



Roald Dahl's
Matilda!

Homecoming Musical 2023

Study Guide
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Background:

- Originally a children's novel by Roald Dahl in 1988
- Adapted into a feature film in 1996
- Adapted into a musical in 2010
- Adapted into a movie musical in 2022




Production History:

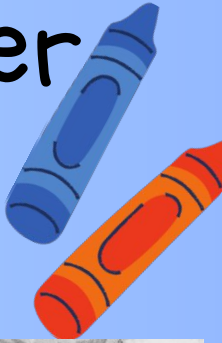
- In 2009, Royal Shakespeare Company announced their plan to stage an adaptation of *Matilda* with book by Dennis Kelly and music and lyrics by Tim Minchin.
- *Matilda* would play a 12-week run in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2010 to rave reviews
- *Matilda* would transfer to the West End in 2011 where it still plays to this day
- In 2013 *Matilda* would come to Broadway and play until 2017; won three Tonys



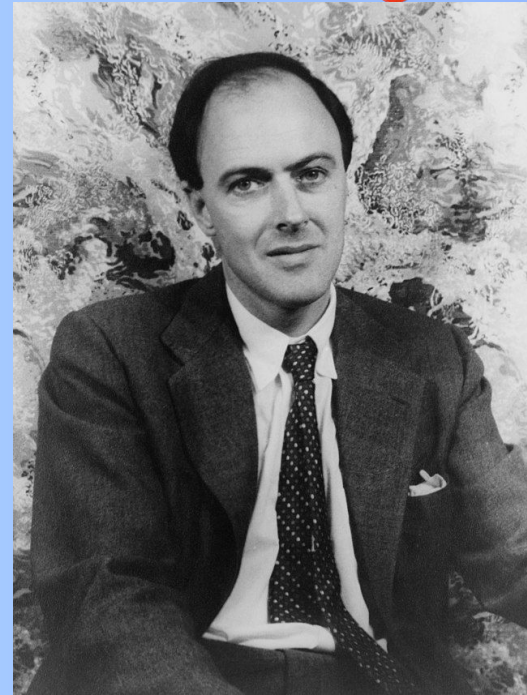
Roald Dahl

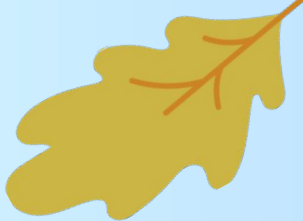
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- **Roald Dahl was born to Harald Dahl and Sofie Dahl on September 13, 1916, in Cardiff, Wales.**
 - **Both of Dahl's parents were immigrants from Norway.**
 - **Roald Dahl was the middle child of five children; they lived an upper-class life.**
 - **Dahl's older sister and dad died when he was three.**
 - **He would attend private schools until he was 18 then after graduating from Repton School join the Royal Air Force.**
 - **Dahl served from 1939-1946. In that time he was a fighter pilot, an assistant air attaché, and supplied intelligence to the British Security Coordination.**
 - **Dahl married Patricia Neal, an American actress, in 1953. They had five kids; they were together until 1983 when they divorced, and Dahl married his long time mistress, Felicity d'Abreu Crosland.**
 - **Dahl died November 23, 1990, in Oxford, England. He was 74 years old.**

Roald Dahl's Writing Career






- Dahl's first published work was an article published in *The Saturday Evening Post* and was about his time at war.
- Dahl's first children's book was *The Gremlins* published in 1943.
- Dahl would then go on to write such classics as *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate factory*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *The BFG*, *The Witches*, and *Matilda*.
- Dahl's children's books often featured kids put in oppressive situations by "evil" adults who are defeated through wits and often with help from a "good" adult.
- Dahl also wrote many short stories with sinister and dark themes; many were adapted for television in a series Dahl hosted.





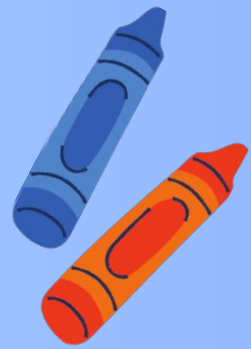
Book Writer: Dennis Kelly



- Born in 1970 in Barnet, UK
 - Graduated from Goldsmiths College, University of London with a degree in Drama & Theatre Arts
 - Drama Desk and Tony Award-winning writer
 - In addition to *Matilda's* success, his plays have been staged by the National Theatre, including a stint at the Old Vic Theatre.
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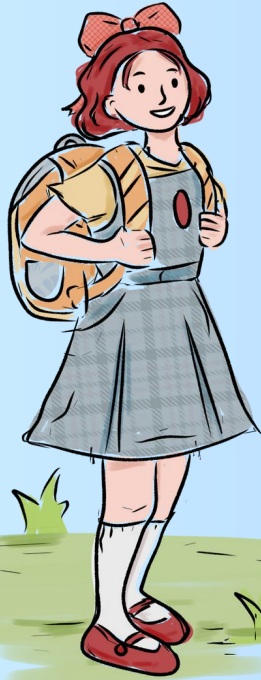
Music and Lyrics: Tim Minchin



- Born on October 7, 1975, in Northampton, UK, but raised in Perth, AU
- Graduated from University of Western Australia and attended the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
- Got his start in comedy writing and held a successful stand-up comedy career
- Matilda was the first musical he wrote.
- Winner of two Olivier Awards for *Groundhog Day* the musical and *Matilda*



Story & Setting:



- Story centers around Matilda Wormwood a five-year-old girl genius who uses her telekinesis and wit to overcome her problems
- Takes place in Buckinghamshire, England
- *Matilda* has a timeless setting

Buckinghamshire:

- Located in the South East England
- With a total population of 808,666
- The largest settlement in the county is Milton Keynes
- Milton Keynes' summers are an average temp of 66 F - 73 F, and its winters stay between 43 F - 47 F.
- Buckinghamshire holds two of England's longest rivers: the River Thames and the River Great Ouse.





