

NEW STAGE
Theatre

Study Guide

New Stage Theatre Presents



ROALD DAHL'S
Matilda
THE MUSICAL

BOOK
DENNIS KELLY

MUSIC & LYRICS
TIM MINCHIN

DIRECTED BY
SHARON MILES

MUSIC DIRECTOR
CAROL JOY SPARKMAN

January 28-February 9, 2020

SPONSORED BY



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NEW STAGE
Theatre

TICKETS: 601-948-3533 or newstagetheatre.com

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New Stage Theatre Education
Drew Stark, Education Associate

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Please note: We want to hear from you and your students! Please respond by filling out the enclosed evaluation forms. These forms help us to secure funding for future Education programming. Please send your comments and suggestions to: New Stage Education Department, 1100 Carlisle Street, Jackson, MS 39202, or email: education@newstagetheatre.com

Thank you for your support!



Theatre Etiquette

To best prepare your students for today's performance, we ask that you review these guidelines for expected behavior of an audience BEFORE the show.

TEACHERS:

Speaking to your students about theatre etiquette is ESSENTIAL. This performance of Roald Dahl's *Matilda the Musical* at New Stage Theatre may be some students' first theatre experience. Students should be aware that this is a live performance and should keep distractions to a minimum as a courtesy to those around them.

STUDENTS:

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Listen to the New Stage staff member who will board your bus and escort your group to the lobby.
- Be sure to go to the bathroom before the performance begins. It is hard to leave without causing a disturbance to those around you once the performance starts.
- Please do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you. Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Recording devices and cameras are strictly prohibited.
- Absolutely no gum chewing, eating or drinking in the theatre.

Noise

Live theatre creates a unique and dynamic atmosphere between actors and audience members for sharing ideas and emotional expression. In the same way that actors can hear what is happening on-stage, they can also hear disruptions in the audience as well. While actors appreciate laughter and applause at appropriate times, excessive noise and talking is not welcomed. Even whispering voices can be distracting to the actors and others in the audience.

- Cell phones are prohibited inside the theatre. Not only is the use of cell phones during a performance distracting for both the actors and fellow audience members, the cellular signal interferes with the use of our sound system. Upon entering the theatre, please remind students (and teachers) to turn off all electronic devices and store them during the performance. If there is a disturbance, they will be asked to leave and will not be invited back to the theatre.

Applause

Applause respectfully acknowledges the performers and shows appreciation or audience approval. Traditionally, applause occurs before intermission and at the conclusion of a performance. Dimming the lights on the stage and bringing up the house lights generally signals these intervals. A curtain call, when the cast returns to the stage, will follow every performance. At the conclusion of the performance, we encourage you to like us on Facebook and other social media platforms. Enjoy the show!

Theatre Etiquette:

- What is the role of the audience in a live theatrical performance?
- How is a theatrical production different than seeing a film? A sporting event? Why can't you talk? What is unique about live theatre that does not happen in cinema?

Theatre Etiquette Activity

Look at the different events listed across the first row in the table below. For each event, fill in ALWAYS, SOMETIMES, or NEVER with the listed behavior expectations. Note the different behavior expectations there are for different events we attend.

	Sporting Event 	Worship Service 	Rock Concert 	Movie Theatre 	Live Theatre Performance 
Cheer					
Clap politely					
Talk to those around you					
Eating					
Standing up and walking around					

Topics for Further Discussion:

- What are the differences between live theatre and cinema?
 - Two-dimensional experience vs. three dimensional, live-action
 - Larger than life on the screen vs. life-size
 - Recorded experience vs. live performances with an audience
- Discuss the nature of film as mass-produced, versus the singular, intimate nature of live performances. Compare original art work to poster design or print work. Which do you feel is more valuable? Why?
- Familiarize yourself with Roald Dahl's *Matilda* by either reading the book or watching the movie. If you could stage a production of *Matilda*, what would it be like?

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Study Guide: Roald Dahl's *Matilda the Musical*

Objectives of Learning

- Explore real-world conflicts through drama
- Engage critically with the process of theatrical adaptation
- Examine storytelling through music and movement

Discussion Questions

Pre-show Questions

- *Matilda the Musical* is based on a novel by Roald Dahl, and was adapted into a film in 1996. Have you read the book or seen the movie? What differences do you think there will be between the musical and the original novel and film?
- Examine the importance of the setting of *Matilda*. *Matilda the Musical* takes place in England and New Stage's production is set in 1988. What expectations might you have about the show (dialects, costumes)?
- Dahl uses distinctive names for his characters that also provides hints about what type of person they are. What type of person do you think is: Miss Honey? Miss Trunchbull? Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood?
- *Matilda* struggles against a family who mistreats her and a headmistress who bullies her and her friends. However, she believes it is possible to change her story and have a happy life. What kinds of goals do you have? What are some of the obstacles in the way of achieving those goals? How could you overcome those conflicts?
- New Stage's production of *Matilda the Musical* features many young performers in the cast. Have you ever been in a play or a musical? What was the experience like?
- Creating suspense is one of the many techniques used by storytellers to captivate their audience. How can music affect mood? What types of stories do you like to hear or see? Why? What excites you about seeing a film or play?

