



# ROALD DAHL

## THE GREAT MOUSE PLOT

Illustrated by Quentin Blake

**FREE** in exchange for a  
£1\* World Book Day  
Book Token (\*€1.50)

[www.worldbookday.com](http://www.worldbookday.com)

WORLD  
BOOK  
DAY

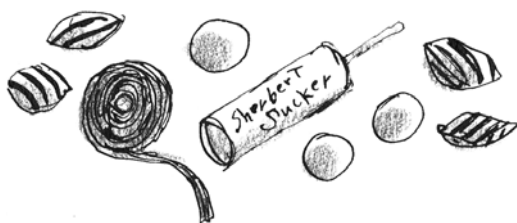
3 MARCH 2016



## 2

My second memory happened when I was just nine. By then I had made some friends and when I walked to school in the mornings I would start out alone but would pick up four other boys of my own age along the way. After school was over, the same four boys and I would set out together across the village green and through the village itself, heading for home. On the way to school and on the way back we always passed the sweet-shop. No we didn't, we never

passed it. We always stopped. We lingered outside its rather small window gazing in at the big glass jars full of Bull's-eyes and Old Fashioned Humbugs and Strawberry Bonbons and Glacier Mints and Acid Drops and Pear Drops and Lemon Drops and all the rest of them. Each of us received sixpence a week for pocket-money, and whenever there was any money in our pockets, we would all troop in together to buy a pennyworth of this or that. My own favourites were Sherbet Suckers and Liquorice Bootlaces.



One of the other boys, whose name was Thwaites, told me I should never eat Liquorice Bootlaces. Thwaites's father, who was a doctor, had said that they were made from rats' blood. The father had given his young son a lecture about Liquorice Bootlaces when he had caught him eating one in bed. 'Every ratcatcher in the country,' the father had said, 'takes his rats to the Liquorice Bootlace Factory, and the manager pays tuppence for each rat. Many a ratcatcher has become a millionaire by selling his dead rats to the Factory.'

'But how do they turn the rats into liquorice?' the young Thwaites had asked his father.

'They wait until they've got ten thousand rats,' the father had answered, 'then they

dump them all into a huge shiny steel cauldron and boil them up for several hours. Two men stir the bubbling cauldron with long poles and in the end they have a thick steaming rat-stew. After that, a cruncher is lowered into the cauldron to crunch the bones, and what's left is a pulpy substance called rat-mash.'

'Yes, but how do they turn that into Liquorice Bootlaces, Daddy?' the young Thwaites had asked, and this question, according to Thwaites, had caused his father to pause and think for a few moments before he answered it. At last he had said, 'The two men who were doing the stirring with the long poles now put on their wellington boots and climb into the cauldron and shovel the hot rat-mash out on to a concrete floor.'



Then they run a steam-roller over it several times to flatten it out. What is left looks rather like a gigantic black pancake, and all they have to do after that is to wait for it to cool and to harden so they can cut it up into strips to make the Bootlaces. Don't ever eat them,' the father had said. 'If you do, you'll get ratitis.'

‘What is ratitis, Daddy?’ young Thwaites had asked.

‘All the rats that the rat-catchers catch are poisoned with rat-poison,’ the father had said. ‘It’s the rat-poison that gives you ratitis.’

‘Yes, but what happens to you when you catch it?’ young Thwaites had asked.

‘Your teeth become very sharp and pointed,’ the father had answered. ‘And a short stumpy tail grows out of your back just above your bottom. There is no cure for ratitis. I ought to know. I’m a doctor.’



We all enjoyed Thwaites’s story and we made him tell it to us many times on our walks to and from school. But it didn’t stop any of us except Thwaites from

buying Liquorice Bootlaces. At two for a penny they were the best value in the shop. A Bootlace, in case you haven't had the pleasure of handling one, is not round. It's like a flat black tape about half an inch wide. You buy it rolled up in a coil, and in those days it used to be so long that when you unrolled it and held one end at arm's length above your head, the other end touched the ground.

Sherbet Suckers were also two a penny. Each Sucker consisted of a yellow cardboard tube filled with sherbet powder, and there was a hollow liquorice straw sticking out of it. (Rat's blood again, young Thwaites would warn us, pointing at the liquorice straw.) You sucked the sherbet up through the straw and when it



was finished you ate the liquorice. They were delicious, those Sherbet Suckers. The sherbet fizzed in your mouth, and if you knew how to do it, you could make white froth come out of your nostrils and pretend you were throwing a fit.

