

Inspiring Dahl

18th July 1982

Dear Roald Dahl,

I am writing to thank you from the bottom of my heart for writing such entertaining and remarkable stories. You certainly deserve this fan letter. As a matter of fact, this is the first letter to an author that I have ever written. Ever since reading your first book *The Gremlins*, I have become addicted to reading. I think it's just terrific – certainly my favourite so far! Since then, I have read more of your books and have loved them all.

My name is Mark and I am 12 years old. I found school difficult when I was younger and couldn't understand why my teachers and parents made me read every night. I think now, that if I had been introduced to your stories earlier, reading each night would have been a joy. However, I am now known as the 'Book Worm' (which I love) and I read at every chance that I can. My teacher is always telling me to put my book away in my bag and read it again during the next break. Sometimes they don't notice me and I read all lesson. It's great! Please don't tell my mum though.

The main reason for me writing to you is that I would love to become a children's author, just like you, and I would love some tips on what makes a great story that people want to read. Where do you get your inspiration from? How do you plan each story? How do you create the plot? How do your characters evolve?

I absolutely love *James and the Giant Peach*. How amazing that so many book lovers call this their all time favourite (well, they do in my school). It gripped me from start to finish. What a magical and fascinating journey that James goes on. No wonder it was your first classic novel.

My mum wanted me to tell you that her favourite is *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. She tries to read it to my little sister every night. I think that she can even retell it without looking at the words. The Oompa-Loompas make her giggle every time she reads about them. My mum has successfully added another follower to your fan club. My sister loves *Fantastic Mr Fox* best of all. She thinks that Boggis, Bunce and Bean are hilarious and believes that one of the characters is based on the grumpy old man who lives at the end of our road. She won't tell me which one though!

I have a few ideas for my first book and I have begun to make a plan just like my teacher has taught me. There are three main characters (one young boy, based on a boy I used to know and two animals that he meets on his magical journey). I have attached my notes to this letter for you to have a look at (if you get chance).

Please write back to me, I would really appreciate your insightful advice in the start of my journey to becoming an exciting and mesmerising author just like you.

Yours sincerely
Mark

classroomsecrets.com

Inspiring Dahl – Y3m/Y4s/Y5e (Sapphire) – Text

Like this? Find more differentiated Roald Dahl resources [here](#).

Inspiring Dahl – Follow-Up Work

Find **THREE** adjectives in the first paragraph of the letter.

What are the adjectives used for?

Did Mark find school easy when he was younger? Explain your answer.

Mark says that he is now known as the 'Book Worm'. Why do you think this is a suitable name for him?

Why do you think that Mark has chosen to write to Roald Dahl for advice on becoming an author?

Write down **THREE** things that Mark tells you about himself and his family.

James and the Giant Peach was Roald Dahl's first classic novel. Find **ONE** example of why Mark agrees with this.

What doesn't Mark want Roald Dahl to tell his mum?

Select two words that show how much Mark admires Roald Dahl.

What has Mark done so far with his first book?

How does Mark try to persuade Roald Dahl to write back to him?

Who are Mark's sister's favourite characters?

Why does Mark write this sentence and finish it with the two words 'so far!'?

I think it's just terrific – certainly my favourite so far!

Inspiring Dahl – Vocab 1

Write the meaning of each of these words.

remarkable _____

addicted _____

inspiration _____

plot _____

evolve _____

gripped _____

fascinating _____

hilarious _____

insightful _____

mesmerising _____

Task A:

A *conjunction* is a word that joins two or more words, phrases or clauses.

Time Conjunction	End Clause
during	he jumped out of bed quickly
before	Mark had to plan it all
when	Mark was reading his book
while	he wouldn't answer the telephone

Complete these sentences using a time conjunction from the box below to begin and an end clause from the box to finish.

_____ writing his story, _____

_____ Mark heard the alarm, _____

_____ Mark was reading his book, _____

_____ the Maths lesson, _____

Task B:

Complete the sentences below.

Mark said that Roald Dahl's stories were both entertaining and _____.

Before we write a story we need to create a _____.

Mark has become _____ to reading.

To become a _____ writer, Mark needs to work hard at school.

The Oompa Loompas are _____, they make Mark's mum laugh every time she reads about them.

Mark was _____ when he read James and the Giant Peach.

plot

hilarious

remarkable

mesmerising

gripped

addicted

Inspiring Dahl – SPAG

Prefixes are added to the beginning of an existing word in order to create a new word with a different meaning.

For example: *happy* and *un-* = *unhappy*

Place the root word in the correct prefix column. Some words may go in more than one column!

dis (not)	de (makes an opposite word)	mis (wrong)	over (too much)	re (again)

appear	form	handle	paid	write	mount	use
part	coat	form	behave	night	done	
start	cycle	agree	rail	lead	honest	fill

Complete these sentences using the words below.

