

*About the Author*

***Roald Dahl***

Roald Dahl was a famous British author, screenwriter, and former Royal Air Force pilot, best known for his imaginative and sometimes darkly humorous children's books. He also wrote short stories for adults, screenplays, and autobiographies. His stories have entertained generations of readers and continue to be popular today.

***Early Life***

He was born on September 13, 1916, in Llandaff, Wales, to Norwegian parents. His father, Harald Dahl, died when Roald was only three years old. Roald was sent to several boarding schools in England, where he experienced strict discipline and harsh teachers – something he later reflected in his books.

Even as a boy, he loved storytelling and adventures. After finishing school, he worked for the Shell Oil Company and then served as a fighter pilot during World War II. He began writing after being injured in the war.

***Military Service***

In 1939, at the age of 23, shortly after the outbreak of World War II, Roald Dahl joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) while working in Tanzania for the Shell Oil Company. He trained as a fighter pilot in Nairobi, Kenya, and learned to fly Hawker Hart and Gloster Gladiator aircraft.

In 1940, during one of his first missions over Libya, Dahl was flying a Gloster Gladiator when he crashed in the desert. Due to an incorrect location given for his landing site, he ran out of fuel and was forced to crash-land in rough terrain. The crash fractured his skull, injured his back, and temporarily blinded him.

He was rescued and taken to a British field hospital in Alexandria, Egypt, where he recovered over several months.

Despite his injuries, Dahl returned to flying later that year. He was stationed in Greece, flying the Hawker Hurricane, one of Britain's most famous fighter planes. He participated in dogfights against German aircraft, including the Luftwaffe's feared Messerschmitt Bf 109s.

### ***End of Flying Career***

Unfortunately, ongoing headaches and blackouts – after-effects of his crash – made it too dangerous for him to continue flying. In 1941, he was invalided out (retired due to injury) from active service.

### ***Work as an Intelligence Officer***

After leaving combat, Dahl was sent to Washington, D. C., where he worked as an air attaché – a kind of diplomat – at the British Embassy. There, he also served as part of the British Security Coordination, an intelligence unit involved in spying and political influence during the war.

In this role, he met many famous figures and began writing short stories and war-related pieces, including one of his first published works, “*A Piece of Cake*” (originally titled “*Shot Down Over Libya*”), based on his crash experience.

### ***Writing Career***

Dahl began his writing career in the 1940s, first publishing short stories for adults. In 1961, he published his first children’s book, “*James and the Giant Peach*”, followed by many other classics such as:

“*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*” (1964)

“*Fantastic Mr. Fox*” (1970)

“*The Witches*” (1983)

“*The BFG*” (*Big Friendly Giant*) (1982)

“*Matilda*” (1988)

His children’s stories often feature clever, brave children and cruel or foolish adults, with magical or unusual situations. Dahl’s style was unique – he used humour, invented words and unexpected twists.

### ***Autobiographies and Non-Fiction***

Dahl also wrote about his own life:

“*Boy: Tales of Childhood*” (1984) – stories from his school days

“*Going Solo*” (1986) – his experiences in Africa and the RAF (Royal Air Force)

These books offer a real look into his adventurous life and early inspirations.

### ***Screenwriting and Film Adaptations***

Roald Dahl also worked as a screenwriter. Notably:

Wrote the screenplay for “*You Only Live Twice*” (1967), a James Bond film

Co-wrote “*Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*” (1968)

Many of his books were later adapted into films, cartoons, and musicals:

“*Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*” (1971)

“*Matilda*”(1996 and 2022 musical)

“*The BFG*” (animated in 1989, live-action in 2016 by Steven Spielberg)

“*The Witches*” (1990 and 2020 versions)

### ***Personal Life***

Roald Dahl married actress Patricia Neal in 1953, and they had five children. The couple later divorced. Dahl faced personal tragedies, including the death of his daughter Olivia and health problems in the family, which affected his writing and life.

He later married Felicity “Liccy” Crosland, and they lived in a small village called Great Missenden in England. There, he wrote most of his books in a small writing hut in his garden.

### ***Death and Legacy***

Roald Dahl died on November 23, 1990, at the age of 74. Today, he is remembered as one of the greatest children’s writers of all time. His books have been translated into over 60 languages and have sold more than 250 million copies. Many of them have been turned into movies, musicals, and plays.

*The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre* was opened in his honour, helping children discover the joy of reading and writing.

In 1983, he received the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement, and in 1990, just before his death, he was named the UK’s most popular children’s author in a nationwide poll.

### ***Fun facts about Roald Dahl***

1. He invented over 500 words

Roald Dahl loved playing with language. In “*The BFG*” (Big Friendly Giant), he invented a whole new “gobblefunk” language. Some of his made-up words include:

Scrumdiddlyumptious – delicious

Snozzcumber – a disgusting vegetable

Gloriumptious – Glorious + scrumptious

Why did Dahl make up words? He believed that language should be fun. He wanted his books to sound like how kids imagine and talk. He encouraged playfulness, creativity, and humour through storytelling

2. He wrote most of his stories in a garden shed

Dahl did most of his writing in a small writing hut in his garden, sitting in a comfy old chair with a pencil and yellow paper. He didn't like typewriters!

3. He loved chocolate

As a boy, Dahl attended Repton School in England. During his time there, the Cadbury chocolate company would send new chocolate bars to the school for students to taste and review. Dahl said this was an exciting and magical experience, and it made a big impression on him. This childhood memory later inspired him to write "*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*" (1964).

4. He helped invent a medical device

When his son Theo suffered a brain injury, Dahl worked with doctors to develop the Wade-Dahl-Till (WDT) valve, which helped treat children with hydrocephalus (a condition involving fluid on the brain).

5. His funeral was a celebration

When Dahl died in 1990, he was buried with chocolates, red wine, pencils, a power saw, and his favourite snooker cues – all the things he loved.

6. Roald Dahl Day is celebrated every year

Every year on September 13th, his birthday is celebrated around the world as Roald Dahl Day, with costumes, readings, and activities in schools and libraries.

7. The Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary

In 2016, to celebrate his 100th birthday, Oxford University Press published The Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary, which contains all his invented words, real words he used in special ways, and definitions written in a child-friendly style.