LANGUAGE ARTS CONNECTION

1. **Postcards from a Peach.** Have your students pretend that they are riding on top of the peach with James and his friends. Tell them to write a letter to their family or best friends about their experiences. They should describe how they felt when they met the creatures, the sensation of bobbing in the sea or flying through the sky. You may wish to have them create a postcard, with an illustration of their favorite scene from the play on the back. On the front they should be sure to use proper letter-writing skills (salutation, address format, etc.)
2. **Bugs in a Peach Tree.** Later in this study guide you'll find a crossword puzzle featuring the various bugs that rode inside the peach, as well as several other creepy-crawlies. Distribute this to your students. If you wish, you can assign each student, or group of students, a different creature to do research on – students should report on the duties of these bugs, as well as their physical characteristics as well as other interesting facts about them.
3. **The Five Senses.** When James crawls inside the peach, he uses his five senses to describe the experience: the silence of the night outside, the pink-orange massiveness of the peach itself, the soft mouse-like fuzz on the outside and the stickiness of the inside, the sweet smell of the juice, and the luscious taste of it. Review the five senses: sound, sight, touch, smell and taste. Have your students divide a piece of paper into five sections, one for each sense. Assign them an object to describe according to each of the five senses, using adjectives. Food would probably work best – for sound they can describe the sensation of unwrapping it, or the sound that happens when they bite into it. Students should be as descriptive as they can – how would they describe a chocolate candy to someone who's never experienced it?
4. **After the Show Activities.**
 - Choose a character that you liked and write a one-day's diary for that character.
 - Write a letter to a cast member telling what you liked about his character.
 - Discuss the play. Was there a hero or heroine? A villain? Was there any historical accuracy to the story? The setting? Was there a moral to the story?
 - In 25 words or fewer, describe the plot of the play.
 - Discuss the work of a movie/theater critic. Write a newspaper-type review of the play.
 - Discuss live theater. Are the actors aware of the audience? Why might an actor change his presentation because of audience reaction? Would it be easy to be an actor? Conduct an interview with a classmate pretending to be one of the actors and find out the actor's feelings about being on stage, memorization, rehearsals, costumes, audience, etc.
 - Make a list of all the personnel needed for a play. (director, actors, musicians, author, designers-set, costumes, lights & sound, stagehands, choreographer, producer, etc.)



WRITING CONNECTION

1. The cast of characters inside the peach pit included both predators and prey.

- Why were those particular animals selected to be the creatures to go with James?
- What prevented the spider from wrapping up the tasty little morsels, or the Ladybird from snacking on the appetizing insects?
- Were they just adventurous, or were they surprised by their metamorphosis? Do you think they had something else in common (other than eating the little green *things*)?
- Explain your answers.

2. Can you imagine lacing up and unlacing 21 pairs of boots each day of your life?

- If they were your boots, would they all be the same in color, size, and shape? Picture each pair in your mind.
- Describe each pair of them, and then determine how many different ways the Centipede could wear them, creating a new look each and every day.

3. Flash forward 10 years. James has returned to Merry Ole England, where he has inherited the old house of his Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker. He has planned a reunion for his friends the Earthworm, the Centipede, the Spider, the Old Green Grasshopper, and the Ladybird.

- Describe what takes place during this three-day weekend.
- What do the friends talk about, remember, and look like?
- Give as many specific details as you possibly can when you write about this fabulous event.



PLAYING WITH WORDS

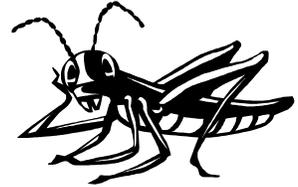
Below is a list of other books by Roald Dahl. Use the words to create new titles!

