The Big Friendly Giant (THE BFG)

By Roald Dahl
Adapted for the stage
by David Wood

Synopsis

Recommended for everyone age 5 and older

One dark night, a little orphan girl, Sophie, sees a giant peering into her window. The giant, afraid that if news of his existence got out there would be a great giant hunt, whisks Sophie away to Giant Country. Luckily this particular giant happens to be the Big Friendly Giant, who only eats "snozzcumbers," a nasty tasting vegetable, and never people—unlike the other giants in Giant Country. The BFG spends most of his time collecting and spreading good dreams. He even takes Sophie on a journey to Dream Country where she can see some delightful dreams that the giant will give to little boys and girls.

Back at the BFG's cave, he must hide Sophie from the other "human bean"—eating giants so they won't gobble her up. Sophie and her new friend can hear the other giants outside talk about going to England and eating small children who live in orphanages. Sophie is aghast. They must go warn the Queen so that she can put a stop to the giants' roaming the world and eating people. With the help of the Queen of England, and her Army and Airforce, the giants are captured and put in a zoo. The BFG is allowed to return to Giant Country with the promise that he will visit every year on Sophie's birthday.

RESOURCE LIST

Prepared by Caitlin Dixon and Judy T. Nelson, Pierce County Library System

FOR CHILDREN

Crazy Jack
Donna Jo Napoli

Giants! Stories From Around the World
Paul Richard Walker

A Handful of Beans
Jeanne Steig

Jack Tales
Richard Chase

Kate and the Beanstalk
Mary Pope Osborne

Shrek
William Steig

Sleep and Dreams
Andrew T. McPhee

Summer Reading is Killing Me
John Scieszka

Tales from the Brothers Grimm and the Sisters Weird
Vivian Vande Velde

SPOTLIGHT

Boy
Roald Dahl
What it was really like to be Roald Dahl growing up, with summers in Norway, life in boarding school, and even a real life chocolate factory!

FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS

Draw 50 Monsters, Creeps, Superheroes, Demons, Dragons, Nerds, Dirts, Ghouls, Vampires, Zombies and other Curiosa
Lee Ames

The Hero with a Thousand Faces
Joseph Campbell

Politically Correct Bedtime Stories
James Finn Garner

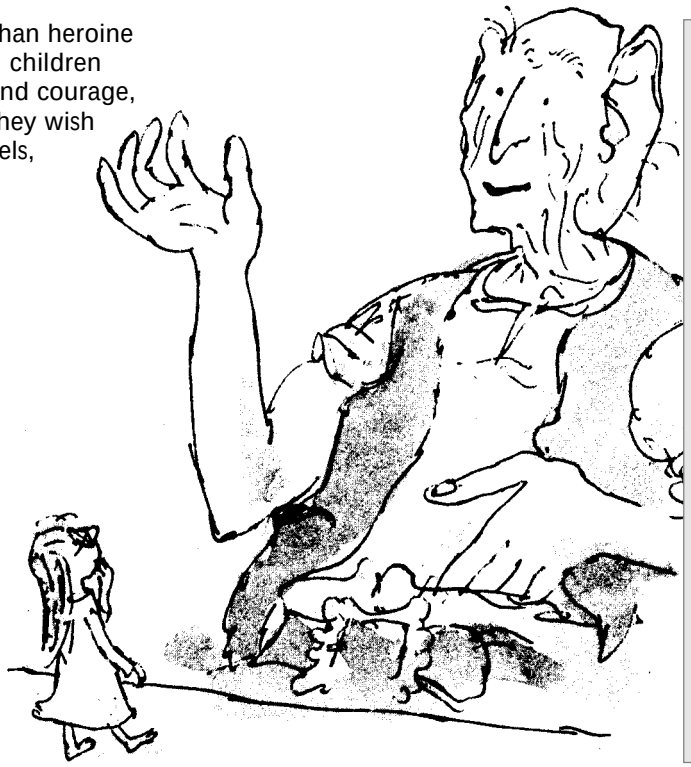
Roald Dahl's Revolting Recipes
Roald Dahl

SPOTLIGHT

The Uses of Enchantment: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales
Bruno Bettelheim
Child psychologist Dr. Bettleheim explains how fairy tales educate, support, and liberate the emotions of children.

COURAGEOUS INDEPENDENCE AND Strong Friendships

Just like Sophie, the orphan heroine in *The Big Friendly Giant,* children need encouragement, and courage, to become the person they wish to be. Positive role models, who can help build a child's self-confidence, help them achieve their goals, and be a reliable friend, are imperative to this end. The most constructive, supportive influence for a child comes from a person who is present on a consistent basis in that child's life. This interaction increases the likelihood that the child will stay away from pit-falls such as alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and gangs.



