

10 FEBRUARY – 3 JULY

The

World
of

Roald Dahl

Wondercrump



ROALD
DAHL
100

SOUTHBANK
CENTRE

How to use this resource

This educational resource explores Roald Dahl's process as a writer, and particularly how he drew inspiration from the world around him.

You may like to follow this suggested scheme of work or incorporate any of the activities into your own lessons.

- Lesson 1** Students will understand what an archive is and why people keep records
- Lesson 2** Students will use critical reasoning skills to create considered collections
- Lesson 3** Students will explore Roald Dahl's use of Ideas Books, understand how he archived ideas for stories and emulate the process themselves
- Lesson 4** Students will learn how to use their collection of ideas to generate a story

This resource has been created to accompany the exhibition *The Wondercrump World of Roald Dahl*. It has been created collaboratively by Southbank Centre, the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, and Wales Millennium Centre.

The exhibition was commissioned by Southbank Centre in partnership with Wales Millennium Centre, and has been supported by the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, and the Roald Dahl Literary Estate in celebration of Roald Dahl 100: the centenary year of the world's favourite storyteller.

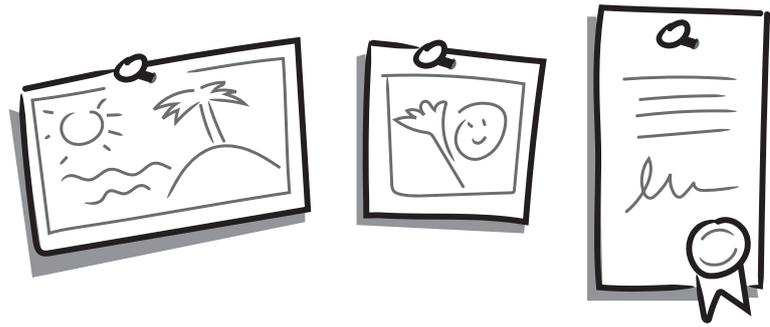


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Lesson 1

Students will understand what an archive is and why people keep records.



Background: What is an Archive?

Have you ever taken a souvenir home from a holiday? Did you once save a shell because you liked the shape? Is an old postcard still pinned to your wall to be read again and again? This could be the start of your own personal archive.

An archive is a collection of items that can tell us about a place, time, event or even person. They record the activities of an organisation or individual. Historic archives are usually made up of paper items (such as letters, photographs, diaries and drawings) but can also include objects.

Archive collections are originally created because someone decided the items were precious. But what does 'precious' mean? A shell might be precious because of the stories it holds for you, even though it is not worth any money. More than this, all the items in an archive relate to each other, making them even more precious because they are a collection. So if you have a shell, a postcard and a stick of rock, they might paint a bigger picture together than they do alone.

Activity 1: Mindmap

With the whole class, make a mindmap of all the types of items you might find in an archive (photos, objects, letters, records etc). Encourage your students to think about what personal or official records of their lives already exist, such as school reports, letters and birth certificates.

Activity 2: Why Archive?

Students discuss in pairs why people might create collections and what makes both the individual items and the whole collection together so precious. They then share their ideas with the group. Their ideas might cover these points:

- The items are special - maybe each one is unique
- You like the way something looks or feels
- An item reminds you of an event or experience, and several items strengthen the memory
- It proves that you did something
- It contains useful information

Activity 3: Discovering Archives

Research and visit a local archive or collection (it could be a library) near your school. What do they keep in their collection? Choose one item from it, then draw a picture of that item and write down everything you can learn about it.

Lesson 2

Students will use critical reasoning skills to create considered collections.

Background: Making Collections

Roald Dahl surrounded himself with strange and unusual objects that he collected throughout his life. He kept many of these on the table in his Writing Hut.

The Writing Hut was in his garden and was built by his friend Wally Saunders. This provided somewhere personal and private where he could work in peace and quiet. On the table next to his writing chair he brought together a range of objects, from a beautiful sparkly geode to a metal ball made of tinfoil chocolate wrappers. Two model planes were a constant reminder of his time in the Royal Air Force (and flying features in many of his stories). He kept his own hip bone and spinal shavings after having operations, which reflect some of the more gruesome, bone-crunching elements of his stories and characters! Anything can become a collection and anyone can be a collector. You just have to decide to start collecting.



Activity 1: Show and Tell

Ask the students: Have you ever collected anything? Arrange a Show and Tell session. As a teacher, you could share a collection of your own to prompt the class discussion. Why did you choose to start that collection? Which of the items is most important to you, and why?