Real Dahl Titles:

Danny, The Champion Of The World
Charlie and The Chocolate Factory
James and The Giant Peach
The Magic Finger
Fantastic Mr Fox
The Enormous Crocodile
Revolting Rhymes

Examples of Some New Titles:

The Enormous Chocolate Finger
Fantastic Giant James
Charlie, The Revolting Peach



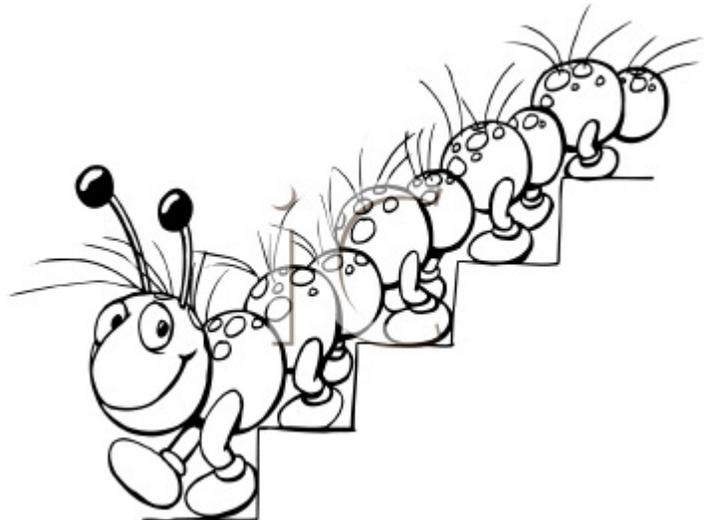
YOUR NEW TITLES:

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MATH CONNECTION

1. A Cent i-what??? (Introducing the Metric System)

The Centipede brags that he has one hundred legs (even though centipedes really only have 42). Your students may have heard of the prefix “centi” – as in “centimeter,” which is 1/100 of a meter. Your students’ rulers are likely marked with feet/inches, as well as centimeters/millimeters. Have them measure classroom objects in feet/inches. And then in centimeters/millimeters – they should note both sets of measurements. After a while, they may be able to estimate how many centimeters something is, based on its measurement in inches, and vice versa.



SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION

Geography

1. The Peach's Travels. James travels from England to New York City in the United States in this story. On a globe, locate England, and then find New York City. Trace James's path from Britain to the United States – what body of water did the peach cross over? With your students, plan other voyages for the peach – from England to Germany, Germany to India, India to China, China to Australia, etc. What countries, continents, and bodies of water are between the originating location and the final destination? Have your students describe the view from overhead – do they see deserts? Rain forests? Any physical landmarks like the Great Wall of China?



SCIENCE CONNECTION

1. Will It Float? (The Scientific Method--Scientific Inquiry)

James and his friends are surprised (and relieved) to discover that the peach floats in the Atlantic Ocean. You can introduce your class to the scientific method by testing whether other objects sink or float. The seven parts of the scientific method, as applied to a pencil, are as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Observation: | <i>Examine the pencil</i> |
| Question: | <i>Will the pencil float?</i> |
| Hypothesis (Educated guess): | <i>I think the pencil will sink.</i> |
| Experiment: | <i>Drop the pencil in a bucket of water.</i> |
| Analysis: | <i>Observe whether the pencil sank or floated.</i> |
| Conclusion: | <i>The pencil sank.</i> |

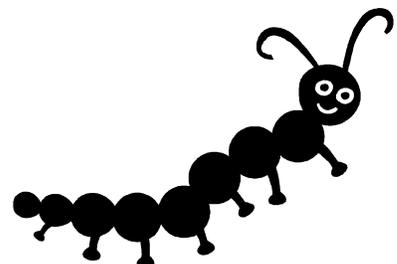
Your students can keep a chart of various classroom objects, writing down the object's name, the hypothesis, and the decision

2. How Does It Grow? (Life Science)

Plant a small garden of your own in your school's courtyard or by a window in your classroom. Whether you plant flowers, vines, or vegetables, research the growth process. How long will it take for sprouts to push up out of the soil? How big is your plant expected to be? What do you need to do to care for it? Take some additional time to research earthworms, centipedes, and grasshoppers. Where do they really live, if not inside a peach pit? What else can you learn about these insects?

