

Teachers' Notes

AIMED at Primary school pupils, the ideas in this study guide are intended as starting points for a cross-curricular topic based on the film. The guide is divided up into a series of photocopiable worksheets containing exercises that could be achieved by a wide range of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2. The activities seek to complement and extend the pleasure the children will have derived from seeing the film whilst at the same time meeting some of the requirements of the National Curriculum and Scottish Guidelines. The tables below can be used for planning and record keeping.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM GUIDELINES				
A modern Fairy Tale	English	KS1 KS2	AT2 AT3 AT2 AT3	1d,3 2b 1d 1c
Goodies and Baddies	English	KS1 KS2	AT2 AT3	2c 2b 1a
Character Profile	English	KS1 KS2	AT2 AT2 AT3	2c 2b 1a
What's in a Name		KS1	AT2 AT3	
			AT2 AT3	2d 2b
Books vs TV	English	KS1 KS2	AT1 AT1	1c, 2a,b 1c,d,2b
My Favourite Book	English	KS1	AT2 AT3	2c 1b,c
			AT2 AT3	2b,3 1a
Classroom Rules	English	KS1	AT3	1c,2b
		KS2	AT3	1c,2a
First Day at School	English	KS1	AT2 AT3	1d 2b
			AT2 AT3	1d 1c
Every Picture Tells a Story		KS1	AT2	2c
		KS2	AT2	1c
How a film looks		KS2	AT3	
	Art		AT2	
Matilda's Mental Arithmetic		KS1 KS2	AT2 AT2	3c 1a,4a

SCOTTISH GUIDELINES

A modern Fairy Tale	English language	Listening/Watching - Awareness of Genre Reading - Awareness of Genre Writing - Imaginative	B-E B-E B-E
Goodies and Baddies	English language	Reading - Knowledge about language Reading - To reflect on the writers ideas+craft Reading - Knowledge about language	D D D
Character Profile	English language	Reading To reflect on the writers ideas+craft Reading - Knowledge about language	D D
What's in a Name		Reading - Awareness of Genre Writing - Imaginative	B-E B-E
Books vs TV	English language	Listening/Watching - In Groups Talking -about experiences, feelings, opinions	B-E B-E
My Favourite Book	English language	Reading - for enjoyment Reading - Knowledge about language Writing - personal	B-E B-E B-E
Classroom Rules	English language	Writing - functional	B-E
First Day at School	English language	Reading - To reflect on the writers ideas+craft Reading - Awareness of Genre Writing - personal Talking -about experiences	D B-E B-E B-E
Every Picture Tells a Story	English language	Listening/Watching - Awareness of Genre	B-E
How a film looks	English Language Art	Reading - Awareness of Genre Evaluating + Appreciation	B-E B
Matilda's Mental Arithmetic		Number Money + Management	B-E

SYNOPSIS

MATILDA is an extraordinary girl, a child of wondrous intelligence- unfortunately her neglectful and deeply stupid parents. Harry and Zinnia Wormwood are too wrapped up in their own little lives to care, or even to notice, that their daughter is a budding genius. Matilda is in love with books and learning. When the Wormwoods finally grants Matilda's wish to attend school, they bundle her off to Crunchem Hall, a bleak brick prison where students cower before the whip-hand and fist of a hulking monster-Principal, Agatha Trunchbull.

Amid Crunchem's darkness, Matilda finds a single light in warm-hearted Miss Honey, the first grade teacher who recognises the girl's remarkable skills. Miss Honey also sees a very special talent that allows the spirited girl to turn the tables on the wicked grown-ups in her world. Matilda is a modern fairy tale. The story of a little girl who creates her own place in the world through strength, courage, and an exceptional knack for mischief.

'Roald Dahl's Matilda', dir. Danny DeVito.
Running time: 98mins
Certificate PG

A Modern Fairy Tale

The filmmakers describe the film Roald Dahl's Matilda as an up to-date fairy tale,
In the box below, Write down the names of the fairy tales you have read.

Can you now try to describe what a fairy tale is? Think about the types of characters, settings and events that occur.

How is the story of Matilda like a fairy tale? Think about the characters and events etc Are there any differences between the story of 'Matilda' and a fairy tale?

Rewriting Fairy Tales

Time to get writing! Can you modernise a traditional fairy tale so that it is more up-to-date? For example, instead of 'Little Red Riding Hood'. You could write 'Little Red Bomber Jacket' and have the girl rescue the boy.

