The Witches

By

Roald Dahl

A Novel Study
by Joel Michel Reed
The Witches
By Roald Dahl

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The Witches
By Roald Dahl

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
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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)

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 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 delightful childhood. Although not a particularly good student, Dahl excelled at athletics.

Dahl was married to the famous actress, Patricia Neal, for many years and they had five children together. 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 has become widely celebrated as Roald Dahl Day.
The Witches
*By Roald Dahl*

**Student Checklist**

Student Name: ________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade/Level</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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The Witches

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Name:
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gospel</th>
<th>pictures</th>
<th>pistol</th>
<th>canon</th>
<th>woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pipe</td>
<td>cigar</td>
<td>ducks</td>
<td>joked</td>
<td>frightening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story 1</th>
<th>Story 2</th>
<th>Story 3</th>
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Language Activity

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: “... grousing, grousing, grumbling, griping 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A plane taking off</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The sound of a car engine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waves crashing in the ocean.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The sound of laughter.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A summer windstorm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your choice.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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.