

Boy: Tales of Childhood

SECTION

1

About the book

Boy: Tales of Childhood is an autobiographical collection of short stories, detailing Dahl's earliest memories as a child at kindergarten, his attendance at Llandaff Cathedral School, then St Peter's and finally his education at Repton boarding school and subsequent early career with Shell.

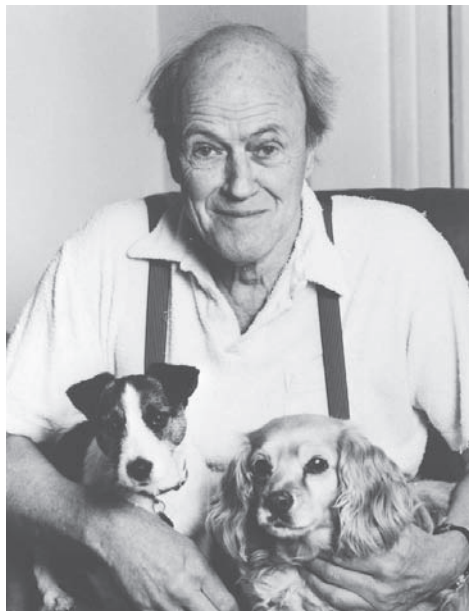
It is a frank, truthful recollection of the key events in Dahl's life through the eyes of a child. He writes with honesty relaying his touching and often amusing scrapes with authority, such as hiding a dead mouse in the mean sweet-shop owner's wares ('The Great Mouse Plot' and 'Mrs Pratchett's revenge'), to filling his sister's fiancé's pipe with goat's droppings ('Goat's tobacco') and his first eventful ride in a motor car ('A drive in the motor-car').

His affection for his mother is paramount throughout the book, and it is to her that Dahl wrote a letter every week of his life from 1925–1967. His happy memories of his precious family holidays to 'the magic island' of Norway ('Going to Norway' and 'The magic island') and his chocolate tasting for Cadbury ('Chocolates'), coupled with his own success in sports ('Games and photography') and his promising early career ('Goodbye school'), allow the reader some light relief from the more haunting recollections of his youth.

However, his darker and more poignant memories of corporal punishment, so freely administered by both teachers and 'boazers' (prefects) most often for trivial offences ('Captain Hardcastle', 'The Headmaster', 'Boazers' and 'Fagging'), and his excruciating longing to return home to his family from boarding school ('Writing home' and 'Homesickness'), and painful encounters with the medicinal limitations of the 1920s ('A visit to the doctor' and 'Little Ellis and

the boil'), provide an illuminating context for his best-selling fictional works. His autobiography continues in *Going Solo*.

Dahl's first person narrative is an excellent example for Year 6 Non-Fiction Unit 1: Biography and autobiography. It is also a good foundation for Year 5 children studying Dahl as a significant author (Narrative Unit 1) and wishing to know more about the real-life stimulus he drew on from his schooldays to create his cruel fictional characters in later life.



About the author

Roald Dahl was born in Llandaff, Wales, in 1916, of Norwegian parents. After completing his education he began his career working for Shell but this was soon interrupted by the outbreak of World War Two, during which Dahl flew in the RAF. He began his writing career in 1942 with an article for the *Evening Post* and had his first book *The Gremlins* published in 1943. He continued to write

for adults but did not turn his hand to children's fiction again until after the births of his own two daughters: Olivia and Tessa. *James and the Giant Peach* was followed closely by *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and a string of subsequent best-sellers. His stories are enjoyed the world over and read by millions of children. Despite his death in November 1990, at the age of 74, Roald Dahl remains today one of the world's best-loved and most successful children's authors ever.

Facts and figures

Boy: Tales of Childhood

First published in 1984

Won the Boston Globe-Horn Books Book Award for Excellence in Children's Literature in 1985.

The second volume of Dahl's autobiography, *Going Solo*, was published in 1986.

PAGE
3