



Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

by Roald Dahl

About the novel

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is about a poor boy who lives with his parents and grandparents and wins both a lifetime supply of sweet treats and a visit to the deliciously mysterious factory where they're made. Along with four other "lucky" kids, Charlie learns how eccentric factory owner Willy Wonka and his secret workers from a far-away land make the finest chocolate products in the world and perfect the most unique delights. But only the most deserving of the children at the end of the tour, the mild-mannered and thoughtful Charlie, gets the ultimate prize—the factory, and the opportunity to move his family out of poverty and into the famous factory itself.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is also about—well, chocolate—and the cacao bean, "the thing from which all chocolate is made." Cacao, like other plants such as tobacco and cannabis, or substances like alcohol, has special properties that excite our brains and makes us feel good. But, as with all these other substances, chocolate has a "dark" side (think Darth Vader) that we must learn to manage if we are going to truly enjoy the magic without losing our heads.

And then there is chance—chance, and greed and excess and self-centredness—but chance is an important theme in the book. Chance too has a certain magic power to excite our brains. We can learn to calculate the odds and even realize that we have virtually no chance. And then a voice in our head says, "You have as much chance as anybody else." And our bodies tense up, and our minds race, and we throw reason to the wind. We must learn to manage those voices if we are going to truly enjoy the excitement of chance without losing our shirts.

About the author

Roald Dahl (1916-1990) is one of the world's best-known children's authors. He was born in Wales to Norwegian parents, attended boarding school in England, and travelled and worked in Africa and elsewhere. He served as a fighter pilot in WWII, was injured, and moved to the US where he started writing short stories and novels. Dahl suffered many losses in his youth and adulthood, and he was candid about his beliefs about greed and injustice in the world, but he remained an admirer of mischief and humour his whole life.

Instructional strategies

1. After students have read at least the first 12 chapters of the book, engage them in an exercise exploring the probability of winning a Golden Ticket, using the information and probability vocabulary featured in Chapters 5 through 12.
 - a. Break students into small groups and give each group a [Probability Scale handout](#). Have students record data related to each character's chance of finding a ticket, based on information from Chapters 5-12. Then have students discuss their findings and come to a consensus in their group on where to place them on the probability scale representing their likelihood of finding a ticket.

- b. Make space on the classroom floor for a life-size probability scale using students as markers. If desired, use tape to create the scale. Have representatives of each group stand on the point of the scale that matches their team's decision for each character. Discuss the differences, if any, and reasons for the different ratings. Seek consensus if possible.
- (Note: It is impossible to place the Mike Teevee on the scale since there is no information on how many candy bars he ate. If students do not realize this and place him on the scale, ask them to explain the basis of their decision to help them see the problem of a lack of data.)*
- c. At this point you might facilitate a discussion by asking questions such as:
- i. What factors contribute to a character's probability of finding a ticket?
 - ii. Since they all found a ticket, didn't they all have the same chance? Explain.
- d. Display the [image](#) of Grandma Georgina's and Grandpa George's conversation at the end of chapter 5 and facilitate a discussion using questions like:
- i. Who is right?
 - ii. Compare and assess the two statements: "You have as much chance as anybody else" (p. 23) with "This particular candy bar had as much chance as any other of having a Golden Ticket" (p. 31).
 - iii. Under what conditions would the probability of a bar having a winning ticket be the same as the probability of a person finding a winning ticket?
- e. Drawing attention to chapter 7, engage students in a conversation about:
- i. Why were the parents and grandparents "trying as gently and kindly as they could to prepare Charlie for the disappointment"?
 - ii. Why were they "just as tense and excited as Charlie was" even though they were pretending to be calm?
 - iii. What did they know? What did they feel?
 - iv. Why do we sometimes do things even when we "know" they will not work out?
2. Have students work in small groups. Ask them to identify the factors that contributed to the early demise of each of the four children on the tour with Charlie. Review their ideas as a class and then ask questions like:
- a. Did the children know that their behaviour might cause problems? Why do you think that?
 - b. Why do we sometimes do something even when we know it will cause problems?
 - c. What was different about Charlie?
 - d. What can we learn from this?

Gambling literacy

Big ideas

- Gambling can be a fun recreational activity but can also lead to significant harm
- As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage gambling in our midst
- We can learn how to control gambling by examining the different ways people have thought about it, engaging in critical self-reflection and listening to each other



Competencies

- Assess the ways in which material goods are distributed in society, how those goods are valued and how this is related to gambling policies and behaviours
- Explore and appreciate the diverse cognitive, social, emotional and physical factors that impact gambling behaviour
- Develop personal and social skills to reflect on and manage personal behaviour and choices related to gambling

For a complete look at the gambling literacy competencies, as defined by the Centre for Addictions Research of BC, see: www.uvic.ca/research/centres/carbc/assets/docs/iminds/hs-gambling-curriculum.pdf

Links to Curriculum

First Peoples' principles of learning

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

English Language Arts 4-6

Big ideas

- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world
- Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens

Competencies (ELA 4-5)

- Use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading, listening, or viewing to construct meaning from text
- Apply a variety of age-appropriate thinking skills to gain meaning from texts
- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and develop understanding of self, community, and world
- Respond to text in personal and creative ways

Competencies (ELA 6)

- Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, and visual texts, guide inquiry, and extend thinking
- Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world
- Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways

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