Theatre Observations (on the day of the show) at New Stage Theatre

STUDENTS: Look around. What do you see?

- Observe the lighting instruments around the room and on the ceiling. Look at the set. Does it look realistic or abstract? Try to guess how the set will be used during the show.
- Discuss the elements that go into producing a live performance: The lights, set, props, costumes, and stage direction. Be aware of all the people involved in the backstage choreography or "behind the scenes" elements as they watch the show. Observe how each technical element establishes mood or furthers the dramatic action of the story.
- What special effects are used in the show? Were the effects successful?
- What is your impression of each of the characters visually? Does each character's outward appearance reflect how you interpret the character? Does the overall appearance give you an impression of setting? Do the actors change costumes quickly?
- How does music and sound effects establish a mood for a particular scene in the show? How does it further the dramatic action of the story?
- How successful are the technical elements incorporated into the play? How are the various settings of the play accomplished scenically?

Study Guide: Roald Dahl's *Matilda the Musical*

Post-show Discussion Questions

How does it make me feel? What in the play contributed to that feeling?

- In *Matilda the Musical*, the schoolchildren sing about what life might be like when they are grown-up. What does it mean to be a grown-up? What kinds of things do YOU look forward to when you grown-up? What are the benefits of being a young kid?

Developing Further: Divide the class into two groups. One group will brainstorm about adjectives describing adults and the other group describing children. Create a list of activities that either adults or children do. As a whole class, create a Venn diagram using each group's lists. How different were the adjectives? Then describe as a class five adjectives that describe both adults and children and the activities they can share.

- Ms. Trunchbull insists that you must always follow the rules, even though they are unfair to the children. Is it important to always follow the rules or when it is appropriate to break them? What historical examples can you think of when people revolted against unfair practices?
Can you think of examples of rules that you find unfair? If you could change those rules what would you change them to? Why?

Developing Further: Write a persuasive essay that uses examples from the play or from real life to support why you feel the way you do.

- Matilda took revenge upon many of the adults in her life, because of the way that they treated her. In the end, she decides to give up taking revenge and to forgive others instead. Do you think that revenge is a strong or weak choice to make? Do you think that taking revenge helped Matilda solve her problems? What are some other choices that she could have made besides taking revenge? When discussing her parents to Ms. Phelps in the library, Matilda initially lies about what her parents' opinion of her. Why do you think Matilda doesn't tell the truth?
- *Matilda the Musical* praises moral courage and intellectual aptitude over physical and emotional manipulation and abuse. What would happen if Matilda was homeschooled by her crude parents? What would happen if Miss Honey never adopted Matilda?
- Matilda's family does not treat her with respect. She is much happier when she is with Ms. Honey, who nurtures her gifts and appreciates her. How do you define family? Is it always the people who you are related to you?
- Compare and contrast the stage adaptation of *Matilda* to Roald Dahl's book or the 1996 film adaptation starring and directed by Danny DeVito? Explain the similarities and differences between the original plot and subsequent adaptations for screen and the stage. Which do you like better and why?
- Notice that throughout the show, the actors speak directly to the audience. This theatrical concept is called 'breaking the fourth wall,' or eliminating the false barrier between the characters on stage and the audience. Why does the playwright chose to this convention and what does he intend to accomplish by doing so? Is this done successfully?
- What does it mean to be a bully? Have you ever been or have you seen someone being bullied? If so, how did you respond? Looking back, is there something you would have done differently?

Study Guide: Roald Dahl's *Matilda the Musical*

Classroom Activity: Who Has The Control?

- Ask the students to walk around the room at their own pace, noticing where everyone is. Ask them to choose one person in the room, without letting them know. Encourage them to keep looking at this person but not to talk to them or touch them.
- Introduce the idea that the person they have chosen is dangerous to them and that they must stay away from them at all times as they walk around the room. As they walk around, ask them to imagine that the room they are in is a classroom at Crunchem Hall and that the person they have chosen is Miss Trunchbull. They must stay away from her and try and disappear from her sight at all times.
- Ask the students to stop walking and silently choose another person in the room. Explain that this person is a shield and as they walk around they must try and keep this shield between themselves and their Miss Trunchbull. Explain that the shield is Matilda, who in the plot is the only student to stand up to Miss Trunchbull.

Reflect with students on what it feels like to be in a school controlled by a tyrant/bully? How do you feel about her as Headmistress and what do you feel about Matilda?

Classroom Activity: Inside the Chokey

In a circle, ask all participants to close their eyes as you read out the description of the Chokey.

The Chokey is a very tall but very narrow cupboard. When you get locked up in there, you have to stand more or less at attention all the time. The floor is only ten inches square so you can't sit down or squat in it. You have to stand. And three of the walls are made of cement with bits of broken glass sticking out all over so you can't lean against them. You can't lean against the door as it's got thousands of sharp, spiky nails sticking out of it- they've been hammered through from the outside. It's terrible. It's pitch dark and you must stand up dead straight- if you wobble at all you get spiked either by the glass on the walls or the nails on the door- you'll be spiked and cut all over when you come out or babbling like an idiot- off your rocker! It's absolute torture!