Gobstoppers, costing a penny each, were enormous hard round balls the size of small tomatoes. One Gobstopper would provide about an hour's worth of non-stop sucking and if you took it out of your mouth and inspected it every five minutes or so, you would find it had changed colour. There was something fascinating about the way it went from pink to blue to green to yellow. We used to wonder how in the world the Gobstopper Factory managed to achieve this magic. 'How *does* it happen?' we would

ask each other. ‘How *can* they make it keep changing colour?’

‘It’s your spit that does it,’ young Thwaites proclaimed. As the son of a



doctor, he considered

himself to be an authority on all things that had to

do with the body. He could tell us about scabs and when they were ready to be picked off. He knew why a black eye was blue and why blood was red. ‘It’s your spit that makes a Gobstopper change colour,’ he kept insisting. When we asked him to elaborate on this theory, he answered, ‘You wouldn’t understand it if I did tell you.’

Pear Drops were exciting because they had a dangerous taste. They smelled of

nail-varnish and they froze the back of your throat. All of us were warned against eating them, and the result was that we ate them more than ever.

Then there was a hard brown lozenge called the Tonsil Tickler. The Tonsil Tickler tasted and smelled very strongly of chloroform. We had not the slightest doubt that these things were saturated in the dreaded anaesthetic which, as Thwaites had many times pointed out to us, could put you to sleep for hours at a stretch. 'If my father has to saw off somebody's leg,' he said, 'he pours chloroform on to a pad and the person sniffs it and goes to sleep and my father saws his leg off without him even feeling it.'

'But why do they put it into sweets and sell them to us?' we asked him.

You might think a question like this would have baffled Thwaites. But Thwaites was never baffled. ‘My father says Tonsil Ticklers were invented for dangerous prisoners in jail,’ he said. ‘They give them one with each meal and the chloroform makes them sleepy and stops them rioting.’

‘Yes,’ we said, ‘but why sell them to children?’

‘It’s a plot,’ Thwaites said. ‘A grown-up plot to keep us quiet.’

## CHAPTER

## 3



The sweet-shop in Llandaff in the year 1923 was the very centre of our lives. Without it, there would have been little to live for. But it had one terrible drawback, this sweet-shop. The woman who owned it was a horror. We hated her and we had good reason for doing so.

Her name was Mrs Pratchett. She was a small skinny old hag with a moustache on her upper lip and a mouth as sour as a green gooseberry. She never smiled. She never

welcomed us when we went in, and the only times she spoke were when she said things like, ‘I’m watchin’ you so keep yer thievin’ fingers off them chocolates!’ Or ‘I don’t want you in ’ere just to look around! Either you *forks* out or you *gets* out!’

But by far the most loathsome thing about Mrs Pratchett was the filth that clung around her. Her apron was grey and greasy. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk. It was her hands, however, that disturbed us most. They were disgusting. They were black with dirt and grime. They looked as though they had been putting lumps of coal on the fire all day long. And do not forget please that it was these very hands and fingers

that she plunged into the sweet-jars when we asked for a pennyworth of Treacle Toffee or Wine Gums or Nut Clusters or whatever. There were precious few health laws in those days, and nobody, least of all Mrs Pratchett, ever thought of using a little shovel for getting out the sweets as they do today. The mere sight of her grimy right hand with its black fingernails digging an ounce of Chocolate Fudge out of a jar would have caused a starving tramp to go running from the shop. But not us. Sweets were our life-blood. We would have put up with far worse than that to get them. So we simply stood and watched in sullen silence while this disgusting old woman stirred around inside the jars with her foul fingers.



The other thing we hated Mrs Pratchett for was her meanness. Unless you spent a whole sixpence all in one go, she wouldn't give you a bag. Instead you got your sweets twisted up in a small piece of newspaper which she tore off a pile of old *Daily Mirrors* lying on the counter.

So you can well understand that we had it in for Mrs Pratchett in a big way, but



we didn't quite know what to do about it. Many schemes were put forward but none of them was any good. None of them, that is, until suddenly, one memorable afternoon, we found the dead mouse.





