



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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2013 Volume II: Interpreting Texts, Making Meaning: Starting Small

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## **Giant Reading with The BFG**

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by Whitney Davis

### **Introduction**

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Thump, thump, thump! What is that? It's tall. It's big. It's ugly. It's a giant!! Giants leave their mark wherever they go. From shattered towns and villages to human bones left behind after a late night meal, giants always leave their mark. Just like giants, we want our kids to be able to make and leave their mark when reading.

This unit will focus on growing giants in reading through teaching and improving your students' reading comprehension skills. Throughout this unit we will focus on strengthening reading comprehension skills through reinforcing and improving your students' skills in retelling, predicting, making connections, and critical thinking skills. This unit can be adapted and used from kindergarten through third grade.

### **Rationale**

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Reading comprehension is a skill that lower elementary school kids struggle to master. It is an even bigger skill to master for students classified as "struggling, or at-risk readers". For the purposes of this curriculum based unit, reading comprehension can be defined as a process in which readers access prior knowledge and put it together with information found within a text to construct meaning. In order for students to be able to comprehend a text successfully, they are required to make connections, visualize what is said, infer meaning, and ask questions that will lead to understanding. <sup>1</sup> Many factors can prevent students from mastering reading comprehension, such as; low academic achievement, being held back a grade, poor behavior and attendance, and low socioeconomic status. <sup>2</sup>

This research-based curriculum unit will be designed to highlight the best practices used to teach reading comprehension skills and strategies to lower elementary school students and at-risk students.

### **Demographics**

George Washington Carver Elementary School is an inner-city school located in the Jackson Ward area of Richmond, Virginia. Ninety-nine percent of the school's population is Black, and ninety-three percent of the

students attending George Washington Carver Elementary School receive free or reduced-price lunch.

At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, there were 22 students in my class. Two students received speech therapy twice a week, and one was an English as a Second Language (ESL) student. Out of the class of 22 students, 13 were classified as "on track" readers, 3 were classified as "emergent" readers, and 4 were classified as strugglers. The goal for the school year was for each student to make measureable progress in the areas of reading and comprehension.

## Content Objectives

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### Background Information

Roald Dahl is the author of many well-known children's books. Some that you may be familiar with are: *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Matilda*. Roald Dahl also happens to be the author of my favorite children's novel *The BFG*, on which is the novel that this unit is centered.

Roald Dahl was born in Llandaff, Wales in 1916. As a young boy, he was a lover of stories and books, especially the stories his mother told of trolls and other mythical characters. Dahl first began writing in 1942, when he would describe his version of World War II for the Saturday Night Post. He then went on to write a series of short stories for adults. <sup>3</sup>

It wasn't until Roald Dahl became a father that he started his career as a children's author in the 1960's. Much as his mother did for him when he was a young boy, Dahl would make up bedtime stories for his daughters. He fostered many ideas from his made up tales, which is how *James and the Giant Peach* came into existence in 1961 <sup>4</sup>. He went on to write his second book, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, in 1967, and many other bestselling books followed, including *The BFG*.

Roald Dahl had a special gift, which was being able to identify with children. He stated:

If you want to remember what it's like to live in a child's world, you've got to get down on your hands and knees and live like that for a week. You'll find you have to look up at all these giants around you who are always telling you what to do and what not to do.<sup>5</sup>

He understood that a child's attention needed to be captivated and said,

It's tougher to keep a child interested because a child doesn't have the concentration of an adult. The child knows the television is in the next room. It's tough to hold a child, but it's a lovely thing to try to do. <sup>6</sup>

He also believed that it was important to teach children to become readers.

He stated that "Books shouldn't be daunting, they should be funny, exciting, and wonderful; and learning to be a reader gives a terrific advantage." <sup>7</sup>

## *Fairy Tales*

I'm sure you know about them, I know about them, but our students may not know too much about fairy tales. I'm talking about your classic fairytales like *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and *Goldilocks and The Three Little Bears*. Fairytales are a kind of folktale or fable. Fairy tales have been retold for many years, and pass down from generation to generation. Through the reading of fairy tales, students are introduced to witches, giants, ogres, dragons, queens, princesses, elves, and a plethora of animals who are able to talk. Not only are children introduced to mythical and royal characters, they also begin to understand magic, and how enchanted objects work, such as the talking mirror in *Snow White*.<sup>8</sup>

