



Fourth graders receive six award-winning, classic literature books, each complete with a comprehensive teaching curriculum; three additional workbooks/puzzles in language arts; a fourth-grade reading skills text; creative writing story starters, and one literature book that combines the study of ecology with that of our largest state, Alaska. This is the grade in which students generally learn about their own state. As a result, California/Alaska history and geography (and that of other states) is fully integrated into the literature as well as other guided activities throughout the curriculum manual. For math, we use the very comprehensive Saxon series, much admired and used by homeschooling families. Math also includes a *Problem of the Week* book. Science uses *Fourth Grade Science*, a book that includes plenty of opportunities for hands-on activities.

# 4th GRADE

## LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS BOOKS INCLUDE

*Ben*, both student and teacher editions  
*Grammar and Writing Skills*  
*Writing Fun and Fantasies*  
*Reading and Understanding Nonfiction*

## LITERATURE & SOCIAL STUDIES

*Bite of the Gold Bug*  
*By the Great Horn Spoon*  
*Island of the Blue Dolphins*  
*James and the Giant Peach*  
*Matilda*  
*Swimmer*

## MATH & SCIENCE

*Saxon Math 54*  
*Problem of the Week Grades 5-6*  
*Fourth Grade Science*

## SOCIAL STUDIES IS STUDIED THROUGHOUT

the literature and projects included in the curriculum manual.



# James and the Giant Peach

*James and the Giant Peach*, written by Roald Dahl, is the story of a lonely boy who escapes from his cruel aunts by traveling in a giant peach with a hilarious group of animals. This highly recommended book is ideal for introducing the study of fantasy, family, friends and courage.

## LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

### BEFORE READING

Have your child look at the cover of the book and illustrations in the book. Let the student describe what he or she sees in each of the pictures. Ask him or her to predict what kind of story this will be and whether he or she expects to enjoy it.

Have your student research each of the insects from the story—centipede, earthworm, silkworm, spider, glow-worm, grasshopper and ladybug. You can probably find many of these creatures in your yard or neighborhood.

It is also fascinating for a child to observe these creatures through a magnifying glass. These activities help establish the characteristics of each animal in the student's mind.

### WHILE READING

- Keep a running list of new vocabulary words from the story in a notebook. Encourage your child to use these words when writing stories.
- To develop critical-thinking skills and enjoy the book more, have the student undertake the following activities:

#### CHAPTER 1

Give three examples showing that Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker are mean. Have your child describe and draw what he or she thinks they look like. Compare this description with the one in the next chapter.

#### CHAPTER 2

Compare James' feelings about when he lived with his parents to when he lived with his aunts.

# 4th GRADE LITERATURE PROGRAM

## CHAPTER 3

Write a paragraph explaining what he or she would do with a bag filled with 1,000 crocodile tongues.

## CHAPTER 7

In rapid time the peach grows from the size of a melon to that of a pumpkin. Draw a picture of the peach and show each of its growth stages.

## CHAPTER 8

Write a paragraph explaining why he or she thinks James' aunts don't like him. Start the paragraph with the topic sentence: "James' aunts don't like him." Continue the paragraph with several sentences giving the reasons.

## CHAPTER 11

Explain how James feels when he:

- Goes outside in the dark
- Walks up to the peach
- Enters the hole
- Goes into the peach pit room

## CHAPTER 13

Discuss with you why Glow-worm says to Centipede, "There is no need to be rude."

## CHAPTER 14

Write a paragraph comparing James' relationship with his aunts and his relationship with the animals.

## CHAPTER 16

Explain whether they believe it was a mistake to cut the peach loose.

## CHAPTER 17

Write about the effects the peach had on the environment. In the story Grasshopper says "We are there." The question is, where is there? Guess where the insects and James have ended up.

## CHAPTER 19

Discuss with your youngster how James and his friends can possibly get out of this particular predicament. How can they get the sharks to stop eating the peach? Encourage your child to use his or her wildest imagination to invent some crazy ways to solve the problem.

