Roald Dahl https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/magazine-zone/roald-dahl

A person writing on a book

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

2016 is the centenary of Roald Dahl's birth. Find out about the life and works of one of the most popular authors in the UK.

[Instructions](https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/magazine-zone/roald-dahl)

[Preparation](https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/magazine-zone/roald-dahl)

Roald Dahl is one of the greatest storytellers the world has ever known. He’s sold well over 200 million books and you might also know stories like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *The BFG*and *Matilda*from the film versions. Roald Dahl had a way of telling stories that makes them fun and easy to read. This, according to Roald himself, is because he found it very easy to remember what it was like to be a child.

His life

Roald was born in Llandaff in Wales on 13 September 1916. His parents were both from Norway but they moved to the UK before he was born. He went to several different boarding schools, living away from his parents for most of the year. Once, to play a trick on the owner of a sweet shop, he put a dead mouse in one of the jars of sweets! As punishment for that, he was caned (hit with a stick) at school. In fact, Roald hated violence and cruel behaviour, and in many of his stories the main characters are treated cruelly by their family, carers or teachers. However, they always come out on top.

Roald’s dream was to go to exciting foreign places, and he got the chance when he got a job with the Shell Company supplying oil in East Africa. When the Second World War broke out, he became a fighter pilot and he almost died when he crashed his plane in the desert. Although he flew again after that, he soon became too ill to continue and was sent home and given a new job in the British Embassy in Washington DC. There, he started writing speeches and war stories, and his first pieces of writing were published.

Have you heard of any of these stories?

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Charlie is a young boy from a poor family and, like most children, he loves chocolate. Charlie buys Wonka chocolate bars hoping to find a golden ticket inside because whoever finds a golden ticket is invited to visit the Wonka chocolate factory and meet its eccentric owner, Willy Wonka. However, there are some wonderfully strange things inside the factory!

The BFG

The BFG is the Big Friendly Giant and he brings sweet dreams to children while they are sleeping. One night he is seen by a girl called Sophie, and he kidnaps her and carries her away to his homeland because he is scared she’ll tell the world about his existence. He is actually friendly, but the other giants are not. They bully the BFG and want to eat people. Sophie decides to get someone to help: the Queen!

Matilda

Matilda is a genius and she loves books, but her parents don’t understand her intelligence and are cruel to her. Matilda’s brainpower is discovered by her teacher, Miss Honey, who helps her to develop her intellect – and amazing mental powers! But Miss Honey is also being mistreated by Miss Trunchbull, the cruel headmistress, so Matilda tries to find a way to help her ...

Boy: Tales of Childhood

This book is told like a story, but it’s not a novel. It’s an autobiography of Roald Dahl’s childhood and school experiences. He describes his experiences with the dead mouse, horrible teachers, summer holidays to Norway and getting the job with Shell.

So now you know a little more about the genius storyteller who created some of the UK’s best-loved tales, why not have a go at reading one of his books? Check out the official Roald Dahl website to find out more: [www.roalddahl.com](http://www.roalddahl.com/)

Article

Roald Dahl books rewritten to remove language deemed offensive

Augustus Gloop now ‘enormous’ instead of ‘fat’, Mrs Twit no longer ‘ugly’ and Oompa Loompas are gender neutral

Hayden Vernon

Sat 18 Feb 2023 13.20 GMT

Roald Dahl’s children’s books are being rewritten to remove language deemed offensive by the publisher Puffin.

Puffin has hired sensitivity readers to rewrite chunks of the author’s text to make sure the books “can continue to be enjoyed by all today”, resulting in extensive changes across Dahl’s work.

Edits have been made to descriptions of characters’ physical appearances. The word “fat” has been cut from every new edition of relevant books, while the word “ugly” has also been culled, the Daily Telegraph reported.

Augustus Gloop in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is now described as “enormous”. In The Twits, Mrs Twit is no longer “ugly and beastly” but just “beastly”.

Hundreds of changes were made to the original text – and some passages not written by Dahl have been added. But the Roald Dahl Story Company said “it’s not unusual to review the language” during a new print run and any changes were “small and carefully considered”.

In The Witches, a paragraph explaining that witches are bald beneath their wigs ends with the new line: “There are plenty of other reasons why women might wear wigs and there is certainly nothing wrong with that.”

In previous editions of James and the Giant Peach, the Centipede sings: “Aunt Sponge was terrifically fat / And tremendously flabby at that,” and, “Aunt Spiker was thin as a wire / And dry as a bone, only drier.”

Both verses have been removed, and in their place are the rhymes: “Aunt Sponge was a nasty old brute / And deserved to be squashed by the fruit,” and, “Aunt Spiker was much of the same / And deserves half of the blame.”

References to “female” characters have disappeared. Miss Trunchbull in Matilda, once a “most formidable female”, is now a “most formidable woman”.

Gender-neutral terms have been added in places – where Charlie and the Chocolate Factory’s Oompa Loompas were “small men”, they are now “small people”. The Cloud-Men in James and the Giant Peach have become Cloud-People.

Puffin and the Roald Dahl Story Company made the changes in conjunction with Inclusive Minds, which its spokesperson describes as “a collective for people who are passionate about inclusion and accessibility in children’s literature”.

Alexandra Strick, a co-founder of Inclusive Minds, said they “aim to ensure authentic representation, by working closely with the book world and with those who have lived experience of any facet of diversity”.

A notice from the publisher sits at the bottom of the copyright page of the latest editions of Dahl’s books: “The wonderful words of Roald Dahl can transport you to different worlds and introduce you to the most marvellous characters. This book was written many years ago, and so we regularly review the language to ensure that it can continue to be enjoyed by all today.”

A spokesperson for the Roald Dahl Story Company said: “When publishing new print runs of books written years ago, it’s not unusual to review the language used alongside updating other details including a book’s cover and page layout. Our guiding principle throughout has been to maintain the storylines, characters, and the irreverence and sharp-edged spirit of the original text. Any changes made have been small and carefully considered.”