Sophie and her friend, the BFG, help each other gain confidence in themselves. A P Watt Ltd. on behalf of Quentin Blake. From The BFG *by Roald Dahl. Illustrated by Quentin Blake.*

Kids, did you know...

Buckingham Palace, one of the settings in *The BFG,* is where the Queen of England lives? It has served as the official London residence of Britain's royal family since 1837. Although in use for many events and receptions held by the Queen, areas of the Palace are open to visitors on a regular basis. Buckingham Palace is one of the world's most familiar buildings, and more than 50,000 people visit as guests each year to banquets, lunches, dinners, receptions, and Royal Garden Parties.

In *The BFG,* Sophie and the Big Friendly Giant provide each other with the necessary support and strength to overcome obstacles. The relationship between these two characters is a good example of a strong and positive friendship. Sophie and the BFG both fulfill needs for one another: Sophie finds someone she can count on, and the BFG finds a companion who likes him for who he is.

Dahl's ability to illustrate these positive relationships for young people is one of the reasons adults find his work so important for kids. Young people usually enjoy and can relate best to stories in which the heroes and heroines are children with the capacity to accomplish great things, and who prevail in the end. Dahl's independent and tenacious protagonists encourage young people to foster these characteristics in themselves. Many children struggle with low self-esteem and look to their peers for identity; Dahl's stories reinforce that they can be their own people, asserts Sharon Royer in her 1998 article, "Roald Dahl and Sociology 101," in *The ALAN Review.*

This courageous independence is exemplified in the very character of the BFG. The BFG is an outcast: a gentle, meek, vegetarian giant living among grisly ogres who think it is fun to eat children. Because of these virtues, the BFG is ostracized from his own kind, yet he is embraced and loved by Sophie. As children identify with Sophie, they are shown that kindness and gentleness are traits to look for in a friend.

Dahl's view of society appeals to children and young adults because it reflects their own perspective. As Royer says, he piques their sense of humor and spirit, while illustrating that good will triumph and evil will be punished, and every child can be the hero of their own story.

ACTIVITY

• Encourage your students to think about someone in their lives who is a positive role model. Invite them to list the characteristics that make that person influential. Now, ask the students to brainstorm ways that they can be role models for others.

EALRs

CIVICS—responsibilities of citizenship

"Dreams is mystical things"

Everybody dreams. Although some people don't remember them, most of us are blessed with sweet ones as well as tormented by bad ones. In *The Big Friendly Giant,* the BFG whisks Sophie, and us, away to "Dream Country," where we are introduced to a different way of thinking about dreams.

Often children manifest their fears as monsters in their dreams. Here Bloodbottler picks on the BFG.
A P Watt Ltd. on behalf of Quentin Blake. Illustrated by Quentin Blake, from The BFG *by Roald Dahl.*

In this story, dreams are captured by the BFG and blown through his trumpet into the thoughts of sleeping children. The many theories about where dreams come from, and why they exist, have changed over the centuries. Originally, people believed they were of a spiritual nature: either a product of divine intervention or a demonic vision. Many people today believe the Freudian theory of dreams, which holds that they are a reflection of our subconscious thoughts and feelings.

Different cultures have their own legends about the existence and meaning of dreams. In Native American folklore, many tribes have legends about dreamcatchers. One such legend begins with a grandmother who spent many days watching a spider carefully spin its web. One day, she stopped her grandson from killing the spider with his shoe. In return for saving its life, the spider wove a magical web in her window, which snared bad dreams and let good ones pass through the hole in its center. Generations later, handmade dreamcatchers are still kept in windows to protect people from bad dreams.

Bad dreams can be a burden for many, and nightmares are very common for children. Nightmares can be particularly distressing to the very young because they may have a difficult time separating the dream world from the real world. Fueled by vivid imaginations, many children make monsters their tangible symbol for everything that is scary. Studies show that the most frequent dreams for young children involve being threatened by an animal or monster. Fears, like a young person's growing awareness of death and their own vulnerability, often trigger these monster-laden nightmares.

Luckily, in stories like *The BFG,* some of these nightmare monsters seem less frightening, and even laughable. In this case, children-eating giants seem practically harmless, because we know that the BFG and Sophie will prevail.

ACTIVITY

From http://www.thebfg.uk.com

• Ask your students to think of a good dream they would like the BFG to blow to them in their sleep. Have them write it out in a speech bubble, like you see in the comics, and then hang these around the room. Now the students can 'catch' the dreams they want!

"Dreams is very mystical things," says the BFG. "Human beans is not understanding them at all. Not even their brainiest prossefors is understanding them." The BFG catches dreams to give to little girls and boys. A P Watt Ltd on behalf of Quentin Blake. Illustrated by Quentin Blake, from The BFG *by Roald Dahl.*

EALRs WRITING–write for a purpose