



Matilda Discussion Guide

GRADES 3 - 7

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Have students complete the [Anticipation Guide](#) to prepare for understanding and connecting with the deeper themes and messages of the story.
- Frontload vocabulary with the [Vocabulary Guide](#).
- The story is set in England, so watch for British words: "telly" is a television, "sweets" are candy, "bingo" is a numbers game the mother plays, and a "conker" is a game with horse-chestnuts. Matilda is a prodigy who reads grown-up classics before she starts school, this is meant to seem impossible.

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 1 - 3

- What clues on pages 8-12 show that Matilda is far ahead of other children her age? Point to the text.
- Mr and Mrs Wormwood are unkind to Matilda, but she stays calm and clever. What do her reactions tell you about the kind of person she is?
- Instead of arguing with her father, Matilda plays tricks (the superglued hat, the "ghost"). What does choosing tricks over shouting reveal about how she handles unfair grown-ups?

Chapters 4 - 6

- After each thing her father does, Matilda plans a specific "punishment" for him. Pick one and explain what she wanted it to teach him.
- The author makes the Wormwood family both funny and terrible at the same time. How does his habit of exaggerating help him do that?

Chapters 7 - 11

- Compare Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull. Using how each one speaks to children, what does the author want you to feel about each of them?
- The students believe the stories about the Chokey even though they sound impossible. How does Miss Trunchbull use fear to control the whole school?
- Bruce Bogtrotter is forced to eat an enormous cake as a punishment, but the other children cheer him on. Why does finishing it feel like a victory instead of a defeat?

Chapters 12 - 17

- When Matilda tips the glass over with her eyes, how does the author build up to that moment so the reader is ready to believe it?
- Miss Honey tells Matilda the story of her childhood and her aunt. How does learning this change the way you see Miss Honey?
- After hearing Miss Honey's story, what does Matilda decide her new power is for?



Matilda Discussion Guide

GRADES 3 - 7

During Reading Cont: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 18 - 21

- Matilda uses the chalk to pretend to be a ghost named "Magnus." Why does that one name have so much power over Miss Trunchbull?
- At the end, Matilda's parents leave and she stays with Miss Honey. Is this a happy ending for everyone? Use the text to support your answer.
- The villains are exaggerated and the heroes are kind and clever. What message do you think the author wants readers to carry away from the book?

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- Matilda finds power in books long before she finds power in her eyes. What is the story saying about reading and knowledge?
- In three or four sentences, retell how Matilda and Miss Honey's relationship changes from the beginning of the book to the end.
- Using [RIF's Influence on a Character](#), describe Matilda and the other characters that influenced her decisions throughout the story.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.

Read more titles by Ronald Dahl:

- The Witches (1985)
- Fantastic Mr. Fox (2007)
- The BFG (2022)