Text taken from *Matilda* by Roald Dahl

Ask students to think about how it might feel to be inside the Chokey. What sounds do you hear? What other noises might you hear if you were inside the Chokey? Encourage them to include those that you might hear inside their own heads or body. Read through the description again and encourage individuals to make sounds at the appropriate moments as you read to try and create an atmosphere they imagined.

Classroom Activity: Strength in Quietness

Many of the adults in *Matilda the Musical* are quite loud. Matilda prefers the quietness of a book, allowing her to learn about a world different from her own. Sometimes our modern world puts a greater emphasis on the outward appearance which can be loud, fast, and shallow rather than focusing on our inner selves. Below are two exercises to encourage quiet mindfulness to help students begin to cultivate awareness and sensitivity to the world around them.

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- **Listening to the Bell:** Ring a bell and ask the students to listen closely to the vibration of the ringing sound. Tell them to remain silent and raise their hands when they no longer hear the sound of the bell. Then tell them to remain silent for one minute and pay close attention to the other sounds they hear once the ringing has stopped. Afterwards, go around in a circle and ask the students to tell you every sound they noticed during that minute.
- **The Heartbeat Exercise:** Have the students jump up and down in place for one minute. Then have them sit back down and place their hands on their hearts. Tell them to close their eyes and feel their heartbeats, their breath, and see what else they notice about their bodies.

Classroom Activity: Reflections of Storytelling through Music, Song, and Movement Response Sheet

Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deeper understanding.

Matilda the Musical uses music and songs to tell a story. Think about the music and lyrics from the production and how did the songs affect your experience as an audience member? Are there any songs that stood out to you? Why? What makes a song so powerful in a production?

Choose a musical number from the show (suggestions are listed below) Reflect on the song. Which character sang this song? When does it appear in the play? What makes this song important to the rest of the story? Examine the following words as it relates to the song within the show.

RHYTHM	DYNAMICS	MELODY	HARMONY
KEY	TONE	TEXTURE	FORM

Now, think about the movement aspect of a production number. What do you remember about the choreography when you saw the performance? What makes the movement unique in style of the show and furthers the storytelling? How did the choreography contribute to the intention of the song? Examine the following words as it relates to the elements of movement principles.

BODY	SPACE	DYNAMICS	TEMPO
ENERGY	RELATIONSHIPS	FORM	STYLE

What Did She Say? Vocabulary Terms

REVOLT [rə'vɔlt]

VERB

1. rise in rebellion.
 - refuse to acknowledge someone or something as having authority.
2. cause to feel disgust.

NOUN

1. an attempt to put an end to the authority of a person or body by rebelling.
 - a refusal to continue to obey or conform.

De-rigueur (adj.) required by etiquette or current fashion.

Umbilical Cord (noun) a flexible cordlike structure containing blood vessels that connects a human fetus to the mother

Empirical (adj.) based on observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic

Supple (adj.) bending and moving easily and gracefully; flexible

Tarantella (noun) a rapid whirling dance originating in southern Italy

Oblige (verb) to do as (someone) asks or desires in order to help or please them.

Gaol (noun) a place for the confinement or jail

Peal (verb) (of a bell or bells) to ring loudly

Squib (noun) a small, slight, or weak person, especially a child

Treacle (noun) a thick, sticky dark syrup made from partly refined sugar; molasses

Suppurate (verb) to undergo the formation of pus; fester

Carbuncle (noun) a severe abscess or multiple boil in the skin

Fiend (noun) a wicked or cruel person

Tardis (noun) a time machine

Muzzle (verb) to prevent (a person or group) from expressing their opinions freely

Dissent (verb) hold or express opinions that are different than those officially expressed.