Fairy tales are popular among children and adults because of the lessons that they teach. According to psychologist Bruno Bettelheim and Kieran Egan, children seek meaning in their lives, and much of it comes from the impact of parenting and cultural heritage. Much of the reading material that students are exposed to in school during instructional time does not have depth or substance, which leaves little for children to connect to. Fairy tales give children a chance to connect to a text on an emotional level. The lessons learned in fairy tales help guide children through situations in everyday life. I'm sure you can relate to Goldilocks in the story *Goldilocks and the Three Little Bears*—that is, if you have ever been in a place that you had no business being in, or touched (and broken) some items that did not belong to you without permission. Fairy Tales help children understand right from wrong, good from evil, and how to handle the situations that life may bring. Children can identify with fairy tales because they are able to make a self to text connection between themselves and the characters.<sup>9</sup>

Fairy Tales can be very helpful to teachers when teaching language arts and reading by helping to develop students' aptitude for learning and imagination. Because students are able to make self to text connections with many fairy tales, they will be actively engaged when reading. Students will be able to apply what they already know from past experiences to connect with the emotions and feelings of the characters in the text. Students will be able understand abstract oppositional concepts associated with fairy tales, and use cause and effect to organize knowledge. Students will also gain a better understanding of their cultural heritage, as well as the heritage of others. Last, students will understand that all living things have needs and problems, which will help them to understand more about themselves.<sup>10</sup>

## *The Unit*

Throughout this unit you and your students will be reading and discussing a lot about giants. It is good to have a little background knowledge about giants, as it will help you to discuss *The BFG* with your students. Giants are recognized in folktales as being a type of magical or supernatural being. Giants are usually huge in body type, and are not easy on the eyes. Most giants are portrayed in literature as crude and awkward, but often possess a great deal of wisdom. Giants are a bit greedy when it comes to eating, and at times they yearn for the flesh of humans.<sup>11</sup>

This curriculum unit will be based on the children's novel by Roald Dahl called *The BFG*. I chose this book because I believe Roald Dahl to be an awesome children's writer. The story of *The BFG* has two main characters with which students can identify immediately; Sophie, a child who gets kidnapped in the middle of the night, and *The BFG*, a giant, friendly as it turns out, who is judged based on what humans have read and heard about giants. When reading this novel, you will find that there are many opportunities for students to use their critical thinking, predicting, and drawing conclusions skills. There is also ample opportunity throughout this novel for teacher-student, and peer to peer discussion. You will also find that there are great

prompts that can be used throughout this novel for writing. Students will have many chances to share their opinions, and express how they feel about the situations that the main characters are put in. This is an engaging novel to read at the end of the year, when you will be able to reinforce reading comprehension and writing skills that have been taught, while having fun with your students.

Roald Dahl's *The BFG* introduces a character by the name of Sophie, who is an orphan living in a home for girls in England. It is the "witching hour" and she is supposed to be asleep. Sophie goes to the window to close the curtains, so that the light from the moon does not disturb her, and sees something tall, black, and skinny walking down the street. Sophie is spotted by the creature, and is kidnapped and taken to Giant Country. Once in giant country, Sophie learns that there are two kinds of giants; those that devour human beings, and the Big Friendly Giant (The BFG), who is kind, warm, and gentle. Sophie and the BFG learn of the other giants' plan to eat the girls and boys that live at the orphanage in England. Sophie and the BFG come up with a plan to stop the other nine giants before it's too late. <sup>12</sup>

In addition to reading *The BFG*, you will want to give your students some background knowledge on giants. *Jack and the Beanstalk* is a wonderful fairy tale, and it is referenced in *The BFG*. Jack is a young boy who goes to town to sell their family's cow because it would no longer produce milk. On the way to town, Jack is stopped by a gentleman who offers to trade Jack five magical beans for his cow. When Jack comes home with beans and no money, his mother becomes upset with him and throws the beans out of the window. She sends him to bed with no supper. When Jack wakes up he finds that the magical beans have sprouted into a huge beanstalk that reached into the sky. he climbs the beanstalk to find a woman giant. The giant gives Jack breakfast, but must quickly hide him when her husband awakes. Jack waits for the giant's husband to fall asleep, and makes his way down the beanstalk, but not before he steals a bag of gold. Later, Jack travels back up the beanstalk in need of more gold coins. He waits for the giant's husband to fall asleep and steals the hen that lays the golden eggs, and climbs back down the beanstalk. Still not satisfied, Jack climbs the beanstalk again. This time he takes the golden harp. Jack isn't so lucky getting away, and the giant climbs down the beanstalk after him. When Jack gets to the bottom of the beanstalk he quickly grabs an axe and chops the beanstalk down. The beanstalk and the giant come tumbling down. Jack [has] killed the giant, and he and his mother live happily ever after. <sup>13</sup> I recommend that you wait to read *Jack and the Beanstalk* to your students until you have read through the second chapter of *The BFG*, entitled "Who?", and before the thirteenth chapter, entitled "A Troggolehumper and the Fleshlumpeater".

