



The Magical STORYTELLER

Library of Congress Carl Van Vechten



Roald Dahl

Once upon a time, there was a funny, very tall man who lived in a shed at the bottom of the garden. He liked to sit there and think, and his thoughts became some of the most exciting and best-known thoughts in the whole world.

Why? Because he wrote them down. And that meant other people could read them too, and fall in love with what he'd written. In this way, children and their parents found out about the extraordinary underground world of a family of foxes at war with three farmers; or the magic that goes on inside a chocolate factory; or the truly disgusting husband and wife known as Mr and Mrs Twit.

All these weird and wonderful characters, and plenty more besides, were the invention of that funny, very tall man in a shed. Even his name was interesting: Roald Dahl. Mind you, there was a good reason for that. His parents came from Norway, although they'd moved to live in Wales many years before Roald was born. But Roald was to suffer a tragedy at a young age: his dad, Harald, died when the boy was just three years old.

Whether it was this, or the horrible experience of being sent away to boarding school, nobody really knows, but Roald developed a keen interest in stories. Maybe it came from his mother, who would sit and tell her five children old folk tales from her home country about trolls and other magical creatures. Young Roald loved hearing and reading stories, and he loved telling them.

After flying fighter planes and working as a spy in the Second World War, he began writing for a living, turning out books for children and grown-ups, as well as lots of short stories about dark and unexplained things – his famous *Tales of the Unexpected*. He even wrote films, including a James Bond movie (*You Only Live Twice*) and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

But it was his children's stories that made him famous. Starting with *James and the Giant Peach*, he went on to create *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *Danny the Champion of the World*, *The Twits*, *George's Marvellous Medicine*, *The BFG*, *The Witches*, *Matilda* and *Esio Trot*, among plenty of others.

And many of them started with a simple thought from that funny, very tall man in his shed at the bottom of the garden.

You can find out about Roald Dahl's real-life experiences and how they found their way into his stories at the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire (the author's home village). The Museum is a charity which aims to inspire excitement about reading, writing and creativity. There are three fun and fact-packed galleries, with lots to make, do and see (including Roald Dahl's writing hut). Aimed at 6–12 year-olds, the Museum is open to the public and to school groups throughout the year.

www.roalddahlmuseum.org

Roald Dahl is famous for his stories and rhymes, but much less well known is how often he went out of his way to help seriously ill children. Today Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity helps children with the severest conditions and the greatest needs. The charity believes every child can have a more marvellous life, no matter how ill they are, or how short their life may be.

Why not find out more at www.roalddahlcharity.org



Wordsearch

M	R	O	W	K	L	I	S	S	Q	C	R	Y
R	R	S	T	N	U	A	J	A	M	E	S	T
O	E	O	S	P	I	K	E	R	D	N	E	I
W	L	P	W	U	E	G	A	I	S	T	D	C
W	S	D	P	H	N	A	P	H	T	R	E	K
O	T	H	M	O	T	S	C	E	O	A	P	R
L	E	V	P	A	H	R	I	H	N	L	I	O
G	L	S	A	U	N	S	A	N	E	P	T	Y
S	L	L	U	G	A	E	S	E	T	A	N	W
L	A	D	Y	B	I	R	D	A	S	R	E	E
S	O	R	E	C	O	N	I	H	R	K	C	N
F	N	E	M	D	U	O	L	C	L	G	A	T
N	A	E	C	O	C	I	T	N	A	L	T	A

Can you find all the words below hidden in the wordsquare above?

ATLANTIC OCEAN
CENTRAL PARK

JAMES
PEACH
SPIDER

AUNTS
EARTHWORM
LADYBIRD
RHINOCEROS
SPIKER
STONE

CENTIPEDE
GRASSHOPPER
NEW YORK CITY
SEAGULLS
SPONGE



MARVELS

Real creepy-crawlies may not be able to talk, but they are as fascinating in their own way as James's friends!