3. What Do You Eat? (Life Science)

James and the Giant Peach takes a few liberties with animal habits. In particular, it is noted that his parents were eaten by a rhinoceros. In fact, rhinos are herbivores: they eat only plant life – they would not have eaten human beings. Also, the insects are afraid that the sharks would eat the peach while it was floating in the ocean – sharks are actually **carnivores**: they eat only meat, and would not have eaten a peach (in addition, the position of their mouth in relation to their snout would forbid them from biting the rounded peach). With your class, brainstorm a list of animals and discuss whether they are **herbivores** or **carnivores**. Are some animals **omnivores**: do they eat both plants and animals? You may wish to assign a different animal to each member of your class to do research on.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

James and the creatures get very hungry on their travels until they realize that they can eat the peach. They sing a song called 'Eating the Peach' which describes all the glorious food that might tempt them. The words to the song were taken from the poem that Dahl wrote in the book of James and the Giant Peach'.

I've eaten many' strange and scrumptious dishes in my time, Like jellied gnats and dandyprats and earwigs cooked in slime, And mice with rice - they're really nice when roasted in their prime. (But don't forget to sprinkle them with just a pinch of grime.) Now comes the burden of my speech: These foods are rare beyond compare - some are right out of reach; But there's no doubt I'd go without million plates of each for one small mite, One tiny bite, of this FANTASTIC PEACH!

However, eating just peach would get very boring after a few days. Can you make up some recipes using peach to make the fruit more exciting? Be as inventive as possible - peach curry for example. Write down all the ingredients and the amount used. Write down instructions on how to make the food.

Example:

PEACH RECIPES

Starter - Cream of Peach Soup

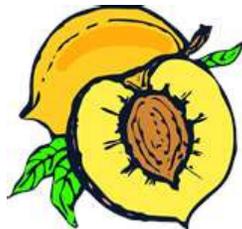
Main Course - Peach Curry

Dessert - Peach Pie and Custard

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.

CRAFT CONNECTION

Enjoy this giant peach craft before or after you see *James and the Giant Peach!*

You will need:

Tissue paper in orange, yellow and pink
White (PVA) glue
Paper plate
Scraps of brown and green paper

Instructions:

Paint the back of the paper plate with glue. Rip the tissue paper into small pieces and stick these all over. Paint over another thin layer of glue to stick down any loose edges.