*Fin M'Coul* by Tomie dePaola is an Irish legend about a good giant whose name is Fin M'Coul. *Fin M'Coul* is a great book to read to students before reading the BFG to introduce them to the concept of giants, and to help them compare and contrast the characteristics of good giants and bad giants. Fin M'Coul is a nice and gentle giant, who happens to be very strong. Cucullin is the strongest giant in all of the Ireland, but is not as nice as Fin. In order to prove that he is the strongest giant, Cucullin beats up every giant in Ireland except Fin M'Coul. Whenever Fin would hear that Cucullin was nearby he would run away, hoping not to be found. Fin's wife becomes tired of running from Cucullin. Knowing the secret of Cucullin's strength, she comes up with a series of events that will trick Cucullin into losing his strength. <sup>14</sup>

*Abiyoyo*, by Pete Seeger, is an exciting folktale about a little boy who plays the ukulele, his father who is a magician, and a giant named Abiyoyo. The little boy and his father lived in a small village. The villagers would complain that the little boy made too much noise while playing the ukulele, and that the father played annoying magic tricks with his wand. One day the villagers got tired of the little boy's noise, and the father's magic tricks, and made them go and live on the edge of town. In this new town people told stories about a giant named Abiyoyo who eats people, but no one believed the stories. One day Abiyoyo rose and started

walking towards the town, and everyone was scared. The little boy's father was confident that he could make Abiyoyo disappear if he could get him to lie down. The little boy pulled out his ukulele and started to play music for the giant. Abiyoyo danced and danced until he was tired, and fell to the ground. The little boy's father pulled out his wand and Abiyoyo disappeared. All the villagers were grateful to the little boy and his dad, and invited them to come back to live in town. <sup>15</sup>

## Teaching Strategies

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What can be said about reading for comprehension? It's a skill that students struggle to learn. It's hard for students to stay actively engaged when reading to be able comprehend a text. I struggle when teaching reading comprehension! If these are some of your thoughts when approaching reading comprehension, then you are not alone. I stand with you, yelling "how do I get my students to understand?" while pulling my hair out!

When we want students to comprehend while reading a text, what we really want them to do is think. Think about the events that are happening in a story, how the characters feel, what's going to happen next, whether the events occurring in the story are normal, funny, or weird, and what connections can be made from this text to real life. In order for all of this to occur we have to teach and encourage our students to be "reading detectives".

### Retelling

The first step in teaching and encouraging your students to become reading detectives is to help them apply a skill that they have been using since they were able to talk, which is retelling. Students are able to retell an event that happens on the playground, or what Johnny was doing to Tommy behind your back. When it comes to retelling a story that has been read, students often draw a blank. When retelling a story, students should be able to use characters' names, tell where the story takes place, and tell about the important parts of the story. When good reading characteristics are taught, students will become better thinkers and readers. <sup>16</sup>

The first chapter of *The BFG* is a great place to start getting your kids to use those retelling skills that they already possess. During this chapter Sophie is awake during the witching hour because the moon is shining on her through the window. When she gets out of bed to close the curtains, she sees something tall, black, and skinny. When reading aloud the first chapter of *The BFG*, be sure to pause after each event that happens. Remember, you are laying the foundation for your students so that they will have an understanding of what is going on in the story. You want to be sure to get an answer to the following question—as it pertains to the events that occur in the story—from your students when reading: Who is the character in this story? What is wrong with Sophie? Where is Sophie? What time of day is it? What was Sophie supposed to be doing? What did Sophie do?; and What did Sophie see? Explain to your students that good reading detectives are able to listen for clues, ask and answer questions that will help them to be able to tell what is going on. Once your students have answered these questions from hearing the text, you are ready to go back and read the first chapter again without stopping. After re-reading the first chapter, use chart paper to create a story board, and fill it in with your students. After the storyboard is complete ask students to tell you what has happened in the story. Encourage students to use retelling terms such as, first, next, then, and last; use the story board to remind students of character names and the setting when retelling what has happened in chapter one of the story.