Activity 2: Collect a Collector (extends Activity 1)

Ask each child to find out about a collector within their family and community. Make a class board of photographs of collectors with their collections. Invite one or more guest collectors into class to show their collection and answer questions about it.



Activity 3: Accidental Archives

Sometimes we begin to collect things without realising it. Get students to empty out their bags and take a look at the contents. List the objects you find in there (listing – or cataloguing – is an important part of using an archive). Now look for similarities between the objects: can some be grouped together? Which objects do you treasure the most? Which objects do you think a historian might treasure in a hundred years from now? Are your answers to the last two questions the same or different? Why?

Activity 4: Making Choices (extends Activity 3)

Think about another collection of items that you already have. Which items would you choose to keep for a long time? Why would you pick those items and why do you think it would be important to keep them?

Activity 5: Crafting Characters by Telling Tales

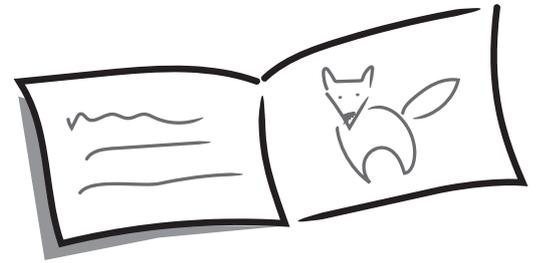
Quentin Blake illustrated most of Roald Dahl's books, including *The BFG*. In Blake's original drawing of the Big Friendly Giant he was wearing big black boots. Though Blake's illustration had been based on Dahl's description of the BFG, when Dahl saw it he realised the boots weren't quite jumbly and gentle enough for his character. Quentin Blake received a parcel in the post containing one of Roald Dahl's own Norwegian sandals, and this became the distinctive footwear of the BFG.

Bring together a selection of varied shoes and boots (you could ask fellow teachers to provide a range). Place them in the centre of the room. Each child should choose a new shoe and imagine a character it would suit: what does the shoe suggest about its wearer, and why?



Lesson 3

Students will explore Roald Dahl's use of Ideas Books, understand how he archived ideas for stories and emulate the process themselves.



Background: Roald Dahl's Ideas Books

As well as the objects in his Writing Hut and the art in his home, Roald Dahl kept another collection which is incredibly precious: his collection of writings, and in particular his Ideas Books. Throughout his life, he captured hundreds of ideas in these books. He would keep the books on his shelf and go back to them, often several years later, and some of the ideas would grow into complete stories.



Activity 1: Create Your Own Ideas Book

Your class can create their own Ideas Books, just like Roald Dahl's, where they can scribble down all their ideas. Ask your students to keep these books safe and use them whenever they have an idea, no matter how small. You could also build time for updating their Ideas Books into your day, perhaps during registration. Over time each student will develop a book full of ideas and inspiration they can return to and use in their creative writing.

Emphasise that the Ideas Book is a special notebook that will be used just for ideas. The students should keep their notebook with them or store it somewhere it can easily be accessed, like a desk drawer. Don't worry about whether ideas are short or long, big or small; the most important thing is to write that idea down before it is forgotten. Roald Dahl once jotted down a funny idea about an old man in a pub who takes out his glass eye and puts it in his beer glass to frighten anyone who tries to steal a sip. This simple idea grew to become just one of the tricks played by The Twits.

Ideas books can contain all sorts of things. Here are some starting points:

- Drawings of things or people you've seen
- Dreams you've had
- Characters you've met
- Inventions you'd like to create
- 'What if?' questions
- Delicious or disgusting flavours
- Something that made you laugh, angry, embarrassed, happy, confused
- Imagined or real places you find interesting
- Fascinating facts you discover
- Intriguing photographs
- Conversations you've overheard

Lesson 4

Students will learn how to use their collection of ideas to generate a story.

Background: Becoming Storytellers

Like all writers, Roald Dahl created his stories by writing and re-writing. The first draft was never the final version. One day, Roald Dahl was looking at his apple tree and had an idea that sparked his imagination. He wondered what would happen if apples kept on growing. He began to work this into a story, but as the story developed he realised that the apple wasn't quite right. He considered replacing it with an orange or a pear before deciding on... a cherry! He chose a cherry because the stone in the centre would give his characters a place to live. But he still wasn't convinced that he'd found the ideal fruit for his story. After two years of redrafting his story, Roald Dahl decided that James Henry Trotter and his friends should fly to New York in a Giant Peach.

Roald Dahl once said, 'Good writing is essentially re-writing. I am positive of this.'