# 4th GRADE LITERATURE PROGRAM

## CHAPTER 20

Write about some of the things the animals worry about and how they depend on James.

## CHAPTERS 21/22

The friends use the silk spun by the Silkworm and the thread spun by Miss Spider. Use either an encyclopedia or other animal books to research how strong these threads are. Discuss whether or not they would actually hold a giant peach.

## CHAPTER 25

There is an excellent description of how worms help the soil in this chapter. If you have access to a garden, half fill a large glass jar with damp dirt, ensuring there are no worms in it. Half fill another glass jar with dirt and include a worm or two. Observe the differences in the quality of the soil in each jar for a week or two. Write about the differences. The dirt with the worms in it should be lighter and more crumbly than the dirt without any worms.

## CHAPTER 29

Write why he or she thinks the Centipede insulted the Cloud-Man and got the travelers into such trouble?

## CHAPTER 39

At the end of the story, all the characters have a happy new life. Describe what things make each one happy. Write some of the things that would make a happy new life for your student.

## AFTER READING

Have your child suppose James had not dropped the bag of magic crystals. Discuss with your child what he would do and what might have happened as a result.

One of the wonderful things about fantasy is that ordinary people can be heroes. In *James and the Giant Peach*, James is only 7 years old, but he confronts each emergency with calm courage and an intelligent solution. Have your student draw a comic strip detailing the events of the day.

Tell your student he or she has a chance to spend a day with either Earthworm or Centipede. Ask him or her to write a paragraph explaining which one he or she would choose. Why? What would he or she do during that day?

# 4th GRADE LITERATURE PROGRAM

## WRITING ACTIVITY #1

Have your child reread Chapter 9 and list the descriptive phrases that paint a picture of being in the moonlight (wild white moon/ deadly quiet/ long, black shadows/ silent, mysterious, and wonderful/ soft and silver). Have your student write a poem or short story that takes place on a moonlit night that's alive with magic.

## WRITING ACTIVITY #2

Suggest to your child that he or she received a box of magic green crystals. Have him or her write a story about them. Include the following:

- How he or she got the crystals
- What he or she did with the crystals
- The places he or she visited
- Adventures he or she encountered
- The problems he or she solved

Use at least three descriptive phrases in the story that he or she learned from the book.

## WRITING ACTIVITY #3

Have your child pretend that he or she is a newspaper reporter whose job is to interview four of James' animal friends.

Write each character's name and its response to the question:

"What was the most exciting moment during your trip on the giant peach?"

## ART ACTIVITY #1

Let your student transform everyday junk into fantasy sculptures. Have your child collect objects such as old automobile parts, scraps of wood, screws, nails, wire, rope and old toy parts. Provide basic art supplies such as glue, paint and paint brushes.

Have your student construct fantasy sculptures of creatures inspired by the animals in *James and the Giant Peach*. Encourage your child to be imaginative.