Reek (verb) to smell strongly and unpleasantly; stink

Odiferous (adj) having or giving off a distinct, unpleasant smell

Defiance (noun) open resistance; bold disobedience

Coup (noun) a sudden and violent seizure of power from authority

Horde (noun) an army or tribe of nomadic warriors

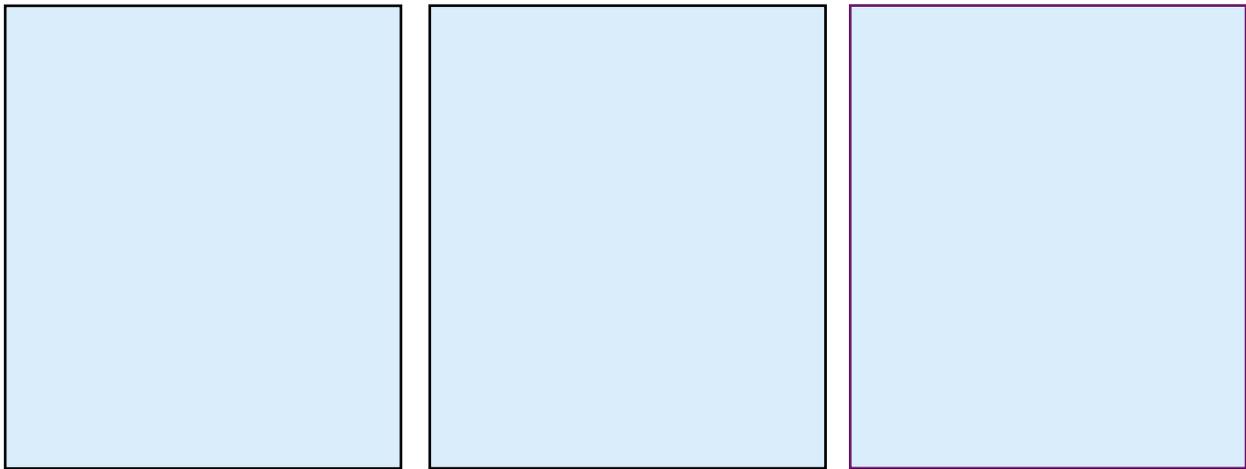
Activity: Standing Up for What is Right

Matilda stands up for what is right, even though it is hard to do. The focus of this activity is to have the students connect the storyline of *Matilda the Musical* to their own lives.

Question: Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you had to stand up for the right thing? What are some examples of how you can stand up for what is right in your own life?

In this activity, students will brainstorm, write, rehearse, and perform a skit in a small group, or write a monologue to show how they can stand up for what is right in their home, school, or community. Examples: Standing up for a friend/sibling/younger student at school who is being bullied; telling the truth even though it may be tempting to lie.

In the boxes below, either write about a situation or draw a picture of a situation where you stood up (or wanted to stand up) for what is was right.

Three empty rectangular boxes are provided for students to write or draw. The first two boxes have black borders, and the third box on the right has a purple border. All boxes are filled with a light blue color.

Using the notes or pictures from the boxes above, fill in the following information to help write your script.

Characters: Who was involved?

Setting: Where did the situation take place? What time of day?

Describe how the situation began. What was the main problem and how was it caused?

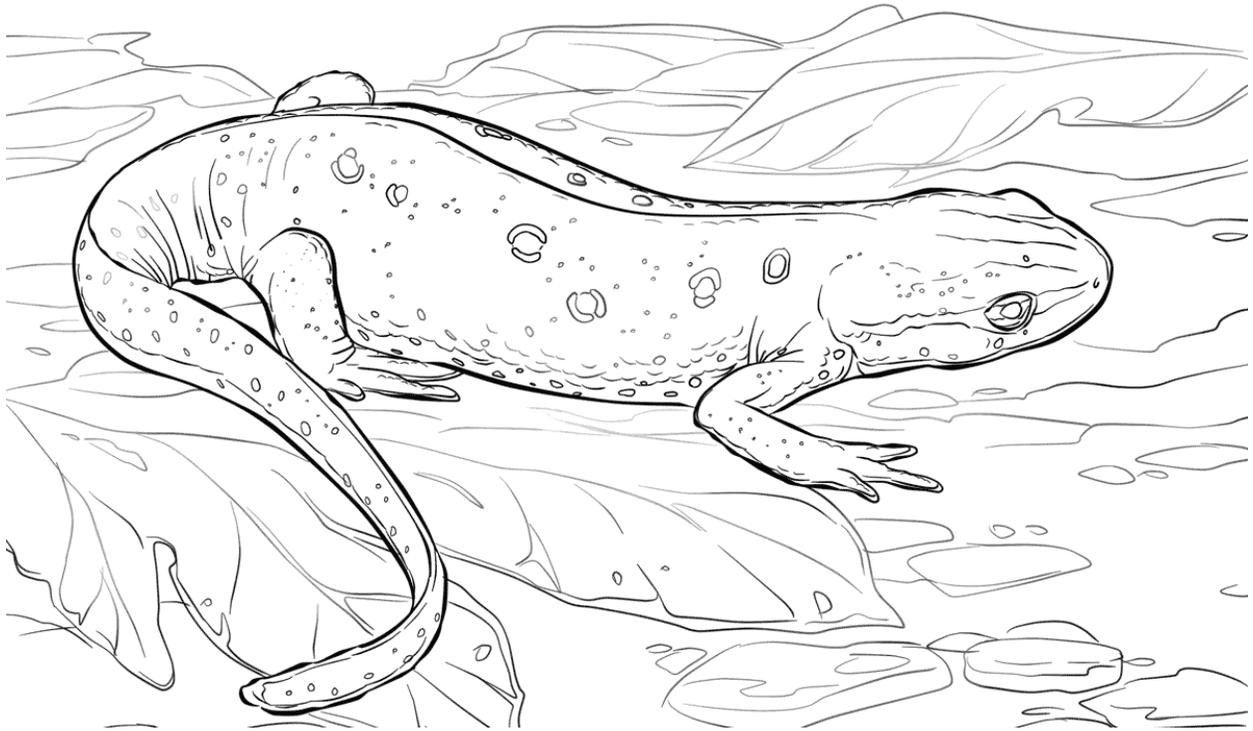
What options did you have? What did you want to do in the situation?