Goodies & Baddies

"All good books have to have a mixture of extremely nasty people - which are always fun - and some nice people. Can you imagine how boring 'The BFG' would be if he were the only giant in Giantland?"

(Roald Dahl)

In all of Dahl's books there are 'goodies' and 'baddies'. The baddies are not just a little bit nasty - but really bad! Dahl believed that to make characters interesting it was best to exaggerate their good or bad qualities. One of the ways in which he did this was to think about little details, such as crooked noses or twitching ears so that the reader can really picture the person.

TASK

In the box below write down the names of the 'goodies' and 'baddies' in books or films that you have read recently.

GOODIES	BADDIES

TASK

Think about what is about these characters that makes them really good or really bad. Is it the way they look, the way they behave, or the way they sound? Can you tell they are good or bad just by looking at them?

Character Profile Sheet

Using what you have learnt about goodies and baddies, choose a character from the film Roald Dahl's Matilda and write about what they are like in the spaces below,

TASK

**CHARACTER'S
NAME**

**HOW THEY
LOOK
(CLOTHES,
HAIR)**

**HOW THEY
SOUND**

**HOW THEY
BEHAVE
(KIND, NASTY,
NAUGHTY?)**

**DO WE
LIKE/DISLIKE
CHARACTER?
WHY?**

What's in a Name

The names of the characters in Matilda tell you a lot about them. This idea is not new and has been used in many different ways throughout the ages.

In medieval times characters in plays had names which told you about their good points, e.g. Faithful, or their bad points, e.g. Anger.

Look at some of the names of the people in 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and see what their names tell you about them. In Victorian stories for children the idea became very complicated. One of the characters in 'The Water Babies' by Charles Kingsley is Mrs Do-as-you-would-be-done-by. What do you think she is like? Can you find out some of the other names in the book.

Roald Dahl also uses descriptive names in his books. Look at some of his other books and see if you can make a list of your favourite names.

Make up some wonderfully descriptive character names of your own.

Books versus TV

"Why read a book, when you can get it from the TV much quicker?"
(Harry Wormwood)

MATILDA'S family have no time for reading material at all, apart from magazines. They prefer to get their information and enjoyment from the television. Matilda, on the other hand, spends her whole time with her nose in one book or another. Through reading she is able to learn many things which is one of the reasons that she is so knowledgeable at school.

TASK

Have a debate in your class about books versus television. Is one better than the other? Divide up into two groups. The first group for supporting books and the second for television. You will also need a chairperson who will lead the debate and make sure that each side has a fair time to speak and that neither side gets too rowdy. In your groups write down all the points you can think of as to whether either books or TV might be better. When you have finished you will be ready for your debate. Make sure that everybody gets a turn to speak.

My Favourite Book

All of us have a favourite book that we enjoy reading again and again. What is your favourite book? Describe your book below. What type of story is it? When did you first read it? How many times have you read it? What is it about the book that makes you like it so much?

TITLE: _____

AUTHOR: _____

PUBLISHER : _____

DATE WRITTEN: _____

Classroom Rules

Miss Trunchbull is very strict with all the girls at Crunchem Hall. Each classroom has rules displayed up on the walls for all the children to obey. Heaven help the child who breaks a rule - for they must meet THE CHOKEY!

Some of the rules include:

**NO LAUGHING
NO PIGTAILS
NO DAYDREAMING
NO COLOURING
NO FUN**

At your school you probably have rules as well, but not as many as at Crunchem Hall. Rules are made so that pupils know how to behave.

TASK

It is time that you made up some rules of your own but not for you. - for your teacher! For example, *no drinking coffee in the classroom*.

First Day at School

Jane Eyre

Look at these extracts from books which describes the heroine first day at school. Jane Eyre was written in the nineteenth century. Some of the words in it are difficult so look them up in a dictionary and if in doubt ask your teacher. A Little Princess was written at the beginning of this century and Matilda is modern.

When I again unclosed my eyes, a loud bell was ringing; the girls were up and dressing; day had not yet begun to dawn, and a rushlight or two burnt in the room. I too rose reluctantly; it was bitter cold, and I dressed as well as I could for shivering, and washed when there was a basin at liberty, which did not occur soon, as there was but one basin to six girls, on the stands down the middle of the room. Again the bell rings all formed in file, two and two, and in that order descended the stairs and entered the cold and dimly-lit schoolroom: here prayers were read by Miss Miller; afterwards she called out - 'Form classes!'

