

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The BFG

by

Roald Dahl

Book Information

Roald Dahl, The BFG
Quiz Number: 5058
Puffin, 1984
ISBN 0-14-034019-X; LCCN
208 Pages
Book Level: 4.8
Interest Level: MG

Luckily for Sophie, the BFG (Big Friendly Giant), who carries her off is nothing like his giant neighbors who are headed for England to gobble children and must be stopped.

Award: Bilby Award; Children's Book Award; Misc./Other

Topics: Horror/Thriller, Giants; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 4-6

Main Characters

Mary the Queen's easily rattled maid

Mr. Tibbs the Queen's resourceful butler

Queen of England the stately ruler who helps the BFG and Sophie capture the giants who are eating her subjects

Sophie a small intelligent orphan girl who befriends the BFG after he kidnaps her

The Big Friendly Giant (BFG) a kind-hearted giant who is harassed by the giant community because he does not eat people

The Bloodbottler a giant who nearly eats Sophie when he intrudes on the BFG in his cave

The Fleshlumpeater the largest of the giants, who enjoys bothering the BFG

Vocabulary

absurd ridiculous or silly

cardigan a type of sweater that buttons up the front

dormitory a big room with several beds

laborious requiring a large amount of work and time to accomplish

massive extremely large

waistcoat vest

Synopsis

The adventures of a young orphan girl named Sophie begin when she decides to sneak a peek out the window to see what the world looks like during the witching hour. She is stunned to discover that there is a giant blowing through a long trumpet into the window of her neighbors. When the giant senses Sophie watching him, he reaches through her window and carries her off to Giant Country.

Once there, Sophie is relieved to discover that the giant has taken her so she will not reveal the secret of his existence; he has no intention of eating her. In his strangely garbled giant English, he tells her that he is the Big Friendly Giant, or the BFG, and he is the only giant who does not eat people. Every night he sadly watches as his fellow giants go off to hunt "human beans." When Sophie asks him what he was doing in her village, he reluctantly tells her his secret: he catches dreams and delivers them to small children while they are sleeping.

As they talk, Sophie learns that the BFG tries very hard to live an honorable life. He lives on a detestable vegetable called the snozzcumber because he does not want to steal food from humans. He wishes he could stop his fellow giants from eating people, but he is the smallest of the giants.

Soon Sophie realizes how weak the BFG actually is when a giant named the Bloodbottler barges into BFG's cave thinking he heard a "human bean" that he would like to have for a snack. The BFG denies her presence and tries to distract the Bloodbottler. Sophie hides inside a snozzcumber, and the BFG unwittingly almost causes the Bloodbottler to eat her when the BFG coaxes the Bloodbottler to eat the snozzcumber as a diversion; fortunately, the Bloodbottler is so disgusted by the taste of the snozzcumber that he spits Sophie out and leaves.

After the Bloodbottler leaves, the BFG decides to take Sophie dream catching. He withstands a cruel tossing game by the other giants as soon as he

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The BFG

by

Roald Dahl

comes out of his cave, but they eventually tire of their sport and let him go. In Dream Country, the BFG catches one beautiful dream before he catches a nightmare so disturbing that he loses his zeal for the day and heads home. He finds the giants napping and avenges himself by blowing the nightmare into the ear of the Fleshlumpeater.

In the evening, Sophie is horrified when the BFG sits on a rock and watches the giants go off to eat English schoolchildren. She wants the BFG to intervene, but he tells her it is hopeless: he cannot stop them. At first Sophie is frustrated by this response, but then she comes up with a plan of her own. She suggests that the BFG mix a dream for the Queen of England that shows the giants gobbling schoolchildren and that has the image of Sophie sitting in the Queen's window at the end of the dream. She convinces the BFG that when the Queen finds Sophie sitting in her window when she wakes up, she will know that the dream is also real and help them stop the giants.