What was the "right" thing to do, and why?

Describe how the main problem was resolved. What actions did you take? What actions did the others take?

Explain the "moral" of the story. What did you learn from this situation, and what do you think other people should learn from this situation? Would you do anything differently next time?

Science Corner: Facts about Newts and Coloring Page



A newt is a type of salamander found throughout Asia, Europe, and North America.

This amphibian stands out because of its bright colors, especially the variations of yellow, red, and orange bellies found on different types to scare off predators.

Habitat: Newts enjoy wet environments such as forests and grasslands. They have the ability to breathe underwater and on land. Their skin is soft and moist, making humid and wet climates ideal.

Size and Characteristics: Newts range from 2.75 inches to nearly 4 inches long, with females growing slightly larger than the males. They have four fingers on their front two legs and five toes on the back two legs. If a newt loses a tail, part of its spinal cord or its eyes, it has the ability to regenerate. Unlike salamanders, newts do not have costal or rib grooves along their sides.

Diet and Prey: Newts eat a diet of worms, small fish, snails, and insects. Newts hunt by sight, so their prey must be moving to attack. To fend off predators, newts have secret toxins in their skin that they secrete if needed.

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Study Guide: Roald Dahl's *Matilda the Musical*

Synopsis

Act I: As an ensemble of children explain how "special" they are, Mrs. Wormwood, an amateur ballroom dancer, gives birth to a baby girl called Matilda. The self-obsessed new mother is more concerned about missing a dance competition than her newborn child. Mr. Wormwood, a used-car salesman, dismissed the child as ugly and cannot comprehend that Matilda isn't a boy.



Five years later, Matilda, who has become an avid reader, lives unhappily with her parents and older brother, Michael, who verbally abuse and mock her. Matilda retaliates by pranking her father's hair oil, turning his hair green. Matilda's only retreat from her troubled home and family are the books that she finds at the local library, where she befriends the librarian, Mrs. Phelps.

Matilda begins to tell her a fantastical story about a world-famous acrobat and escapologist whose only desire is to have children, but cannot. To distract themselves from their despair, the couple decides to perform a dangerous, new act.

The next day, Matilda starts school at Crunchem Hall, where her kind and compassionate teacher, Miss Honey, immediately recognizes Matilda's exceptional intelligence and recommends she be placed with older children. The cruel headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, dismisses her suggestion and reminds Miss Honey of the rules of the school. Back home, Mr. Wormwood, frustrated by the loss of a sham-deal of worn-down cars with his rich Russian clients, destroys one of Matilda's books. Matilda retaliates by adding glue to his hat.

At school, Matilda learns about Miss Trunchbull's cruel punishments to disobedient children, including being locked in the Chokey, a small cupboard filled with sharp objects, and witnesses a girl being swung by her pigtails and thrown across a field. Miss Honey visits Matilda at home and attempts to explain to her parents about Matilda's exceptional abilities. Mrs. Wormwood is too busy with her dance partner, Rudolpho, to listen and mocks Miss Honey and Matilda's interest in books.



At the library, Matilda continues her story about the acrobat and the escapologist to Mrs. Phelps. Matilda explains that the acrobat's sister, a former world champion hammer-thrower, has arranged their performance. After discovering that his wife is finally pregnant, the escapologist cancels the life-threatening feat, enraging his sister-in-law who produces a binding contract to perform the act or go to jail. Back at school, Matilda's classmate, Bruce Bogtrotter is caught stealing a slice of Miss Trunchbull's personal cake and is forced to eat the entire cake in front of the entire class. Even though the class rallies behind Bruce as he finishes the cake, Miss Trunchbull drags Bruce off to the Chokey.



Act II: Mr. Wormwood explains to the audience that television is much more important than reading. Matilda's school-friend, Lavender, states that she is going to put a newt in Miss Trunchbull's water pitcher. The children dream about what adulthood would be like and share their hopes about their future. Matilda vows to put an end to Miss Trunchbull's cruelty.

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Back in the library, Matilda continues to tell the tragic story of the acrobat and the escapologist to Mrs. Phelps and how after the birth of their child, the acrobat dies and her sister is invited to live with the grieving escapologist and his newborn daughter. The aunt is secretly cruel to the little girl. Mr. Wormwood returns home, having sold the broken-down cars to the Russians, and Matilda disapproves of her father's deceit. Her father locks Matilda in her room and she finishes the story of the acrobat and the escapologist. After discovering the cruel truth about his sister-in-law, the escapologist vows to retaliate, but is never seen again.

The following day at school, Miss Trunchbull puts Miss Honey's students through a grueling physical education class. After Miss Trunchbull discovers the newt in her water pitcher, she starts to punish an innocent student. Matilda discovers she can move things with her mind and tips over the water and the newt onto Miss Trunchbull, scaring her away.



