

Penguin  Readers

THE WITCHES



Illustrated by Quentin Blake

ROALD DAHL

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LEVEL

4

This book has been simplified for English Language Learners
by Karen Kovacs
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ABOUT ROALD DAHL AND QUENTIN BLAKE



Roald Dahl was a children's writer, and many of his stories are very famous across the world. Do you know any Roald Dahl books?



Quentin Blake drew pictures for Roald Dahl's stories. Do you like the pictures in this book? Which is your favourite picture?

About this story

Roald Dahl was born in the UK, but his parents were from Norway. When he was a child, Dahl spent many happy summer holidays in Norway, where his grandparents still lived. The boy in this story is also Norwegian, but goes to school in England.

Dahl's mother told him stories from Norway. Many countries, like Norway, have frightening stories about witches. Roald Dahl wrote this story about witches, and it is frightening because the witches hate children and try to catch them.

MEET . . .



Me!



Grandma



The Grand High Witch



The Witches



Bruno Jenkins

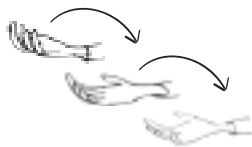
Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

NEW WORDS



get (got) rid of (v.)

make something go away



disappear (v.)

A person was here, but suddenly you cannot see them.



recognize (v.)

know who someone is



a glove (n.)

You wear *gloves* on your hands.



a claw (n.)

A cat has *claws* on its feet.
They can hurt you.



bald (adj.)

A *bald* person has no hair on their head.



a wig (n.)

A wig looks like hair.
But it is not real.



poo (n.)

You do a *poo* in the toilet.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What will happen in the story?
Answer the questions.

- 1** Look at the picture on page 9.
Can you see the witch?
What does the witch want to do?
- 2** Look at the picture on page 11.
Who are these people?
How are they feeling?
- 3** Look at the picture on page 17.
How are a witch's feet different?

Now let's read Chapter 1 and Chapter 2!

CHAPTER 1

Witches

In stories, witches always wear black hats and have black cats. But I am not telling you a story. I am going to tell you about *real* witches. Listen very carefully, and never forget what I am going to tell you.

Real witches wear normal clothes. They live in normal houses and do normal jobs. That is why it is so hard to catch them.

A real witch hates children. A real witch wants to **get rid of** all children. She thinks about nothing else. Even when she is working or in a shop or driving around in an expensive car, she is always thinking to herself, *Which child shall I get rid of next?* A witch enjoys getting rid of children the same way that *you* enjoy eating chocolate.

To feel happy, a witch must get rid of one child a week. That is fifty-two children a year. Very carefully, the witch chooses a child to catch. Then the witch follows that child, moving slowly and quietly, like a cat watching a little bird in the forest.



The witch gets closer and closer. Then, when she gets to the child, there is fire, animals scream, skin burns, and the child **disappears**.

A witch does not use a gun or a knife. People who do those things are caught by the police. But a witch is very clever, and she is never caught.

For children, a witch is the most dangerous thing in the world. You will soon find out that a witch does not always look dangerous. And, of course, this means that you have to be very careful! I am going to tell you about all their secrets. But even when you know these, you can never be sure if a woman is a witch or just a kind woman.

THE WITCHES

Please study this picture below. Which woman is the witch? That is a difficult question, but it is a question that every child must try to answer.



A witch might live near your home. Or maybe she sat next to you on the bus this morning. Or she might be the woman with the beautiful smile who gave you a sweet in the street.

She might even be your lovely schoolteacher, who is reading you these words. Look carefully at that teacher. Maybe she is smiling and saying, "Don't be silly! How could I be a witch?" But do not forget that witches are clever. Maybe your teacher is not a witch, but it is *possible*.

We are lucky, because there are not many real witches in the world today. But you should still be worried. In England, there are about a hundred of them in total. Some countries have more witches, others have fewer. Every country has some witches.

My grandmother was Norwegian. People know all about witches in her country because Norway, with its dark forests and icy mountains, is where the first witches came from. My father and mother were also Norwegian, but I lived in England with them. Twice a year, we went to visit my grandmother in Norway. I loved her very much and we were very close.

Soon after my seventh birthday, my parents took me to Norway to have Christmas with my grandmother, like we did every year. One day, while my father and mother and I were driving in icy weather, our car went off the road and down the side of a mountain. My parents were killed, but I only had a cut on my head.

I cannot talk about that terrible afternoon. I still feel very sad when I think about it. After the accident, I went to my grandmother's house and, with her arms around me, we both cried all night.



"What are we going to do now?" I asked.

"You'll stay here with me," she said. "I'll look after you."

"Aren't we going back to England?"

"No," she said. "I can't ever do that. I love Norway too much."

The next day, to stop me thinking about the accident, my grandmother started to tell me stories. She was a wonderful storyteller, but her best stories were the ones about witches. She knew a lot about them.

"These stories are true," she told me. "Everything that I'm telling you actually happened. Witches are all around us and you must believe that."

"Are the stories *really* true, Grandma?"

"Yes, they are," she said. "My dear, you won't live to be as old as me if you can't **recognize** a witch. Listen to me and remember everything that I tell you."

We were in the living room of her house in Norway, and I was ready for bed. It was snowing outside. I sat on the floor by her feet and looked up at her.

"I know children who disappeared and were never seen again," she said. "The witches took them."

"You're just trying to make me afraid," I said.

"No, I want you to be safe," she said. "I love you and I want you to stay with me."

"Tell me about the children who disappeared," I said.

"One child was called Ranghild. She was playing with her little sister in the garden. When their mother came outside, she asked, *Where's Ranghild?*

She went away with the tall woman, the sister said.

What tall woman? the mother asked.

*The woman in the white **gloves**,* the sister said."

My grandmother continued, "Everyone in the town helped look for her."

"Didn't they find her?" I asked.

"No one ever saw Ranghild again," she replied. "The story of another child was very strange," my grandmother continued. "There was a family called Christiansen, and they had a big, old painting in the living room. The painting showed some ducks and a farmhouse, but there were no people in it. One day, their daughter Solveg came home from school, eating an apple. *A nice woman gave this apple to me,* Solveg said.

"The next morning, little Solveg was not in her bed. Her parents looked for her everywhere, but they couldn't find her. Then, suddenly, her father shouted, *There she is! That's Solveg! She's feeding the ducks!* He was pointing at the painting and he was right. Solveg was in the painting. The father ran closer to the painting and touched her. But she was now part of the painting."

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

WHAT CAN YOU REMEMBER?

What do these words mean?

- 1 recognize** A person was here, but suddenly you cannot see them.
- 2 get rid of** know who someone is
- 3 poo** having no hair on your head
- 4 a claw** You do this in the toilet.
- 5 a wig** This looks like hair. But it is not real.
- 6 disappear** make something go away
- 7 a glove** You wear these on your hands.
- 8 bald** A cat has these on its feet. They can hurt you.

Answer the questions.

1 What do witches want to get rid of?

They want to get rid of all children.

2 How many witches are there in England?

3 Where do Solveg's family find her, after she disappears?

4 What do witches wear?

5 Why doesn't the boy want to have a bath?

6 What is different about witches' eyes?