After much persuasion on the part of Sophie, the BFG agrees, and the two put their plan into action. As anticipated, the Queen of England is willing to listen to Sophie and the BFG when she wakes up from her horrible nightmare about giants eating children. After verifying the events described by the BFG, she sends soldiers to capture the giants and bring them back to England.

The BFG leads the Queen's men to Giant Country, where they manage to bind up all but one of the giants. The last one, the Fleshlumpeater, awakens before he can be tied, and the BFG and Sophie work together to capture him. Sophie sticks him in the ankle with a brooch, and the BFG convinces him he has been bitten by a poisonous viper. He has the giant hold his ankles and close his eyes while the BFG pretends to give the giant medical aid but instead binds the giant's hands and feet together.

As a result, the giants are triumphantly flown back to England along with the BFG's extensive dream collection. The Queen has the giants thrown into a huge pit where they are sentenced to a life of eating

snozzcumbers and being gawked at by tourists. The BFG and Sophie are rewarded by being given homes on the palace grounds, and the BFG becomes a great writer. In fact, the reader is informed at the very end of the book that the BFG is the author of the preceding text.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

What does the BFG mean when he says, "For years and years I is sitting here on this very rock every night after night when they is galloping away, and I is feeling so sad for all the human beans they is going to gobble up. But I has had to get used to it. There is nothing I can do"?

He has tried for a long time to think of a way to stop the giants, but he has had to come to terms with the fact that interfering with them will not help the human beings and will probably result in him getting hurt.

Literary Analysis

Besides choosing to not eat people, how does the BFG show that he wants to be a good giant?

The BFG shows his moral character in many ways. He refuses to steal vegetables from human beings. He plans to return the book he "borrowed" in order to learn to write. He also tries to take good care of Sophie. Lastly, he spends most of his time giving good dreams to children and trying to keep them from having nightmares.

Inferential Comprehension

Why is Sophie amused that the Fleshlumpeater is so afraid of Jack?

She finds it humorous that a horrible and fierce creature like the Fleshlumpeater is terrified of a fictional character from a fairytale.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The BFG

by

Roald Dahl

Constructing Meaning

When Sophie discovers that the giants are planning to go to England to eat schoolchildren, she is extremely anxious to stop them. The BFG insists that it would be impossible and presents many arguments against each of Sophie's plans. How does she convince him they should try to stop the giants?

The BFG has three main arguments against any of Sophie's plans. First, since he is smaller and slower than the other giants, he cannot chase them to either stop them or to warn humans. Second, he is afraid to warn humans because he suspects they will think him a rare creature to be locked up in a zoo. Finally, the BFG states that humans are not known for their kindness, and thus, he is fearful of any contact with them. While Sophie accepts the BFG's argument about not being able to chase the other giants or warn the people of England, she argues that not all humans are lacking in kindness. She eventually talks the BFG into trying her plan to create a dream for the Queen of England that shows exactly what is happening with the evil giants and the schoolchildren. Sophie also tells the BFG that if he helps humans conquer the giants, he will be a hero and will be treated with kindness. Once Sophie tells the BFG about the back entrance to the palace, all the BFG's concerns have been addressed, and he reluctantly agrees to give her plan a chance.

Comparing and Contrasting Have the students read some other short stories about giants such as *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Abiyoyo*, or Grimm's *The Young Giant*. Have them discuss the differences and similarities between the giants in this story and the giants in other tales.

Understanding the Author's Craft The BFG has his own special way of saying things. Let the students get the feel for the BFG's language by having them write their own story in giant speech or translating a short tale or fable into giant talk.

Teachable Skills

Responding to Literature In this story, the BFG feels he is helpless because he cannot stop the giants from doing something he knows to be wrong. Have the students write about a time they knew someone was doing something wrong and did not know how to stop them. Were they able to find a solution or not?

Recognizing Feelings The BFG shows Sophie how he categorizes and writes a summary of all the dreams he collects. Have the students tell about a dream or nightmare that they have had. Have them decide whether it was a phizzwizard or a trogglehumper.