Themes:

- Importance of imagination/storytelling
- Importance of rebellion
- Importance of education and learning
- Found family
- Gaining agency through bravery
- Mentorship
- Importance of reading!
- Standing out from the crowd
- Being confident in your individuality
- The beauty of being different



Telekinesis

- **Telekinesis is defined as the ability to move or deform inanimate objects (as by a spiritualistic medium) without contact or other physical means.**
- **It can also be a catchall term for a slew of special abilities that include biological healing and the transmutation of matter.**
- **One of the first examples of telekinesis in literature is in the “Mahabharata” which is a Sanskrit Epic from the third century.**
- **The term telekinesis did not show up until the late 19th century when Russian researcher Alexander N. Aksakov coined the term though he was mainly focused on communing with spirits.**
- **It wasn't until the 1930s when American parapsychologist J.B. Rhine began conducting experiments about psychokinesis (scientific name for telekinesis) with the results suggesting that psychokinesis was, indeed, possible.**
- **In the 1970s PEAR or Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Lab was founded specifically for studying psychokinesis.**

Telekinesis cont.

- **Robert G. Jahn set up a device that dropped 9,000 billiard balls into a series of 19 cartons. When no human being was present during the experiment, the balls consistently dropped in a cascading effect, with the center carton getting the most balls while the cartons to its left and right got progressively fewer. When a human participant was asked to try to psychically alter the machine, the bulk of the balls shifted right of center.**
- **Brian Josephson and co-author Fotini Pallikara-Viras tried to explain psychokinesis using quantum physics citing the old wives-tale that our minds are mostly underutilized wonder machines.**

Telekinesis: Does the evidence hold up?

- No not really at all
- The first problem is the action of telekinesis or psychokinesis violates three fundamental laws of physics: the second law of thermodynamics, the conservation of momentum (motion never changes in objects that are isolated), and the inverse square law ([Inverse Square Law - Physics](#))
- The evidence supporting psychokinesis does not stand up to scrutiny. All the studies, especially J.B. Rhine's study, are littered with confirmation bias, experimenter's bias, and cognitive bias.
- The saying that we only use 10% of our brains is not only misguided but woefully wrong.

History of Trunchbull casting


- **The casting of Miss Agatha Trunchbull has been a male in every major cast up to date for specifically the stage show.**
- **With a range of G4 - A2 it puts it in a high baritone range.**
- **It is very hard to cheat height on stage like you can on film and making Trunchbull tower over the kids is an important factor to director Matthew Warchus.**
- **Bertie Carvel originated Trunchbull both on the West End and on Broadway receiving an Olivier award and a Tony Award nomination.**

Behind the scenes matilda 1



Behind the
Scenes Pictures!

Discussion Questions:



Are there ever times where being “naughty” is justified? If so when?

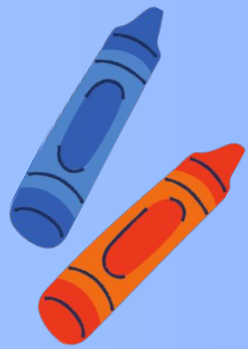
What are ways to honor our differences while still inviting everyone to the same group?

If you had telekinesis for one day what would you do and why?

What are some of the parallels between Miss Honey and Matilda?

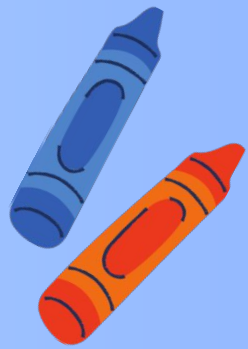


Glossary:



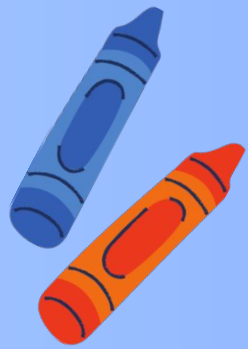
- **Wind** - air swallowed while eating or gas generated in the stomach and intestines by digestion
- **Tarantella** - a rapid whirling dance originating in southern Italy. [Tarantella Dance Video](#)
- **Peroxide** - a colorless, viscous, unstable liquid with strong oxidizing properties, commonly used in diluted form in disinfectants and bleaches.
- **Escapologist** - an entertainer specializing in escaping from the confinement of such things as ropes, handcuffs, and chains
- **Klaxon** - an electric horn or a similar loud warning device
- **Gaol** - a English spelling of "jail"
- **Pealing** - ring loudly (of a bell or bells)

Glossary (cont.):



- **Treacle** - a thick, sticky dark syrup made from partly refined sugar
- **Knickers** - loose-fitting trousers gathered at the knee or calf
- **Suppurating** - to produce or discharge pus; fester
- **Twit** - a silly or foolish person
- **Rhumba** - a rhythmic dance with Spanish and African elements, originating in Cuba.
[Rhumba video](#)
- **Nowt** - nothing
- **Denizen** - an inhabitant or occupant of a particular place
- **Garrantorically** - nonsensical mashup of “guarantee and categorically”
- **Verrucas** - a contagious and usually painful wart on the sole of the foot; a plantar wart

Glossary (cont.):



- **Olfactory** - of or relating to the sense of smell
- **Pong** - a strong, unpleasant smell
- **Anarchistic** - something that advocates or promotes anarchism or anarchy
- **Gawping** - stare openly in a stupid or rude manner
- **Rubbish bin** - trash bin

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