Miss Honey invites Matilda for tea and they both discuss the traumas from their childhood. Matilda realizes that Miss Honey is the real-life child of the acrobat and the escapologist, and the cruel aunt is Miss Trunchbull.



Back at school, Miss Trunchbull forces Lavender to the Chokey by making up words during a spelling test. The children rebel by misspelling simple words, believing they can't all be sent to the Chokey. The children discover that Miss Trunchbull has built many Chokeys, but Matilda uses her extraordinary ability to move the chalk, scaring Miss Trunchbull into believing that it is the ghost of Miss Honey's father, demanding she give his daughter back her house or he will haunt her. The children celebrate as Miss Trunchull runs from the school terrified.

Miss Honey becomes the new headmistress of the school and receives her house back. The Wormwoods arrive in a panic, on-the-run from the Russians, who are part of the Russian mafia, and tell Matilda that they are fleeing to Spain. Miss Honey asks the Wormwoods if she can adopt Matilda, before Sergei, the head of the Mafia, catches up with them. He is so impressed with Matilda that he agrees not to harm the Wormwoods. Mr. Wormwood agrees to let Matilda live with Miss Honey.



Illustrations by Sir Quentin Blake
from the book, *Matilda* by Roald
Dahl.

Bullying

Bullying has become an important issue facing schools as the anger and resentment by tormented students who have been bullied for years, ends up manifesting itself in destructive ways. A bully wields his/her power over another person by intimidating the victim in various ways, either psychologically, verbally, or physically. Bullies pick on those who they see as being vulnerable and easily controlled. Matilda is an extremely gifted and smart little girl who lacks the physical power and the adult authority to free herself from the grips of adults who abuse their power. Matilda saves herself by developing special powers, her acute intellect, and by befriending someone who has been and is also being bullied, Miss Honey.

Discuss with students what they believe motivates Miss Trunchbull's bullying. Compelled by her greedy hunger for control, she manipulates her students by the brutal tactics to uphold her power. Do school-yard bullies in your school possess the same desire for control and power? Even though Miss Trunchbull is an adult and appointed as an authority figure for the school, does that make her behavior acceptable? How is such tyranny overcome?

Research shows that when adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior they send the message that it is not acceptable. Teaching kids how to identify bullying and how to stand up to it safely can help stop bullying behavior over time.

Parents, school staff, and other adults in the community can help kids prevent bullying by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and creating a community-wide bullying prevention strategy. They can:

- Help kids understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Make sure kids know how to get help.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Check in with kids often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.
- Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying "stop" directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.

For more information about how to prevent bullying in your community or school, visit:
www.stopbullying.gov

The Cast and Character Descriptions

Matilda Wormwood



An intelligent, brave, and powerful young girl

Miss Honey



A quiet but warm person who loves and supports Matilda

Miss Trunchbull



The tyrannical headmistress of Matilda's school and a bully

The Wormwoods



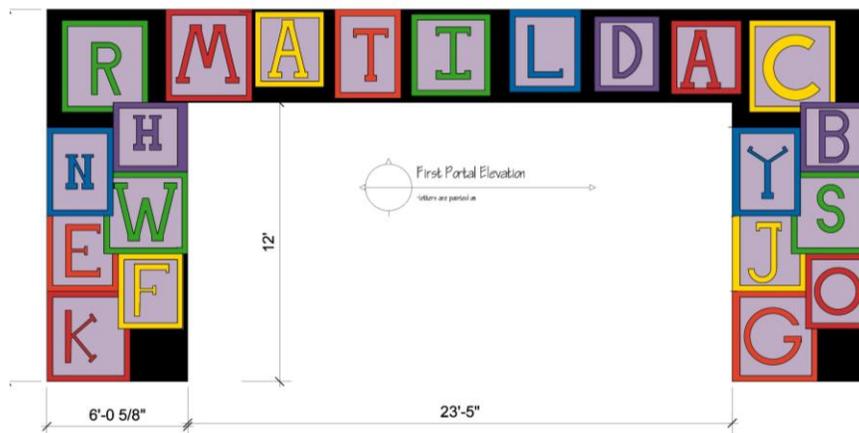
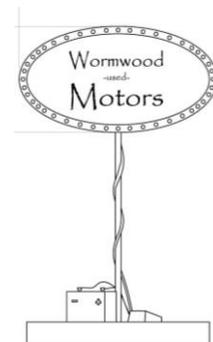
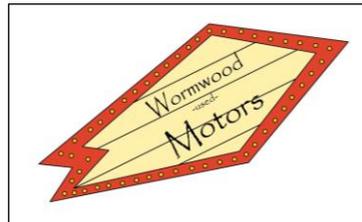
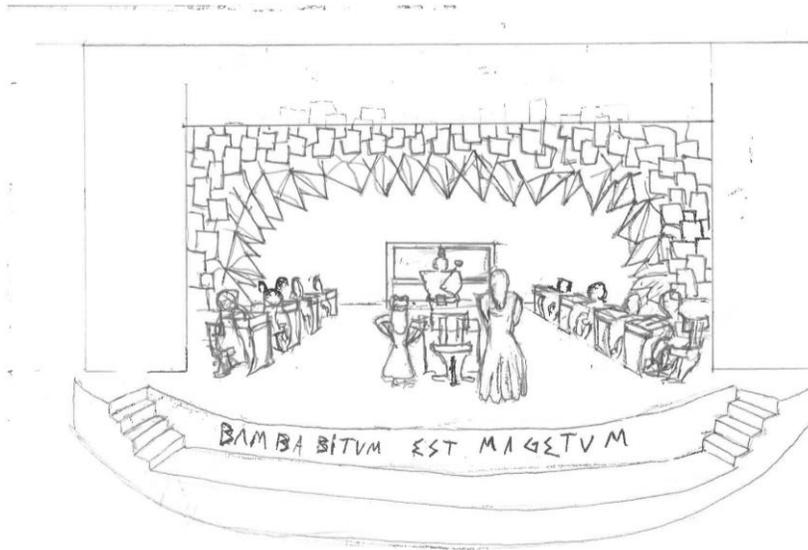
Unsupportive and inattentive to Matilda's extraordinary abilities, Matilda's family neglect and verbally abuse her



