



## The Witches Discussion Guide

GRADES 3 - 7

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

- The story is told by a boy looking back. Dahl sets up his grandmother as a retired "witchophile", a witch expert, so that as she teaches the boy the rules for spotting witches, she's teaching the reader too. Read her rules as the book's real instructions.
- Frontload vocabulary with the [Vocabulary Guide](#).

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

### A Note About Witches - The Grand High Witch

- The grandmother insists her witch stories are "history," not fairy tales. What clues in how she talks make the narrator start to believe her?
- Why might Dahl give readers the grandmother's exact witch-spotting rules so early in the book, before any real witch appears?
- What does the car accident reveal about the bond between the narrator and his grandmother?

### Summer Holidays - The Meeting

- The family must move to England because of the father's will. How does that change what the grandmother is able to protect him from?
- When the narrator, hidden behind the screen, watches the women scratch their heads and peel off their gloves, what exactly convinces him they are witches?
- Why does the narrator's habit of not bathing end up mattering to his survival?

### Frizzled Like a Fritter - The Ancient Ones

- The Grand High Witch destroys a witch who argues with her. What does that moment show about how she controls the others?
- Explain the Delayed Action Mouse-Maker plan in your own words. Why does the nine-o'clock-at-school timing matter to the witches' hope of never being caught?
- When Bruno turns into a mouse in front of everyone, compare how the witches react with how the narrator reacts.

### Metamorphosis - The Mouse - Burglar

- Right after his transformation, the narrator decides being a mouse "is not at all a bad thing." What reasons does he give? Do you find them convincing?
- When he returns to his grandmother as a mouse, how does she respond, and what does that tell you about her?
- What single clue makes the narrator sure that Room 454 is directly below his own room?



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

### Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins Meet Bruno - The Triumph

- The grandmother's attempt to return Bruno to his parents turns almost funny. Why do you think Dahl mixes humor into such a dark story?
- In the kitchen, the narrator uses his new mouse abilities to reach the soup. Point to two moments where being a mouse is exactly what lets him succeed.
- At "The Triumph," the witches are destroyed by their own Mouse-Maker. Why do you think Dahl has the plan work using the witches' own weapon?

### The Heart of a Mouse - It's Off to Work We Go!

- The narrator learns he'll live only about nine more years — and he's glad. Why? What does that reveal about what matters most to him?
- The grandmother says removing one Grand High Witch won't end witches everywhere. How does that turn the ending away from a simple "happily ever after"?
- The narrator says it "doesn't matter who you are or what you look like so long as somebody loves you." How do the events of the book support that message?

**After Reading:** to summarize, question, and reflect.

- Trace how the narrator's courage grows — from a boy frozen in a tree to a mouse who raids a witch's room. Which moment shows the biggest change?
- Who is the real hero of this book — the narrator, his grandmother, or both? Defend your answer with evidence.
- State the central message of The Witches in one sentence, then name two events that support it.

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.