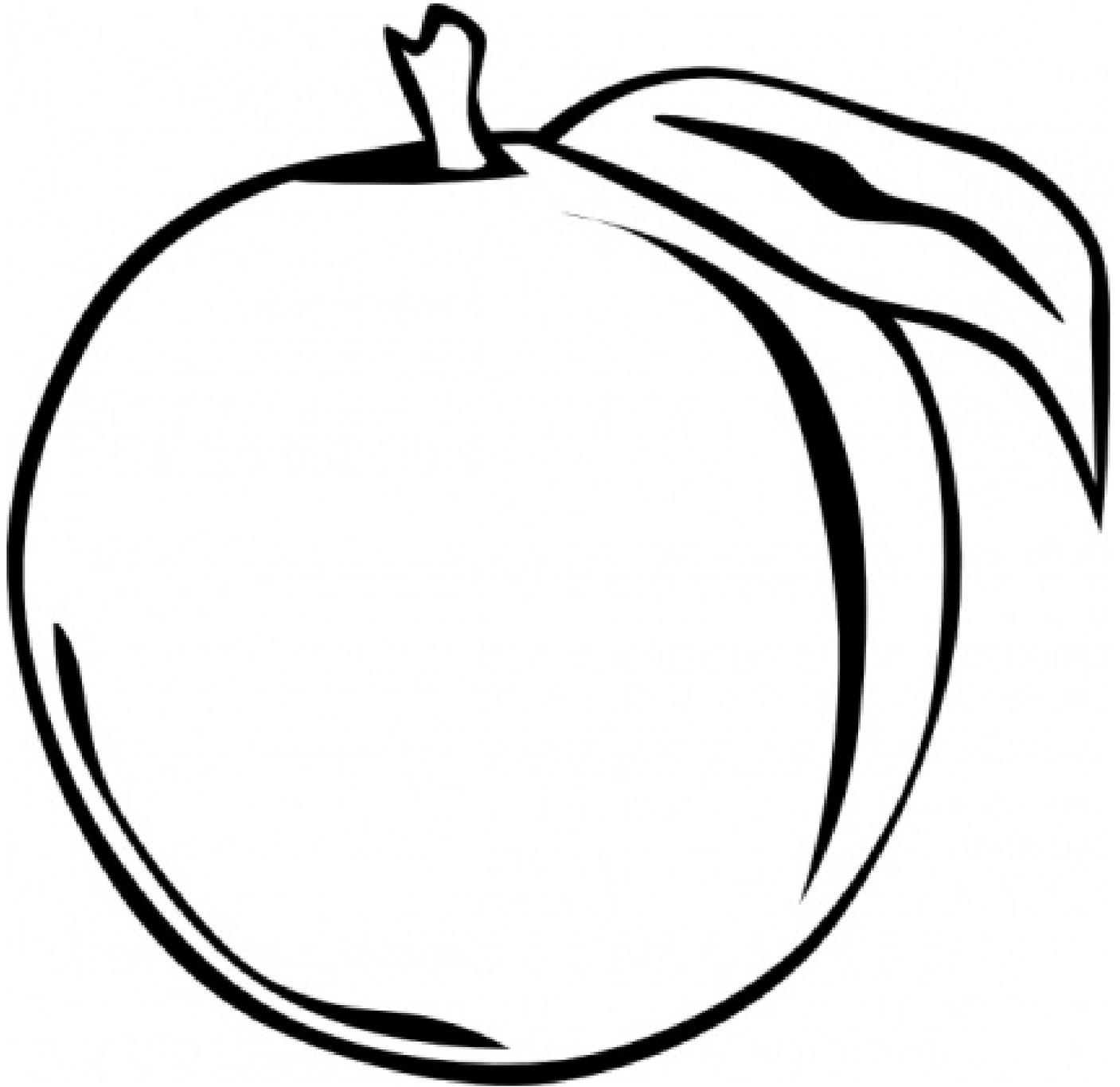
Cut out a small rectangle of brown paper and a green leaf and stick them to your peach. Leave to dry.

When the plate is dry trim any rough edges.