A great tumult succeeded for some minutes, during which Miss Miller repeatedly exclaimed Silence! and Order! When it subsided, I saw them all drawn up in four semicircles, before four chairs, placed at the four tables: all held books in their hands, and a great book, like a Bible, lay on each table, before the vacant seat. A pause of some seconds succeeded, filled up by the low, vague hum of numbers; Miss Miller walked from class to class, hushing this indefinite sound.

A distant bell tinkled: immediately three ladies entered the room, each walked to a table and took her seat; Miss Miller assumed the fourth vacant chair; which was that nearest the dome, and around which the smallest of the children were assembled: to this inferior class I was called, and placed at the bottom of it.

'Jane Eyre' written by Charlotte Brontë
Published by Penguin Classics (1985)

First Day at School A Little Princess

After Sara had sat in her seat in the schoolroom for a few minutes, being looked at by the pupils, Miss Minchin rapped in a dignified manner upon her desk.

'Young ladies,' she said I wish to introduce you to your new companion. All the little girls rose in their places, and Sara rose also.

'I shall expect you all to be very agreeable to Miss Crewe; she has just come to us from a great distance - in fact, from India. As soon as lessons are over you must make each others acquaintance.

The pupils bowed ceremoniously, and Sara made a little curtsy, and then they sat down and looked at each other again.

'Sara,' said Miss Minchin in her schoolroom manner, 'come here to me.'

She had taken a book from the desk and was turning over its leaves. Sara went to her politely.

'As your papa has engaged a French maid for you,' she began, 'I conclude that he wishes you to make a special study of the French language.'

Sara felt a little awkward.

'I think he engaged her' she said, 'because he - he thought I would like her, Miss Minchin.'

'I am afraid,' said Miss Minchin, with a slightly sour smile, 'that you have been a very spoiled little girl and always imagine that things are done because you like them. My impression is that your papa wished you to learn French.'

*'A Little Princess' by Frances Hodgson Burnett
Published by Puffin (1961)*

First Day at School Matilda

Naturally Matilda was put in the bottom class, where there were eighteen other small boys and girls about the same age as her. Their teacher was called Miss Honey, and she could not have been more than twenty-four. She had a lovely pale oval madonna face with blue eyes and her hair was light-brown. Her body was so slim and fragile one got the feeling if she fell over she would smash into a thousand pieces, like a porcelain figure.

Miss Jennifer Honey was a mild and quiet person who never raised her voice and was seldom seen to smile but there is no doubt she possessed that rare gift for being adored by every small child under her care. She seemed to understand totally the bewilderment and fear that so often overwhelms young children who for the first time in their lives are herded into a classroom and told to obey orders. Some curious warmth that was almost tangible shone out of Miss Honey's face when she spoke to a confused and homesick newcomer to the class.

TASK

'Matilda' written by Roald Dahl
Published by Puffin (1988)

Write about your first day at school. Compare your day with all three extracts.

Every Picture Tells a Story

The opening of the film 'Roald Dahl's Matilda' tells the story of Matilda growing up. It portrays her as a baby at four and a half years old and finally at six and-a-half.

Have you any photographs of yourself which could show you growing up?

Perhaps they might need a caption or a sentence to explain where you were at that time.

Organise a 'Guess the Baby' competition using photographs of yourselves. Don't write on them who they are. (Pictures with birthday cakes with names on are too much of a giveaway). And, of course, your teachers have to join in as well.

How a Film Looks

The designers of a film decide how a film is going to look. They can make us think certain thoughts by the way they design things. Look at the picture of Mr Wormwood's car sales showroom. What makes it look like an advertisement?



Matilda's Mental Arithmetic

In both the book and the film Matilda is very good at mental arithmetic. Here is some arithmetic for you to try.

How many ways can you find of getting the answer 9 by just using addition

$$8+1=9$$

$$7+1+1=9$$

$$7+2=9$$

How much of it can you do in your head?

EXTENSION TASK

Still getting the answer 9 - use any way you like to get there - division, subtraction, multiplication, fractions... How complicated can you get?

THE ROALD DAHL FOUNDATION

The foundation was set up by Liccy Dahl,

Roald Dahl's widow, in 1991 -

Its aim is to help in the fields of literacy,

haematology and neurology -

3 areas which hold great significance

for Dahl's family.

The Foundation has been able to

offer grants to hospitals,

specialist treatment centres and

also to individuals who may need help.

If you would like to apply for funds

or would like to help the Foundation in its work

by making a donation then please write to:

The Roald Dahl Foundation,

92 High Street, Great Missenden,

Buckinghamshire HP16 1AN