Matilda and the New Stage cast of *Matilda the Musical*

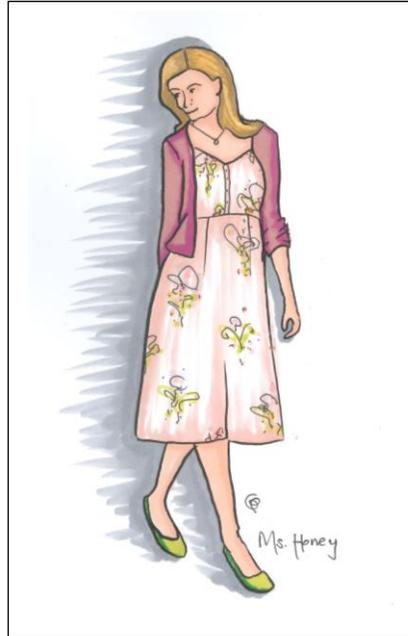
Technical Elements of New Stage's *Matilda the Musical*

Sketches of New Stage's *Matilda the Musical*
Scenic Design by Richard Schug



Renderings of the set of New Stage's
Matilda the Musical by Richard Schug

Matilda the Musical Costume Designs by
Caleb Blackwell



About the Creative Team of *Matilda the Musical*: Tim Minchin and Dennis Kelly



Dennis Kelly is a London-born playwright who has written a number of plays including *Love and Money*, *Orphans*, *Debris*, *Deoxyribonucleic Acid*, *The Gods Weeps*. He is best known for *Matilda the Musical*, which won the Olivier Award for Best New Musical in 2012. Recognized for his 'dark-style of writing,' he has also written for film and television, including the British sitcom *Pulling* and *Utopia*.



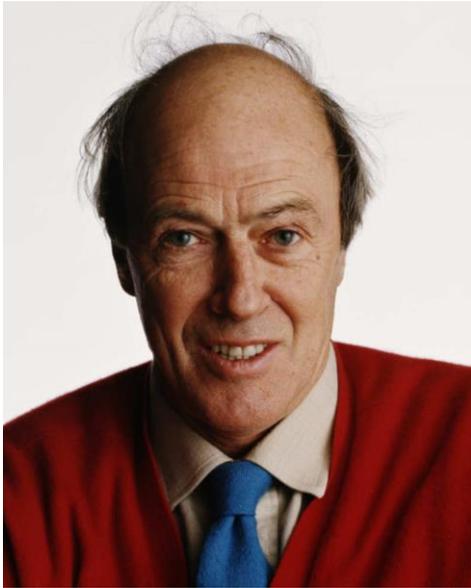
Tim Minchin is an Australian composer, lyricist, musician, comedian, actor, writer and director. Born in Perth, Western Australia, Minchin spent most of his early career writing music and playing in bands. In 2003, he debuted his first solo show at the Melbourne Fringe Festival called *Navel- Cerebral Melodies With Umbilical Chords*. His work was well-received and won the Perrier Best Newcomer Award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In 2009, he was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company to write the music and lyrics for *Matilda*.

I wrote most of the songs for *Matilda* in a blurry seven-week period, wedged between an Australian tour and the birth of my son, Caspar, in the middle of 2009. I didn't at the time know whether the songs were any good... I still don't really. To be honest, I didn't feel qualified to be working on the adaptation of such a well-loved text, and I was very aware of the massive gap in theatre-making experience between the rest of the creative team and me.

But there was something I felt pretty secure about: I knew I didn't have to worry about Dahl. I wasn't compelled to go back and read all his books, I didn't feel the need to examine other adaptations, I didn't search for academic analysis of his style. I could see no reason why any other songwriter would know what Dahl felt like better than I. I figured all I had to do was make sure my songs felt to me like Dahl felt to me.