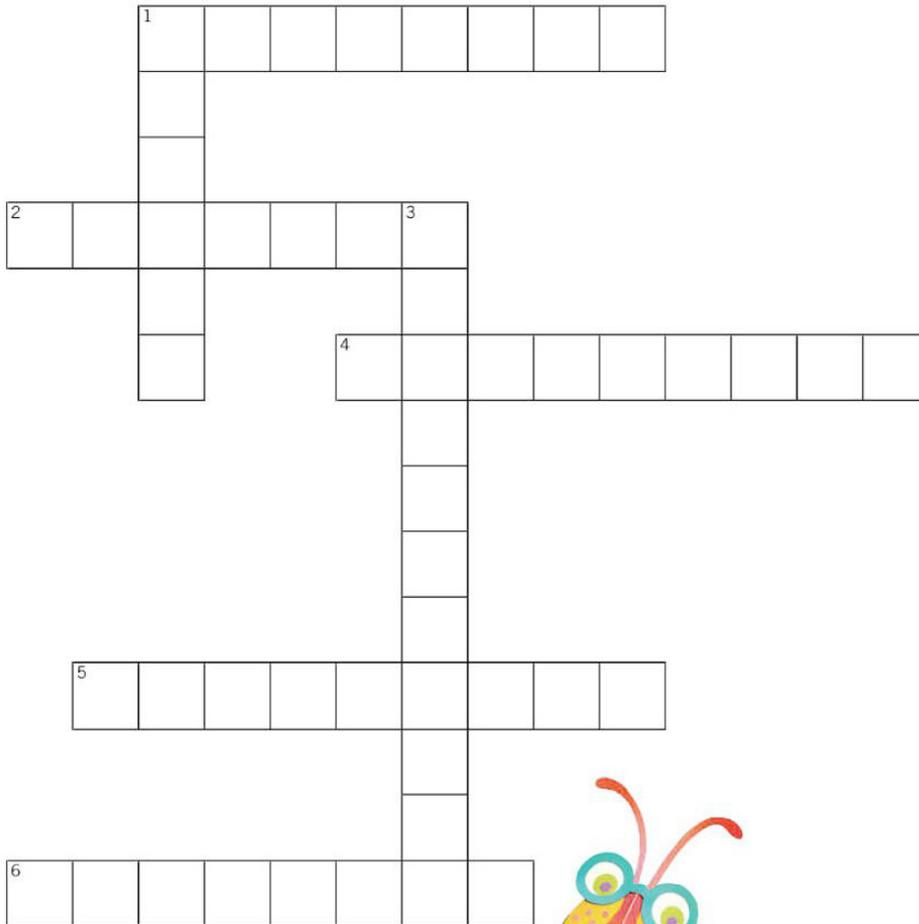
ART ACTIVITY

Draw and color James and his insect friends
inside the GIANT PEACH!



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

How well do you remember the insect characters in *James and the Giant Peach*? First, complete the riddles to the right. Using these clues, you can complete the crossword puzzle below.



ACROSS:

1. A tiny little worm is she,
Well-mannered and well-bred.
And if you ask her nicely,
She'll spin her silky thread.

She is a _____

2. A scarlet shell is on her back,
With several big black spots.
Is it true that you can tell her age
By counting all her dots?

She is a _____

4. A very wiggly fellow,
He's fat and pink and blind.
But which end is the front of him,
And which is his behind?

He is a _____

5. He says he has a hundred legs.
We know that isn't true.
If you catch him, you can count them:
He has only forty-two.

He is a _____

6. She has no wings to give her flight,
And yet she still gets by.
She is not a worm at all,
But a lady firefly.

She is a _____

DOWN:

1. You must never kill this creature
Or any of her ilk.

She catches lots of nasty pests
Within her web of silk.

She is a _____

3. An insect and a violinist,
He pulls out all the stops.
And when he isn't playing,
He hops and hops and hops.

He is a _____



Illustration by Leo Monahan

BEFORE THE SHOW

Prepare your students by using the following questions and activities to promote discussion.

1. How many of you have experienced a live theater performance? What did you see?

2. What are some of the differences between going to the theater and watching television or going to a movie?

- Theater features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times. The success of the play often depends on the audience.
- The theater is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear clothing and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they play.
- There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

3. Introduce your students to the following theatrical terms:

Box Office • Reserved Seats • Acts & Scenes • Producer • Program • Overture • Spotlights • Costumes • Props • Director • Stage • Curtain Call • Stagehand • Lobby • Usher • Musical Theater • Orchestra Pit • Proscenium arch • Playwright • Scenery • Makeup • Actor • Balcony • Play

4. Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.

- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything and so that you will not disturb the rest of the audience while trying to get comfortable in your seat. Lights go out before the curtain goes up and seating is very difficult.
- It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully.
- In this theater you are not allowed to eat or chew gum. Not only does it ruin the theater, but it also distracts from your concentration.
- Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun. In long performances, there will be an intermission. There is no intermission in a Page to Stage performance since they are less than one hour in length.
- Although you may wish to say something to the actors while they are on stage, you need to hold your thoughts. You may disturb their concentration. After the performance you will have an opportunity to ask questions while waiting for your dismissal.
- Sing or participate **if and only if** you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important. But be prepared--Page to Stage shows are VERY interactive!
- Listen to how the music sets the moods and affects your own feelings.
- Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song or dance or joke at the end of the show.