1. He tried hard in the spelling test, however, he had _____ three words.
2. After the hurricane they had to _____ many homes.
3. On their trip they had an _____ stay in France.
4. She _____ the new flavour of ice-cream.
5. He needed to _____ the chicken before he could cook it.
6. The young girl _____ while she was in the supermarket with her mum.

defrost	rebuild	misspelt	disliked	overnight	misbehaved
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Inspiring Dahl – Oral Teacher Questions

Find three adjectives in the first paragraph of the letter. **Entertaining, remarkable and terrific**

What are the adjectives used for? **They help the reader to understand how much Mark enjoys Roald Dahl's stories.**

Did Mark find school easy when he was younger? Explain your answer. **No. He found school difficult and couldn't understand why his teachers and parents wanted him to read every night. He didn't enjoy reading.**

Mark says that he is now known as the 'Book Worm'. Why do you think this is a suitable name for him? **He is always reading, even at school when his teacher asks him to put his book away.**

Why do you think that Mark has chosen to write to Roald Dahl for advice on becoming an author? **Because Mark loves Roald Dahl's books. Roald Dahl was the author who got Mark interested in reading and he wants to be as good as Roald Dahl.**

Write down three things that Mark tells you about himself and his family. **His favourite Roald Dahl story is *The Gremlins*. His mum's favourite story is Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and his sister loves Fantastic Mr Fox. (There are few more alternative answers to these).**

James and the Giant Peach was Roald Dahl's first classic novel. Find one example of why Mark agrees with this. **Because it gripped him from start to finish.**

What doesn't Mark want Roald Dahl to tell his mum? **He doesn't want Roald Dahl to tell his mum that he sometimes reads all lesson without his teacher noticing.**

Select two words that show how much Mark admires Roald Dahl. **Any sensible choice.**

What has Mark done so far with his first book? **Written a plan. Created three main characters. Made some notes.**

How does Mark try to persuade Roald Dahl to write back to him? **He tells him that he would appreciate his insightful advice and describes how he wants to become an exciting and mesmerising author like Roald Dahl.**

Who are Mark's sister's favourite characters? **Boggis, Bunce and Bean.**

Why does Mark write this sentence and finish it with the two words 'so far!'
I think it's just terrific – certainly my favourite so far! **To emphasise that he has not yet read all of Roald Dahl's stories but certainly plans to, which might change his favourite story.**

Write the meaning of each of these words.

remarkable – something that attracts your attention

addicted – to need something all the time

inspiration – creative ideas from someone or something

plot – the main events of a story

evolve – to develop slowly

gripped – to have a strong feeling towards something

fascinating – something that is extremely interesting

hilarious – something that is extremely funny or amusing

insightful – to have a very good understanding of something

mesmerising – to grab/capture the complete attention of someone

Task A:

A *conjunction* is a word that joins two or more words, phrases or clauses.

Time Conjunction	End Clause
during	he jumped out of bed quickly
before	Mark had to plan it all
when	Mark was reading his book
while	he wouldn't answer the telephone

Complete these sentences using a time conjunction from the box below to begin and an end clause from the box to finish.

Before writing his story, **Mark had to plan it all.**

When Mark heard the alarm, **he jumped out of bed quickly.**

While Mark was reading his book, **he wouldn't answer the telephone.**

During the Maths lesson, **Mark was reading his book.**

Task B:

Complete the sentences below.

Mark said that Roald Dahl's stories were both entertaining and **remarkable**.

Before we write a story we need to create a **plot**.

Mark has become **addicted** to reading.

To become a **mesmerising** writer, Mark needs to work hard at school.

The Oompa Loompas are **hilarious**, they make Mark's mum laugh every time she reads about them.

Mark was **gripped** when he read James and the Giant Peach.

plot

hilarious

remarkable

mesmerising

gripped

addicted

Inspiring Dahl – SPAG

Prefixes are added to the beginning of an existing word in order to create a new word with a different meaning.

For example: *happy* and *un-* = *unhappy*

Place the root word in the correct prefix column. Some words may go in more than one column!

dis (not)	de (makes an opposite word)	mis (wrong)	over (too much)	re (again)
disappear dismount dishonest disagree	disform depart deform derail	mishandle misuse misbehave mislead	overpaid overcoat overdone overnight	rewrite recycle restart refill

appear	form	handle	paid	write	mount	use
part	coat	form	behave	night	done	
start	cycle	agree	rail	lead	honest	fill

Complete these sentences using the words below.

1. He tried hard in the spelling test, however, he had **misspelt** three words.
2. After the hurricane they had to **rebuild** many homes.
3. On their trip they had an **overnight** stay in France.
4. She **disliked** the new flavour of ice-cream.
5. He needed to **defrost** the chicken before he could cook it.
6. The young girl **misbehaved** while she was in the supermarket with her mum.

defrost rebuild misspelt disliked overnight misbehaved