An interview with Tim Minchin, "Tim Minchin: I'm Bringing *Matilda the Musical* Home". *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 22, 2015.

A Brief Biography of Roald Dahl



Roald Dahl, the author of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, *The BFG*, and other children stories, was born in Llandaff, Wales in 1916. The deaths of his older sister, Astri, and his father had a profound effect on his childhood.

At the outbreak of World War II, Dahl enlisted in the Royal Air Force at 23 years old. After sustaining severe injuries to his head, nose, and back, he was reassigned to work in Washington DC as an intelligence officer for MI6.

In 1953 Dahl married American actress Patricia Neal and had five children. In 1960, he helped invent the Wade-Dahl-Till valve, to alleviate head injuries suffered by his young son after an accident in New York.

After modest success with his first story collection of military tales in *Over to You: Ten Stories of Flyers and Flying* in 1946, Dahl turned to primarily writing children's books that would give him lasting fame. Dahl's works have a dark comic nature, frequently including gruesome violence and death. His villains were often malevolent adults who torment precocious child protagonists. In 1961 *James and the Giant Peach* was published in the US, followed by *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in 1964. Dahl wrote screenplays for the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. *Fantastic Mr. Fox* was published in 1970, the year before the film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* was released. He later produced other children's classics, such as *Danny the Champion of the World*, *The Enormous Crocodile*, and *My Uncle Oswald*. In the early 1980s he published *The Twits*, *Revolting Rhymes*, *The BFG*, and *The Witches*. *Matilda* was published in 1988 and was later adapted as a film in 1996 and into the stage musical in 2010. Although Dahl died on November 23, 1990, his legacy remains in his literary works and at The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre.

"Roald Dahl was a spy, an ace fighter pilot, a chocolate historian, and a medical inventor."

Inspirational Quotables of Roald Dahl's *Matilda*

Isolation

- "So Matilda's strong young mind continued to grow, nurtured by the voices of all those authors who had sent their books out into the world like ships on the sea. These books gave Matilda a hopeful and comforting message: You are not alone.
- "Sometimes Matilda longed for a friend, someone like the kind, courageous people in her books."

The Love of reading

- "This allowed her two glorious hours sitting quietly by herself in a cozy corner, devouring one book after another. When she had read every single children's book in the place, she started wandering round in search of something else."
- "The books transported her into new worlds and introduced her to amazing people who lived exciting lives. She went on olden-day sailing ships with Joseph Conrad. She went to Africa with Ernest Hemingway and to India with Rudyard Kipling. She travelled all over the world while sitting in her little room in an English village."

About Growing-up

- "You seemed so far away," Miss Honey whispered, awestruck. "Oh, I was. I was flying past the stars on silver wings," Matilda said. "It was wonderful."
- "And don't worry about the bits you can't understand. Sit back and allow the words to wash around you, like music."

Rising above adversity

- "Matilda longed for her parents to be good and loving and understanding and honourable and intelligent. The fact that they were none of these things was something she had to put up with. It was not easy to do so. But the new game she had invented of punishing one or both of them each time they were beastly to her made her life more or less bearable. Being very small and very young, the only power Matilda had over anyone in her family was brain-power. For sheer cleverness she could run rings around them all. But the fact remained that any five-year-old girl in any family was always obliged to do as she was told, however asinine the orders might be."

Be original

- "Matilda said, "Never do anything by halves if you want to get away with it. Be outrageous. Go the whole hog. Make sure everything you do is so completely crazy it's unbelievable..."

Teacher Evaluation Form for *Matilda the Musical*

Name: _____ School: _____

What is your overall reaction to the production?

How would you rate the production values of the performance (costumes, set, props, lighting, special effects)?

How did your students react to the production?

Please comment on the educational value of the program.

What is your overall reaction to the question and answer (talk-back) session?

How did you hear about New Stage's production of *Matilda the Musical*? What other plays would you like your students to see?

How could this Study Guide be more effective for use in your classroom? Please explain.

Please have your students fill out the enclosed student evaluation forms. We want to hear from them too! Evaluations not only help us improve our programming, but help us find sponsorship for bringing quality theatre to you!! Thank you for your continued support!

Please return this form with any additional comments to:

New Stage Theatre Education

1100 Carlisle Street, Jackson, MS 39202, or email at: education@newstagetheatre.com

Student Evaluation Form for *Matilda the Musical*

Name: _____ School: _____

What was your overall reaction to the play?

How would you rate the production values of the play (costumes, scenery, props, lighting, special effects)?

What was your favorite part of the play?

Did you learn anything from this production? If so, what?

Which character in the play did you most identify with? Why?

Have you ever seen professional theatre production at New Stage or elsewhere? Would you recommend a friend to see a production at New Stage and why?

What other stories would you enjoy seeing staged by live actors?

Other comments and observations:

On the back of this page, feel free to draw and recreate your favorite part of *Matilda* and share it with us!

Please return this form with any additional comments to:
New Stage Theatre Education
1100 Carlisle Street, Jackson, MS 39202, or email at: education@newstagetheatre.com