## **Any Thoughts?**

In addition to retelling a story, we want students to be great thinkers when they are reading or listening to a story. We know students can tell you the important events that have happened in a story, but can they react to events in a story, paint a picture, make predictions, or make connections within a text?

Have you ever read a book to your kids, during which you come across a humorous part? Did you laugh? How about your students, did they laugh? Sometimes students don't know how to react to events that happen within a text. In order to get the appropriate reaction we have to teach students that they must always be paying attention, and thinking about what's going on in a story. Great reading detectives are able to react to events. <sup>17</sup>

In order for students to learn how to react to a text we have to guide their thinking by planting little, tiny thinking seeds. Let's reuse chapter one of *The BFG*. Sophie is awake because she could not sleep. It's the middle of the night, everything is still, and everything is silent. No sounds could be heard outside. The window curtains are wide open and the light from the moon is shining in on her, which prevents her from going to sleep. <sup>18</sup> After reading this you should start to get a feeling of alarm, suspense or fright, but whatever your reactions I think it's safe to say that we feel that something is not right. The feeling that you are getting while reading this portion of chapter one is the same feeling that your students should be getting as well. When teaching students to react to what is being read to them, you have to make them aware of the feelings that they are having. A way to teach students to bring those feelings forward is to pause when reading and say "boys and girls, I have a funny feeling about what we just read. Do you have a funny feeling too?" After students have responded to your question, you and your students should be good reading detectives and discuss the feeling that you both are having, and what clues from the text have guided you towards that feeling. <sup>19</sup>

Great reading detectives are always thinking and on the look-out for clues when reading. In order to gain an understanding of a text, students must always be thinking and asking themselves questions. Asking questions while reading helps students to understand meaning, and make predictions. The end goal is for the students to ask themselves these questions while reading to gain an understanding, but for now we are going to have to model the thinking process until they get into the swing of things. Let's reuse the same passage from chapter one of *The BFG*. When going back to plant a thinking seed, you are going to have to go back and pull out the little details that describe the setting at this time in the passage. You may start by asking your kids what's going on right now in the story? What does Sophie see? What does Sophie hear? What time of night is it? Why is Sophie awake? These are all the questions you want your students to generate and answer in order to have a reaction to this text. When you and your students have reviewed what is happening in the story, you should say to your students "boys and girls, I have a funny feeling about what's happening in the story." "Does this sound right to you (go through a quick list of what we know is happening)?" Then ask your students how they feel about what's happening in the story. Eventually, if this technique is used consistently, students will begin to raise their hand and tell you when they are having a funny feeling. <sup>20</sup>

## **Painting a Picture**

When I read a story to my students that is full of vivid details I want to pause, put my hands in the air very dramatically and say "picture this...". "Picture this" is exactly what we want our students to do when they are reading a text. Teaching your students to paint mental pictures of a text when reading keeps them actively engaged in the text.



Teaching your students to paint mental pictures when they are reading can be a daunting task for the simple reason that you have to remember to model this activity whenever the opportunity presents itself. You will want to model how you are using your sense of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing to bring the author's words to life. Let's stay in chapter one of *The BFG*, but this time we will look at a different passage. It is the witching hour, and everything is still. Sophie has gotten out of her bed to close the curtain. Before closing the curtain she peeks out of the window. The silvery moon is shining down on the village streets, the houses look bent and crooked, and everything looks pale and ghostly, and milky-white. <sup>21</sup> The author, Roald Dahl, uses great describing words that appeal to your sense of sight, and hearing. While we are able to pick out these describing words, and use them to paint a picture, our students cannot. After reading this passage, ask your students to put on their reading detective hats and re-read the passage again. Ask students to listen for the words that describe the sounds that Sophie could hear, and what her village and houses looked like. Remind your reading detectives that they are listening for shape and color words. A great way for you to get students to understand the terms bent, crooked, and deathly still is to have them act them out. Ask your reading detectives to describe what the houses look like, what the streets look like, what the sky looks like. Ask your reading detectives to close their eyes and listen as you paint a picture. Start by saying "I am imagining", or "I can picture how," and begin to describe the scene in your own words. When you are done it would be a good idea to take chart paper and draw a picture of what the kids have described so that they are able to see that words can come to life. <sup>22</sup>

## **Making Predictions**

Making predictions is another skill that our students use several times throughout the day. Students may walk outside for recess and look up and see clouds in the sky and say "oh I think that it is going to rain". They were able to use what they know about the weather and make a guess as to what will happen in the near future. Since this skill is naturally embedded within a child, we have to pull it out and show them how to apply it when they are reading.