# ROALD DAHL

Can you believe this boy grew up to be the  
**WORLD'S NUMBER ONE STORYTELLER?**

Roald Dahl may have written some gigantically successful stories, but did you know that one of his favourites was **THE BFG**?

This July you'll be able to see **THE BFG** in a new film directed by Steven Spielberg. Make sure you read it before you see it! Turn the page to get started . . .

P.S. *Blue Peter* are running a really exciting 'Dream Big' competition around the release of **THE BFG** film. Keep watching the show on CBBC to find out more!





# ROALD DAHL

DON'T  
MISS THE  
STEVEN  
SPIELBERG  
FILM

## THE BFG

Illustrated by  
Quentin Blake

FREE D.I.Y.  
GIANT  
EARS!



# ABOUT THE BFG

**This story begins on a dark, silvery moonlit night when Sophie is snatched from her bed by a giant. Luckily it is the Big Friendly Giant, the BFG, who only eats snozzcumbers and glugs frobscottle.**

But there are other giants in Giant Country: fifty-foot brutes who gallop far and wide every night to find human beans to eat.

Sophie and her friend the BFG must come up with a plan to stop them, but first the BFG is going to tell Sophie why he travels around the world at night . . .



## *The Marvellous Ears*

‘If you is really wanting to know what I am doing in your village,’ the BFG said, ‘I is blowing a dream into the bedroom of those children.’

‘*Blowing a dream?*’ Sophie said. ‘What *do* you mean?’

‘I is a dream-blowing giant,’ the BFG said. ‘When all the other giants is galloping off every what way and which to swollop human beans, I is scuddling away to other places to blow dreams into the bedrooms of sleeping children. Nice dreams. Lovely golden dreams. Dreams that is giving the dreamers a happy time.’

‘Now hang on a minute,’ Sophie said.  
‘Where do you get these dreams?’

‘I collect them,’ the BFG said, waving an arm towards all the rows and rows of bottles on the shelves. ‘I has billions of them.’

‘You can’t *collect* a dream,’ Sophie said.  
‘A dream isn’t something you can catch hold of.’

‘You is never going to understand about it,’ the BFG said. ‘That is why I is not wishing to tell you.’

‘Oh, please tell me!’ Sophie said. ‘I *will* understand! Go on! Tell me how you collect dreams! Tell me everything!’

The BFG settled himself comfortably in his chair and crossed his legs. ‘Dreams,’ he said, ‘is very mysterious things. They is floating around in the air like little wispy-

misty bubbles. And all the time they is searching for sleeping people.'

'Can you see them?' Sophie asked.

'Never at first.'

'Then how do you catch them if you can't see them?' Sophie asked.

'Ah-ha,' said the BFG. 'Now we is getting on to the dark and dusky secrets.'

'I won't tell a soul.'

'I is trusting you,' the BFG said. He closed his eyes and sat quite still for a moment, while Sophie waited.

'A dream,' he said, 'as it goes whiffing through the night air, is making a tiny little buzzing-humming noise. But this little buzzy-hum is so silvery soft, it is impossible for a human bean to be hearing it.'

'Can *you* hear it?' Sophie asked.

The BFG pointed up at his enormous



truck-wheel ears which he now began to move in and out. He performed this exercise proudly, with a little proud smile on his face. 'Is you seeing these?' he asked.

'How could I miss them?' Sophie said.

'They maybe is looking a bit props-posterous to you,' the BFG said, 'but you must believe me when I say they is very extra-usual ears indeed. They is not to be coughed at.'



‘I’m quite sure they’re not,’ Sophie said.

‘They is allowing me to hear absolutely every single twiddly little thing.’

‘You mean you can hear things I can’t hear?’ Sophie said.

‘You is *deaf as a dumpling* compared with me!’ cried the BFG. ‘You is hearing only thumping loud noises with those little earwigs of yours. But I am hearing *all the secret whisperings of the world!*’

‘Such as what?’ Sophie asked.

‘In your country,’ he said, ‘I is hearing the footsteps of a ladybird as she goes walking across a leaf.’

‘*Honestly?*’ Sophie said, beginning to be impressed.

‘What’s more, I is hearing those footsteps *very loud*,’ the BFG said. ‘When a ladybird is walking across a leaf, I is hearing her feet

going *clumpety-clumpety-clump* like giants' footsteps.'

'Good gracious me!' Sophie said. 'What else can you hear?'