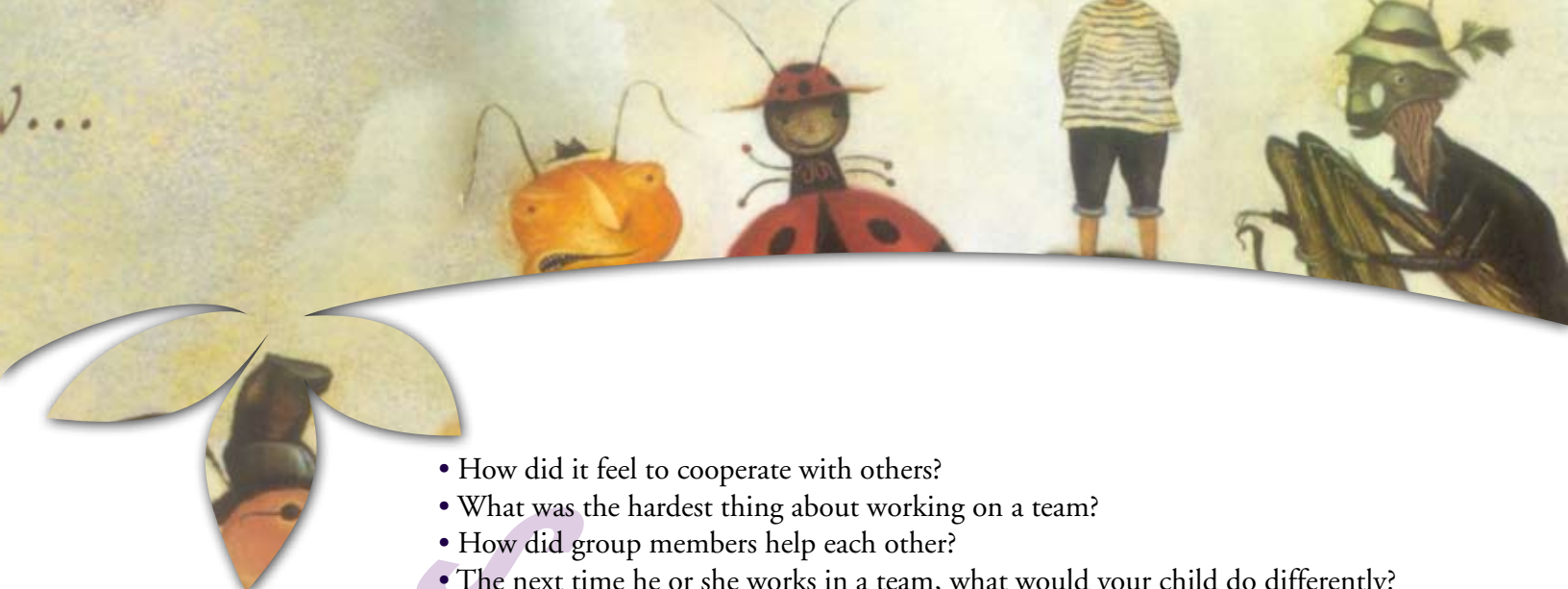
## ART ACTIVITY #2

Have your student draw a picture of the Empire State Building with a giant peach stuck on it, and then write a caption for his or her illustration.

## SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITY

*James and the Giant Peach* illustrates the concept of interdependence.

Discuss with your student the skills and attitudes needed for teamwork. Have your child think of a time when he or she was part of team. Write answers to the following questions:

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- How did it feel to cooperate with others?
  - What was the hardest thing about working on a team?
  - How did group members help each other?
  - The next time he or she works in a team, what would your child do differently?

## SCIENCE ACTIVITY

Explain to your child that he or she will work on a science experiment that investigates floating and sinking objects. Give your child a piece of clay 3" x 3" x 1" and a container of water. Have your child form the clay into a peach and try to make it float. The student can record and illustrate his or her attempts.

Next, have your student experiment with different clay shapes that float. Your youngster will inevitably come up with a boat shape that floats.

Your student can experiment further if you challenge him or her to make boats that can carry objects. Place marbles or other uniform weights one by one onto the clay shapes. The student can record his or her results. Your child can modify his or her boat to carry more weight.

## MATH ACTIVITY

Have your child make the following recipe:

### Peach Dessert

- 4 cups sliced peaches
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/4 lb. margarine, melted
- 1 tsp. oil

Oil an eight-inch square baking dish. Put in fruit at the bottom of the dish.

In a bowl, mix the flour, sugar and baking powder.

Add egg and mix until the mixture is in small clumps.

Scatter the mixture over all the fruit. Distribute the margarine over all.

Bake at 375 F. for 25 minutes. Makes six servings.

Ask your student to calculate how many people the dessert would serve if he or she doubled or tripled the recipe. How much of each ingredient would he or she need to use?

Have your child perform the tasks of cooking, serving and cleaning up.