As you help your students develop their thinking skills as readers you will find that they will start to wonder why things are happening. When the students start to question why things are happening, they going to want to know what happens next. Sometimes when students make predictions they come up with these far-fetched ideas as to what will happen next that have absolutely nothing to do with what's going on in the story. When making predictions, you will want to ask your students: What has happened so far in the story? What information has the author given us in the story? What is the problem in the story? Let's go to a passage at the end of chapter one where Sophie is looking out of the window down the street. It's dark, the houses look slanted, and everything is a pale, ghostly, milky-white color. Down the street, Sophie sees something tall, something skinny, and something black walking towards her home. <sup>23</sup> The question that you will be asking your students is, "What did Sophie see?" Before your students can answer this question and make their predictions there is some information that the author has given us to base our predictions on. Have your students put on their reading detective hats and listen to the passage again. Explain to your students that we need to solve this mystery: what did Sophie see coming down the street. The first step is to gather information. Ask your students, "What information did the author give us?" It would be a good idea to write on the board the three things that Sophie saw so students can see it, and you can make reference to it. It very important that students understand that predictions are based on your past experiences, and the information that is given in the text. Repetition is key. You will need to continue to reiterate to your students the three things that the author has told us that Sophie saw out of the window. You will need to say to your students, "We know that Sophie saw something tall, black and skinny. What is something that could be tall, black, and

skinny that you think Sophie could see coming down the street? <sup>24</sup>

## Connecting the Dots

All great reading detectives should be able to make text-to-self connections when reading. Making these types of connections when reading helps students to understand the story and the characters better. Students are more likely to stay engaged in a story if they can recall a memory or past experience that is similar to the events that are happening in a story.

In order for your students to make connections with the text, more of those thinking seeds have to be planted, and the question "Has anything like this ever happened to you?" must be asked. Since students are recalling a memory or event that has happened in the past, they should start their response to your question with "This reminds me of". By doing this students are reminding themselves that they are talking about an experience that they have already had, and not something that is going to happen, or couldn't happen at all. Let's look at the first line in chapter one of *The BFG*, which says "Sophie couldn't sleep." <sup>25</sup> After reading this single line you're going to have to guide your reading detectives into recalling a time when they haven't been able to fall asleep. You may want to say something like;" It's late at night and you are lying in your bed. Your mom and dad, brothers and sisters are sleeping, but you are the only one awake. Has this every happened to you?" When students raise their hands to respond with their connection to the text, prompt them to start by saying "This reminds me of a time when I couldn't sleep because." Adding "because" to their response statement is going to get your reading detectives to connect to the character's problem because it is now a shared experience. Adding "because" also prompts your reading detectives to ask themselves the question;" Why couldn't Sophie go to sleep?" <sup>26</sup>

## Healthy Conversation

Having a classroom discussion with first graders has to be the hardest task that I have faced as a teacher. Whenever we start discussing a text, situation, or an event, it seems as if everyone wants to talk at the same time, and then go off into their "I" stories that have absolutely nothing to do with the topic that is being discussed. If this scenario sounds vaguely familiar to you, then you must be pulling your hair screaming " why won't you just listen."

Listening is a skill that must be taught, and is very hard for children to master, especially when they have to listen to each other. Listening is an active task. In order for a listener to be able to respond to a speaker and be able to make connections, they must think about the speaker's words, and what the speaker is saying. <sup>27</sup>

In order to grow great thinkers while reading, it is up to us to teach our students how to be great listeners. You can model great listening skills for your students, and the perfect time to model these skills is during whole group reading time. Great listeners look at the speaker while he/she is talking, and nod and smile to show that they are listening. Listeners are also great thinkers. They are thinking about what the speaker is saying, and using that information to paint a picture in their minds. Great listeners also ask questions in order to be sure they understand what the speaker is really saying: Can you say more?[] I don't understand. Can you explain? —and Could you repeat that? <sup>28</sup>

Now that our Children have become great listeners, we are ready to begin having healthy conversations about *The BFG*. When having conversations about books in the classroom, you have to remember to let the comments of your students drive the conversation. Your job is to make sure that the conversation stays in its



lane. When having healthy conversation in the classroom it is important to remember that everyone is free to speak (one at time), and that you want everyone to participate. A healthy conversation has one central idea, and stays with that idea. Last, conversations about a book are only about that book. <sup>29</sup>