Grasshopper

Over 20,000 different species of grasshoppers exist. Most lead solitary lives, although some species have a tendency to form huge swarms that move about eating all plants and crops in their path. Grasshoppers are famous for their ability to jump over 20 times their body length (similar to you jumping over 40 metres!) and for their 'songs', which are actually made by rubbing their wings and legs together. Perhaps to help them appreciate their music, some grasshoppers have their ears in their front legs, while others have them in their abdomen! All grasshoppers have five eyes – two large compound eyes and three further smaller ones.



Centipede

Their name may mean 'hundred feet', but most centipedes have as few as 15 pairs of legs, although some have a lot more. Their last pair of legs stick out like antennae and can be used to feel their surroundings, making centipedes as happy running backwards as forwards. Centipedes have a poisonous bite, which they use to kill and eat insects and even other centipedes! Although they rarely bite humans, it can be rather painful if they do, so be careful! Centipedes can live up to six years, which is a long time for a creepy-crawly.



Spider

Spiders are probably the most common of creepy-crawlies and, although many people are afraid of them, no British spiders are dangerous to humans; in fact, they are positively helpful because they eat so many flies and other creatures that could cause us problems. Spiders have eight legs and up to eight eyes (although some have fewer or none at all). Most spiders can spin webs to help them catch their prey; however, some species prefer to chase and hunt their prey instead.

Earthworm

Earthworms are truly amazing animals. They have 10 hearts, but no lungs, breathing directly through their skin instead; they have no eyes but can sense light, and no ears but can sense vibrations on the surface as light as a robin walking about. Although they have no legs, they can move very fast, using tiny bristles on their skin called setae. They love moist ground, can survive underwater and can even survive being frozen! Earthworms eat tiny morsels of organic matter and also swallow soil as they burrow through the ground, extracting nutrients from it. What comes out the other end is a superb fertiliser helping keep the soil healthy. They also help the soil by creating air flow in the tunnels they burrow and by bringing nutrients from deep underground to the surface as they move around.