Activity 1: What If? Inspiration from Objects

It is important for a writer to be inspired. Roald Dahl kept objects in his Writing Hut for inspiration, lying in his peripheral vision. It's important to take notice of the world around you, but it's also crucial to explore what might be possible – not just what has already happened. Choose an object, and take turns to explore imagination and possibilities by asking 'what if...?' Linking to the 'Crafting Characters' activity in Lesson 2, you could return to using a shoe as an object of inspiration. What if the shoe was made of jelly? What if the shoe magically shrunk? What if a witch owned the shoe? By asking 'what if', see where your imagination and the possibilities suggested by the object take the story. Encourage each student to build on the others' questions in turn, 're-drafting' each other's contribution.

Activity 2: Story Circle: Spin an Idea

Take an idea from an Ideas Book. It could be a description of a person or place, a memory or a fascinating fact. Go around the circle building the story from that initial idea. Each person contributes a sentence continuing the story from the person before them. Once the story has run its course, or descended into chaos, you can split into small groups or work individually to create your own version of the story using the same starting point.



Lesson 4

Activity 3: Soundscape

Divide your students into small groups and ask them to choose a location or setting from one of their Ideas Books, or from one of the stories they developed in the previous activities. Challenge them to think of all the sounds they might hear in that place and to create them using their own voices, building a soundscape that captures their chosen location. Ask the rest of the students to close their eyes as each group performs their soundscape, and then to draw how they imagined the setting. They could then add these drawings to their Ideas Books.

Activity 4: Linking Ideas

By now your class will have explored lots of different story, character and setting ideas. Ask your students to choose an idea that has inspired them and develop it into their own story, independently or in pairs.

Just as Roald Dahl has shown us, some of their best ideas might flare up from tiny sparks of the imagination, and a seemingly minor observation they jot down now could one day grow into a world-famous story.



Further Reading

You can find further information, resources and lesson plans at www.roalddahl.com

Places to Visit

The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre in his home village of Great Missenden, just outside London, has three fun- and fact-packed galleries exploring the life and tales of a master storyteller. Visit the Museum for a fantabulous family day out, a splendiferous school session. You can also check it out online at roalddahl.com/museum

To learn more about Roald Dahl 100 and the events celebrating it throughout 2016, go to roalddahl.com/roalddahl100

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From the Archive

Letter from Roald Dahl to his mother, written at school © RDNL 2016, courtesy of The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre.

October 11th 1925

S^c Peters
Weston-super-mare

Dear Mama

I am sorry I have not writting before. ~~We~~ There was a foot-ball match yestarday, ~~so~~ agensst clarence, and The first eleven lost by 2 goals, The score was 3 goals to 2, but The ~~second~~ eleven won by 5 goals The score was 5 nil. We playd Brien house on wedensday, and the score was 1 all. I hope none of you have got coalds. It is quite a nice day To-day, I am just going to church. I hope mike is quite all right now, and Buzzo Major Cottam is going to recite something coled "as you like it" To night. please could you send me some conkers as quick as you can, but ~~do not~~ dont send to meny, ~~the~~ just send them in a tin and wrapit up in paper

Love from
BOY

In this Ideas Book Roald Dahl references the glass eye later used in *The Twits*
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~~Do you seem to have smoked Trout with~~
 Do you serve a mild horse radish
 sauce with your smoked Trout?
 We serve horse radish sauce, Sir,
 But is it a mild horse radish sauce?
 Oh yes Sir.
 Then I'll have smoked Trout.

The woman with one very large
 muscular calf.
 What curious activity did this denote?

Weak chinéd women, unhappily call
 your beards like weak chinéd men.

(Twits)
 Charles
 He's stealing. The old boy dropped his
 glass eye into the tankard. The
 boy saw it looking up at him
 He very near shook us to death

REPTON SCHOOL.
HALF TERM REPORT.

Christmas... Term, 1930 Place for Half Term... 19
 Form Remove, C. Boy's Name R. Dahl Number in Form... 22

English Subjects.		14	A persistent muddler, writing and saying the opposite of what he means. Fails to correct this by ^{real} revision or thought. Has possibilities. <i>A.H.D.</i>
Latin. M.M.O.	3	$\frac{16}{17}$	Very weak, especially in Composition.
French Geography J.F.C.	-	-	Weak, but may improve.
French.		19	Weak, for the same reasons as in English. <i>A.H.D.</i>
Mathematics.			
Science.			

Housemaster's Report.
 He probably finds his new form master a bit fussing -
 But as long as he attends & tries, he will get on.
A.H.D.

Roald Dahl's school report
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ROALD DAHL 100



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