*The BFG* is a great book to use to reinforce conversational skills. As you continue to read, you and your students will find that Sophie has been kidnapped by a giant, and taken to Giant Country. Sophie fears that the giant is going to eat her, but is pleasantly surprised to learn that he a big friendly giant (The BFG) who does not eat people. Chapter seven begins with The BFG learning that Sophie is an orphan who never knew her mom and dad, and has been treated badly at times. We also discover not only that The BFG is a friendly giant, but that he "blows" good dreams to sleeping boys and girls in Sophie's village. He goes on to explain that there is a place called Dream Country where he uses his enhanced sense of hearing to catch dreams. <sup>30</sup>

Conversation about this chapter can begin by stating what we already know about The BFG. We know that The BFG is a good giant, and doesn't like to see people being hurt. How do you think The BFG is feeling as Sophie is telling him about her life at the orphanage? Have your students turn to their listening partner and discuss their thoughts. We know that The BFG is a sensitive giant who laughs one second, and cries the next. What do you think Sophie is thinking as The BFG responds to her story about living in the orphanage?

## Teaching Activities

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Not only is *The BFG* by Roald Dahl an exciting and wonderful book to read to your students that will help to cultivate a passion for reading and reinforce comprehension skills, but there are many activities that students can engage in that will assess their level of comprehension.

### **Lesson 1: Making Predictions and Asking Questions...What happened to Sophie?**

In chapter one of *The BFG* we discover that Sophie is an orphan who is up late at night during what is called the witching hour. Sophie gets out of bed to close the curtains to the window when she sees something tall, black, and skinny coming down the street. <sup>31</sup>

In chapter two, Sophie tries to figure out exactly what she is looking at walking down the street. She knows that it isn't human, but it resembles a person. Sophie begins to think that it is a "giant person". As this "giant person" is walking down the street she notices that he is wearing a black cloak, and is carrying a suitcase. The "giant person" stops in front of the Goochey's house and looks into the upstairs window of the children who live there, Michael and Jane. Sophie watches as the "giant person" pulls a jar and a long trumpet out of the suitcase. The "giant person" pours the contents of the jar into the trumpet and blows it into the window of the Goochey children. As the "giant person" is packing up he turns and sees Sophie staring at him out of her window across the street. As soon as Sophie sees the "giant person's" face she runs back to her bed and hides under the covers. <sup>32</sup>

The first time that I read this chapter I got goose bumps all over my arms because I wanted to know, exactly who was it that Sophie was seeing? What and why was he blowing something into the window of the Goochey children? — and What was going to happen to Sophie now that she has been seen by this "giant person"? Just as I was able to formulate these questions that the author wants me to arrive at while reading this text, we

have to teach our students the do the same: how to think and ask questions while reading.

After reading chapter two to your students, you will want to go back and "dissect" the chapter with your reading detectives. Explain to your students that we have a mystery to solve today, and we need to start by gathering the all the information and clues that the author has given us. It may be a good idea to start a BFG KWL Chart to help students organize their thoughts visually. Start by asking the students, "What is it that we already know?" There are three important things that you want your students to tell you that they know in this chapter:

1. Sophie sees a giant person.
2. The giant person is blowing something into the window of the Goochey children.
3. The giant person catches Sophie looking at him from her window.

Once you and your students have gathered all the information and clues, you are ready to begin asking questions that will help solve the mystery. Read through the facts again with your students, and as you read start saying to your students "Something does not make sense. I wonder what's really going on here? I believe I have some questions that need to be answered about the information that we already have. What about you? What do we want to know?" There are three important questions that we want answers to in this chapter:

1. What did the "giant person" blow into the window of the Goochey Children?
2. What is going to happen to Sophie now that the "giant person" has seen her?
3. How would you feel if you were Sophie?

Chapter two of *The BFG* leaves you with many activities that can be used to reinforce sequencing, reading comprehension, and predicting skills. At the end of this chapter, there is a writing opportunity that will allow students to use their predicting skills to tell you what they think will happen to Sophie now that the "giant person" has seen her. I like to do most of my writing on story top paper where students can draw a picture first, and then explain their picture when they are writing. I find that this helps students organize their thoughts, and incorporate detail into their writing. You can also have your students exercise their sequencing and comprehension skills by completing a six-box (a large piece of white or manila construction paper folded into six boxes) where they would recall six important events that have happened in the story from the beginning of the book to the end of chapter two, then draw a picture and write a sentence(s) to explain their picture. Students can also make complete a story map on which they identify the characters, setting, and problem, and predict the solution.