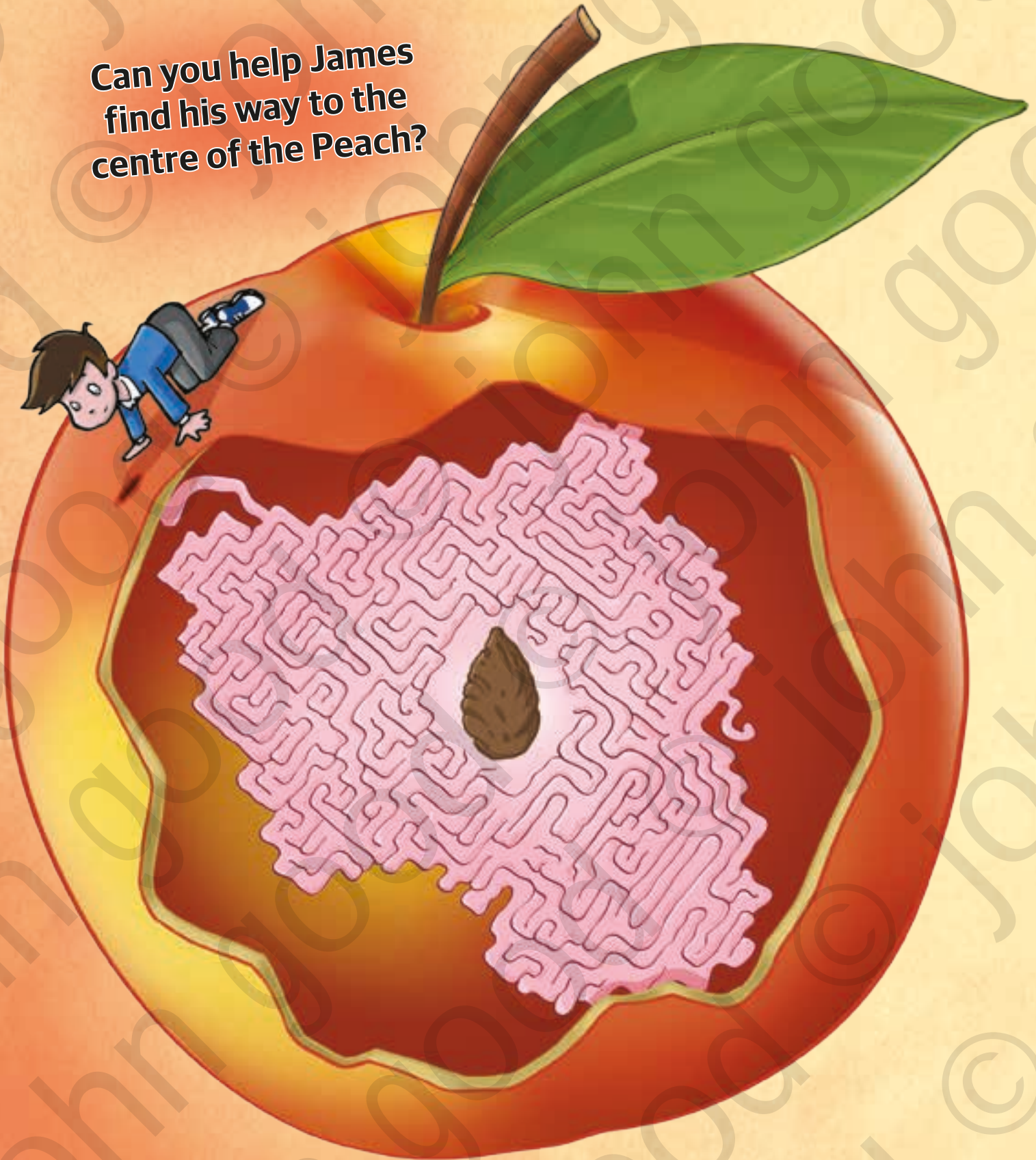
Ladybird

Ladybirds are beetles, and there are over 5000 different kinds in the world, including over 40 in Britain. Not all ladybirds are brightly coloured or have spots; in fact, many are dull-looking. Although called ladybirds, they aren't all female; the name comes from 'Our Lady', the Virgin Mary. The bright colours and spots are a way of warning birds and other predators that a ladybird tastes disgusting, thanks to a special chemical they secrete. Ladybirds are carnivorous, eating small insects such as aphids and other garden pests, making them a gardener's best friend. Male ladybirds are usually smaller than females.



Inside the Giant Peach

Can you help James
find his way to the
centre of the Peach?



Spot the Difference!

There are thirteen differences between these two pictures of Aunts Spiker and Sponge.



Can you find them all?

Mississippi Magic

PEACH COBBLER

With the abundance of peaches in the late summer months, peach cobbler is a traditional dessert from the southern USA. This is an authentic recipe from Mississippi called 'magic' because it is so easy to prepare. This can be served warm or cold with ice cream, whipped cream or custard.

Ingredients:

Two cans of sliced peaches in juice (411g each)

Water

Sugar

110g butter

150g plain flour

1/4 tsp salt

1 heaped tsp of baking powder







110g caster sugar

240ml milk



Preheat oven to 200 C Gas Mark 6.
For a fan assisted oven: 180 C/Gas Mark 5
Preparation time: approximately 15 minutes,
baking time 30-40 minutes
Serves 4-6

Method:

-  As the oven is warming, put butter in a 2.5 litre baking dish and place on the middle shelf.
-  While the butter is melting (watch that it does not burn), strain the juice from the peaches into a bowl. Add enough water to juice to make 240ml of liquid. Add 2-3 tablespoons of sugar to the liquid, depending on preference for sweetness. Set peaches and juice mixture aside.
-  In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, salt, baking powder and 110g of caster sugar. Stir the milk into the dry mixture and mix well into a smooth batter.
-  Carefully remove the baking dish with the melted butter from the oven and slowly pour the batter into the melted butter; do not stir too vigorously but just enough to ensure batter covers the bottom of the dish.
-  Arrange the sliced peaches on top of the batter, ensuring the surface is covered. Then pour the juice mixture over the peaches and batter.
-  Do NOT stir! It will look strange and lumpy but this is expected. Place dish back in the oven and bake for 30-40 minutes until the top layer is golden brown and a toothpick placed in the centre comes out clean.