'I is hearing the little ants chittering to each other as they scuddle around in the soil.'

'You mean you can hear ants talking?'

'Every single word,' the BFG said. 'Although I is not exactly understanding their langwitch.'

'Go on,' Sophie said.

'Sometimes, on a very clear night,' the BFG said, 'and if I is swiggling my ears in the right direction' – and here he swivelled his great ears upwards so they were facing the ceiling – 'if I is swiggling them like this and the night is very clear, I is sometimes hearing faraway music coming from the stars in the sky.'

A queer little shiver passed through Sophie's body. She sat very quiet, waiting for more.

'My ears is what told me you was watching me out of your window last night,' the BFG said.

'But I didn't make a sound,' Sophie said.

'I was hearing your heart beating across the road,' the BFG said. 'Loud as a drum.'

'Go on,' Sophie said. 'Please.'

'I can hear plants and trees.'

'Do *they* talk?' Sophie asked.

'They is not exactly talking,' the BFG said. 'But they is making noises. For instance, if I come along and I is picking a lovely flower, if I is twisting the stem of the flower till it breaks, then the plant is screaming. I can hear it screaming and screaming very clear.'

‘You don’t mean it!’ Sophie cried. ‘How awful!’

‘It is screaming just like you would be screaming if someone was twisting *your* arm right off.’

‘Is that really true?’ Sophie asked.

‘You think I is swizzfiggling you?’

‘It is rather hard to believe.’

‘Then I is stopping right here,’ said the BFG sharply. ‘I is not wishing to be called a fibster.’

‘Oh no! I’m not calling you anything!’ Sophie cried. ‘I believe you! I do really! Please go on!’

The BFG gave her a long hard stare. Sophie looked right back at him, her face open to his. ‘I believe you,’ she said softly.

She had offended him, she could see that.

‘I wouldn’t ever be fibbling to you,’ he said.

‘I know you wouldn’t,’ Sophie said. ‘But you must understand that it isn’t easy to believe such amazing things straight away.’

‘I understand that,’ the BFG said.

‘So do please forgive me and go on,’ she said.

He waited a while longer, and then he said, ‘It is the same with trees as it is with flowers. If I is chopping an axe into the trunk of a big tree, I is hearing a terrible sound coming from inside the heart of the tree.’

‘What sort of sound?’ Sophie asked.

‘A soft moaning sound,’ the BFG said. ‘It is like the sound an old man is making when he is dying slowly.’

He paused. The cave was very silent.

‘Trees is living and growing just like you and me,’ he said. ‘They is alive. So is plants.’

He was sitting very straight in his chair now, his hands clasped tightly together in front of him. His face was bright, his eyes round and bright as two stars.

‘Such wonderful and terrible sounds I is hearing!’ he said. ‘Some of them you would never wish to be hearing yourself! But some is like glorious music!’

He seemed almost to be transfigured by the excitement of his thoughts. His face was beautiful in its blaze of emotions.

‘Tell me some more about them,’ Sophie said quietly.

‘You just ought to be hearing the little micies talking!’ he said. ‘Little micies is always talking to each other and I is hearing them as loud as my own voice.’

‘What do they say?’ Sophie asked.

‘Only the micies know that,’ he said.

‘Spiders is also talking a great deal. You might not be thinking it but spiders is the most tremendous natterboxes. And when they is spinning their webs, they is singing all the time. They is singing sweeter than a nightingull.’

‘Who else do you hear?’ Sophie asked.

‘One of the biggest chatbags is the cattlepiddlers,’ the BFG said.

‘What do they say?’

‘They is arguing all the time about who is going to be the prettiest butterfly. That is all they is ever talking about.’

‘Is there a dream floating around in here now?’ Sophie asked.

The BFG moved his great ears this way and that, listening intently. He shook his head. ‘There is no dream in here,’ he said, ‘except in the bottles. I has a special place to

go for catching dreams. They is not often coming to Giant Country.'

'How do you catch them?'

'The same way you is catching butterflyflies,' the BFG answered. 'With a net.' He stood up and crossed over to a corner of the cave where a pole was leaning against the wall. The pole was about thirty feet long and there was a net on the end of it. 'Here is the dream-catcher,' he said, grasping the pole in one hand. 'Every morning I is going out and snitching new dreams to put in my bottles.'