### **Lesson two: How To Make Snozzcumber Juice**

As we continue to read *The BFG*, we learn that Sophie has been indeed kidnapped by a giant and taken to a far off land called Giant Country. Sophie thinks that the giant that kidnapped her is going to eat her because all giants prefer human beings as their food of choice. Through conversation, Sophie learns that the giant who kidnapped her is different, and good. He does not eat people because he thinks that it is wrong, unlike the other giants who live in Giant Country, which is why he is called The Big Friendly Giant or The BFG. Since The BFG chooses not to eat "human beans", he is forced to eat the only vegetable that grows in Giant Country, the snozzcumber. According to The BFG, snozzcumpers are "filthing, sickable, disgusterous, and rotsome".<sup>33</sup>

Chapter eight of *The BFG* allows you and your students to trade in your reading detective hats for chef hats as you make up recipes for Snozzcumber Juice. Tell your students that we can't grow snozzcubmers because they only grow in Giant Country, but we can make our own version Snozzcumber Juice with a special machine called a juicer. This activity will allow students to be independent thinkers as they brainstorm and make a list of green fruits and vegetables that can be used to make Snozzcumber Juice. Students will then write a recipe for their juice, including a list of ingredients and step by step set of instructions (first, next, then, and last) that tell how to make the juice. Have students draw small illustrations beside their steps. As a reading reward, you and your students could make your very own Snozzcumber Juice and decide whether you think it is "wondercrump," or "disgusterous!"

### **Lesson Three: Making Connections...Jack and the Fleshlumpeater**

In chapter thirteen, Sophie and The BFG are just coming back from Dream Country, where they have captured a trogglehumber, or bad dream. They find that the other nine mean, man-eating giants are fast asleep. The BFG and Sophie decide to blow the trogglehumber onto the meanest sleeping giant of them all, the Fleshlumpeater. As the nightmare unleashes itself onto the Fleshlumpeater he begins to thrash and yell out, asking Jack not to kill him, and to have mercy on him. The BFG tells Sophie that all giants are afraid of Jack because he has killed a giant. As a result of the Fleshlumpeater's violent thrashing from his horrible nightmare, he hits the Meatdripper in the mouth and the Gizzardgulper in the stomach, which starts a fight and wakes the other sleeping giants. <sup>34</sup>

In order to give your reading detectives a little background information on giants, and an opportunity to make text to text connections, you should read *Jack and the Beanstalk* aloud prior to reading chapter thirteen. In this chapter, we want students to be able to make a connection between Jack in the fairytale *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and Jack in the Fleshlumpeater's dream who he seems to be scared of. Ask your reading detectives to put their hats back on because we have another mystery to solve: Who is Jack? Ask your reading detectives, "What information and clues has the author given us about this person named Jack?" There are three things that you want your students to tell you about Jack:

1. Jack is a human being
2. All giants are afraid of him
3. Jack is a giant killer

Ask your reading detectives whether they have ever heard of a person named Jack who may have killed a giant. As a culminating activity use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the story of *Jack and the Bean Stalk* with *The BFG*.

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## Appendices

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### Appendix A

This unit meets the following Virginia Standards of learning in language arts for First Grade: <sup>35</sup>

Standard 1.1: The student will continue to demonstrate growth in the use of oral language.

- a) Listen and respond to a variety of media, including books, audiotapes, videos, and other age-appropriate materials.
- b) Tell and retell stories and events in logical order.
- c) Participate in a variety of oral language activities, including choral speaking and reciting short poems, rhymes, songs, and stories with repeated patterns.
- d) Express ideas orally in complete sentences.

e) Express ideas orally in complete sentences.

Standard 1.3: The student will adapt or change oral language to fit the situation.

a) Initiate conversation with peers and adults.

b) Follow rules for conversation.

c) Use appropriate voice level in small-group settings.

d) Ask and respond to questions in small-group settings.

Standard 1.9: The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fiction and nonfiction.

a) Preview the selection.

b) Set a purpose for reading.

c) Relate previous experiences to what is read.

d) Make predictions about content.

e) Ask and answer who, what, when, where, why, and how questions about what is read.

f) Identify characters, setting, and important events.

g) Retell stories and events, using beginning, middle, and end.

h) Identify the main idea and theme.

