

BOOK REVIEW

OUTLINE

Name the book	
<i>The Witches</i> by Roald Dahl	Give the title and author of the book
Opening	
Children's author Roald Dahl firmly established himself as one of the most imaginative writers of recent times through books such as <i>James and the Giant Peach</i> and <i>Danny, The Champion of the World</i> . But it's his grisly and amusing 1983 story <i>The Witches</i> , superbly illustrated by Quentin Blake, that is the jewel in the crown of his illustrious writing career.	Introduce the author and book, e.g. by saying what other works they have written, when the book was published etc.
Main Body	
The tale begins with the unnamed narrator being orphaned through the tragic death of his parents. According to their wishes, he takes up residence with his Norwegian grandmother and the pair moves to England for the boy's education. But antics in a hotel in Bournemouth soon eclipse anything the English school system can provide. The narrator, warned by his grandmother of a suspicious breed of witches disguised as upstanding, middle-class ladies, gets more than he bargained for when he discovers a plot to wipe out the entire population of English children by transforming them into mice. Unwittingly finding himself at the annual convention of England's witches, the narrator gets a sneak preview of the demonic intentions of the Grand High Witch, as fellow hotel guest Bruno Jenkins is transformed into vermin before his very eyes. Bruno, in many ways a spoilt child, forms an alliance with the narrator and his grandmother and the trio vow to take on the witches and put paid to their evil scheming.	Summarise the plot. It's not a good idea to say <i>everything</i> that happens. Choose the main highlights and don't talk about what happens at the end of the book, or your reader will have no reason to go and read it for themselves.
Dahl is to be congratulated, as always, on his boundless capacity for flights of imagination. Not many writers would get away with a cast of Norwegian grandmothers, talking mice and half-womanly, half-devilish creatures. But where Dahl really stands out is his ability to make the serious comic, and the comic serious. After all, his plot deals with the death of parents, as well as a thoroughly uncharitable plot to exterminate children. But somehow, Dahl forces us to laugh at these sinister events, whilst also asking us to reflect more somberly on vices such as greed and selfishness. Such an achievement is no mean feat .	Talk about the things you enjoyed about the book. Give specific examples.
Of course, the book has its flaws too. The fact that the hero is a small boy, whilst the villains are middle-aged women is sure to give feminists something to complain about. And it could be argued that the plot is too contrived: how likely is it that the boy and his grandmother would really find themselves in the same hotel as the Grand High Witch? Nevertheless, these minor detractions do not stop the book being one of the most entertaining in modern children's literature.	Talk about anything in the book that you did not like. Give specific examples.
Conclusion	
Fans of Roald Dahl will no doubt enjoy reading <i>The Witches</i> , but even those who are not seasoned lovers of his books, or of books in general, would find it highly entertaining. In the opinion of this critic, it's well worth a read.	Conclude by saying if you would recommend the book to others.