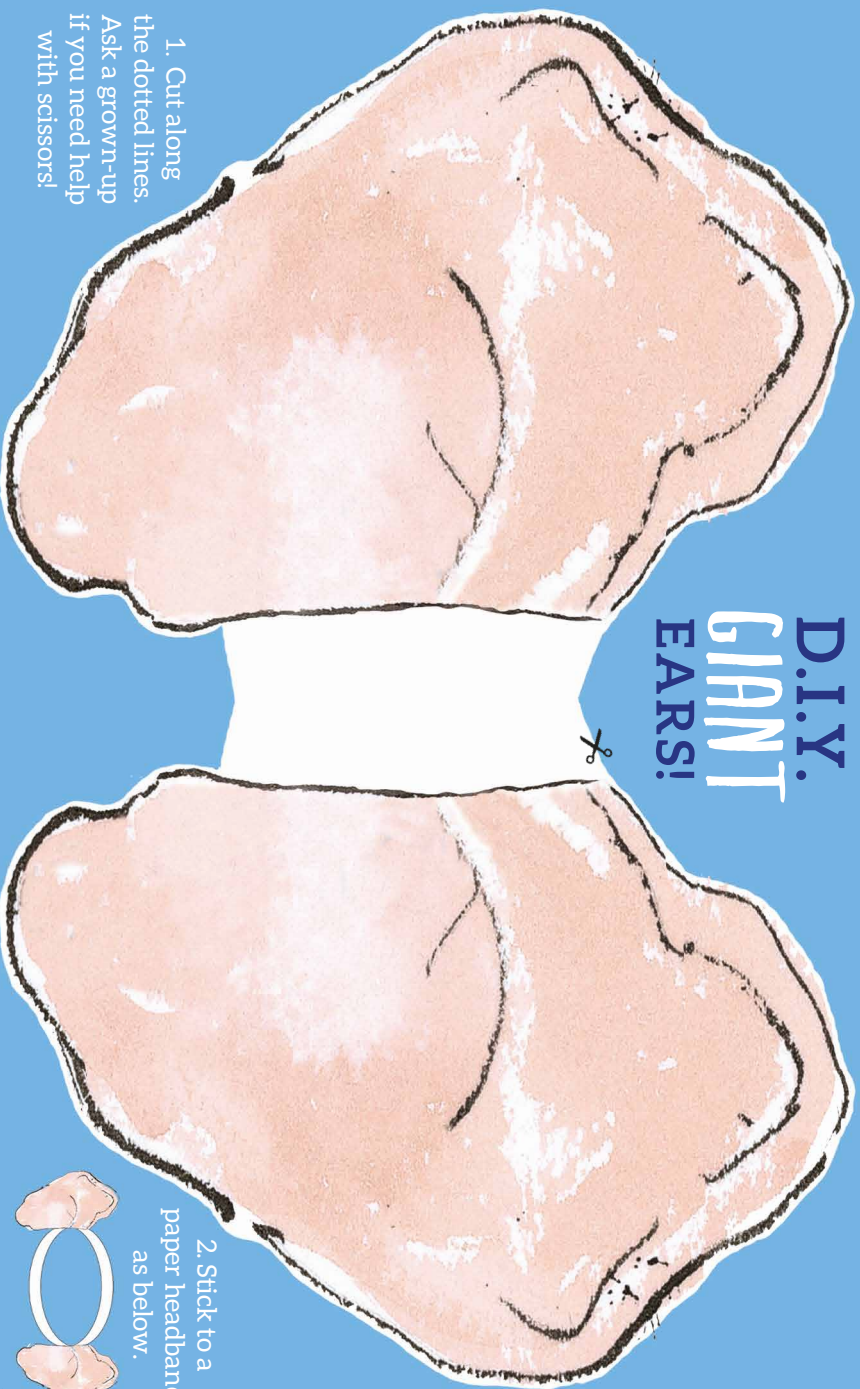
Suddenly, he seemed to lose interest in the conversation. 'I is getting hungry,' he said. 'It is time for eats.'



HAVE YOU EVER HEARD A DREAM?  
**NO?** Then you need  
**GIANT** ears!



# D.I.Y. GIANT EARS!



1. Cut along  
the dotted lines.  
Ask a grown-up  
if you need help  
with scissors!

2. Stick to a  
paper headband  
as below.