Standard 1.12: The student will write to communicate ideas.

a) Generate ideas.

b) Focus on one topic.

c) Use descriptive words when writing about people, places, things, and events.

d) Use complete sentences in final copies.

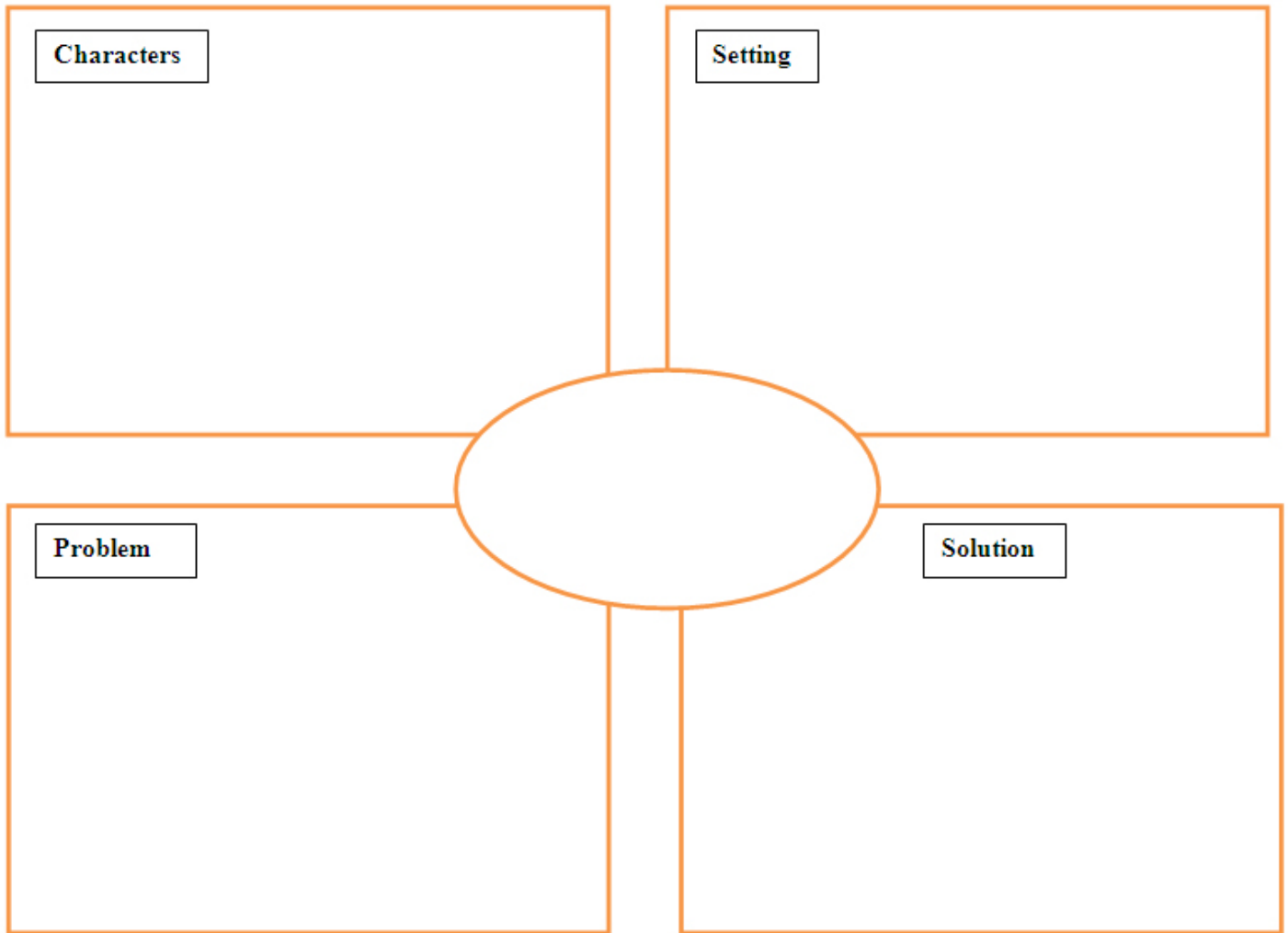
e) Begin each sentence with a capital letter and use ending punctuation in final copies.

f) Use correct spelling for frequently used words and phonetically regular words in final copies.

g) Share writing with others

Appendix B

The BFG Story Board



## Notes

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