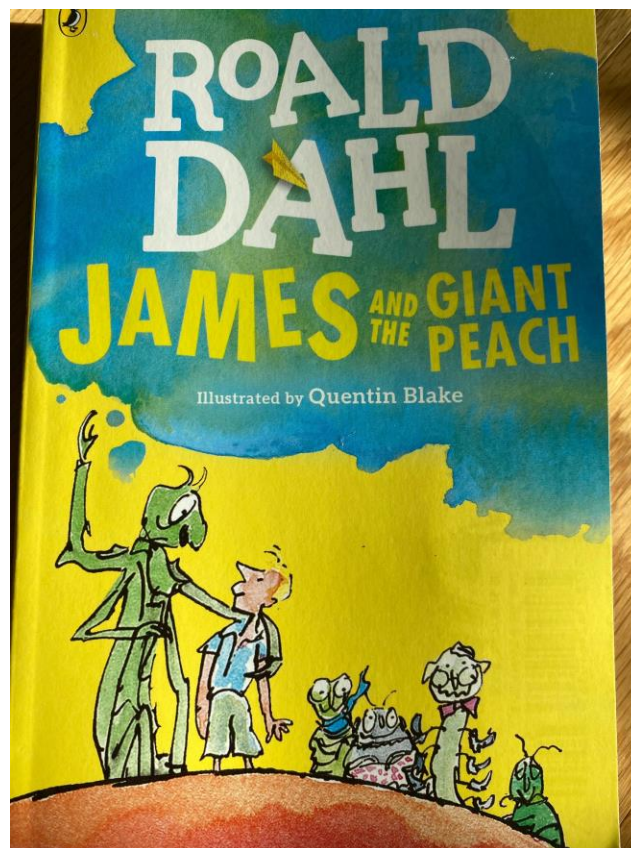


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Introduction

I read *James and the Giant Peach*, which was a novel written by Roald Dahl. It was first published by Alfred Knopf. The original release of the book was illustrated by Nancy Ekholm Burkert. Other copies have been released over the years with illustrations by Michael Simeon, Emma Chichester Clark, Lane Smith, and Quentin Blake. The copy I just read was illustrated by Quentin Blake. I read *James and the Giant Peach* years ago in school and chose to read it again from my positive memory of the book. Dahl is also well known for his other stories such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Witches*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *The BFG*, *The Twits*, and *George's Marvellous Medicine*.



The story follows the main character, James Henry Trotter, through his adventures. His story starts off with a happy childhood, but quickly takes a turn for the worse when his parents are eaten by an escaped rhino from the London Zoo. He is sent to live with his two aunts, Spiker and Sponge. The aunts were horrible people who did their best to ruin his life. His situation seemed bleak until one day when something unimaginable occurred. James encountered an old man who offered him a bag of magic green crystals with strict instructions to activate their magic. On his way into the house, James tripped and spilled the bag of magic crystals by the old peach tree! Shortly after that disappointment, a peach begins to grow on the old tree rapidly to unimaginable proportions. After being locked outside one night, James discovers his new found magic insect friends inside the giant peach. Centipede, Miss Spider, Old Green Grasshopper, Earthworm, Ladybug, Glowworm, and Silkworm. The new friends devise a plan to escape on the giant peach. James and friends then launch on an epic adventure through the sea and skies to new and exciting places.

Discussion Questions

1. When James first encounters the insects inside the peach, do you think he was white with horror due to a fear of insects? Or was it because they were the size of a dog?
2. Do you think Centipede embellished that he had 100 legs to echo a common held belief about centipedes?
3. When Centipede proudly admits that he is a “pest” as well as the grasshopper, does this challenge the reader to ponder what a “pest” actually is?

4. How did Centipede's lighthearted manner and humor make James feel toward the insects after living with horrible Aunt Spiker and Sponge for three whole years?
5. When Centipede says Glowworm is simply "a lady firefly without wings," what is he pointing out about her?
6. Do you think Earthworm agreed to be seagull bait because of the other insects promising to honor his memory, or James' gentle touch and his promise not to let them harm him?
7. How does Grasshopper's comments about how shorthorn grasshoppers and longhorn grasshoppers make "music" match reality? What about his comments on their ears?
8. Do you think the cloud men would have attacked the peach if Centipede hadn't insulted them?
9. Do you think the officers' first reactions to the insects on top of the Empire State Building match how most people feel about insects? Do you think getting to know real insects as the officers got to know these insects may change how people feel about them?