AFTER THE SHOW - 1

Use the following activities after the performance.

1. PANTOMIME

- Look up "pantomime" in the dictionary and explain what it means.
- Take turns pantomiming everyday activities while the group guesses what is happening. (i.e. reading a book, fishing, playing tennis, cooking, etc.)
- Pick an animal and pantomime its actions until it is guessed.

2. MUSIC

- Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? How could you tell? When was the music used? Why? Did it help develop the plot? What type of music was used, or were different types used?
- Can you describe how different kinds of music would make you have different kinds of feelings?
- When a play is a musical, an actor must have additional skills. Can you name some?
- A musical costs much more to produce. Can you name some additional expenses? (i.e. orchestra members and director, a practice piano, a score, a choreographer, etc.)

3. SETS

- Describe the sets used in the play you just saw.
- What props or details were used to suggest specific times or settings?
- How could lighting be changed to create a mood, season, time of day, etc.?
- What materials might have been used in building the sets?
- How were the sets and props moved on and off the stage?
- Describe a simple scene (a day in school, a trip to the mall, a ride in the car or on the bus), ask students to describe a basic set for the scene.

4. COSTUMES

- What would you need to know to create costumes for a play (research, sewing, theatrical effects, etc.)?
- Why is the right costume important to the character in the play?

5. ART ACTIVITIES

- Draw a picture of a favorite scene or character.
- Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from on-stage.
- Re-create a scene from the play using clay forms in a box.
- Design a program cover for the play using the title, date, and an illustration inspired by the play.
- Draw an advertisement or program cover for the play.

AFTER THE SHOW - 2

Promote classroom discussion by asking your students the following questions.

1. How had James' life changed by going to live with his Aunts? What was different from when he lived with his parents?
2. How would you feel about the strange old man who appears in the garden?
3. When James lost the crystals, he felt like crying. Why?
4. How were the travelers saved from the sharks?
5. Compare the real danger of the sharks with the imagined danger of the sharks.
6. How did each of the creatures contribute to the journey?
7. Who is your favorite character? Why?
8. Which character are you most like?
9. Which character would you most like to be?
10. What would the trip have been like without Centipede? Without Ladybird? Without Grasshopper?
11. James finds unexpected friends who are very different from him. Tell about a time when something like that happened to you?

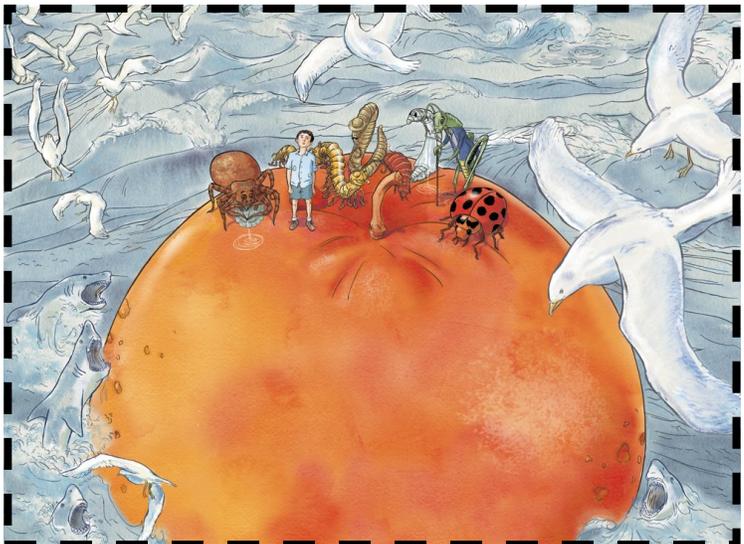


Illustration: Jed Alexander