[Ask an adult to help you with this recipe]

All You Ever Wanted to Know About PEACHES

The peach tree (Latin name *prunus persica*) was first cultivated by the Chinese around 4,000 years ago, making it the world's oldest fruit grown by man. China is still the largest producer of peaches.

Wild peaches can only be found in China. The fruit is small, sour and very fuzzy.

The peach is related to plums, cherries and almonds.

Even though peach skins are fuzzy and nectarines are smooth and shiny, they're actually varieties of exactly the same species.

Peach juice makes a great moisturiser and can be found in quite a lot of cosmetics for this reason.

The world's largest peach cobbler – a pudding rather like crumble – contained 75 pounds (more than 34kg) of peaches. It was made in Peach County, Georgia, in the USA.

The peach reached America before it came to Britain. Spanish explorers took it with them in the 16th century, but the fruit didn't make it to these shores until the next century.

'The Peachoid' water tower in South Carolina

People in China are said to have believed that the peach tree had magical powers. They made wands out of peach wood to scare off evil spirits.

An average, medium-sized peach contains around 30 calories.

Don't try eating a peach stone – it contains poisonous hydrocyanic acid.

There's a 150-foot water tower in South Carolina, USA, that's been nicknamed the Peachoid – because of its peach-like shape.

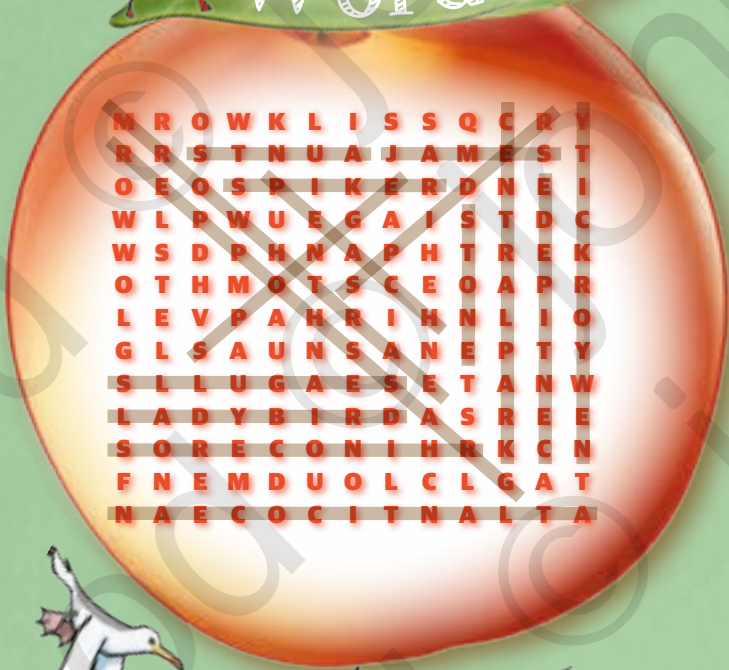
The ripe peach season runs from June until the end of August.

Peaches are a favourite target of insect pests, such as earwigs and caterpillars.

The world's biggest ever peach, as measured by Guinness World Records, weighed 725g (25.6oz) – about five times the size of an average peach. It was grown in Coloma, Michigan, USA, by Paul Friday and recorded in August 2002.



ANSWERS



Inside the Giant Peach



Spot the Difference!

