



# 6A: Dahl & Narrative

### Text

Boy: *Tales of Childhood* by Roald Dahl

### Introduction to the Text

In excerpts from his autobiography *Boy*, Roald Dahl tells stories about when he was a child. Some of these stories describe bad behavior by Roald and his friends and the harsh punishment they received.

### Background and Context

Roald Dahl was born in 1916 in a section of Great Britain known as Wales. His parents were both from Norway, and the family spoke Norwegian at home. Roald’s father died when Roald was only three.

When he was nine years old, Roald went to a boarding school. This is a type of school where the children live at the school. They go home to their families only when the school is closed for vacation or on weekends. Roald did not like boarding school and wanted to live at home.

In the early 1900s, children at British boarding schools had tuck-boxes. In these large boxes, they kept food sent to them by their families.

**Word Count:** 291

A headmaster is a person in charge of a school, like a principal. At Roald’s school, the headmaster sometimes used a cane made of bamboo to punish children who broke school rules. Bamboo is a light, flexible wood. When it hits people, it can feel like a whip.

Roald Dahl’s first name is pronounced ROO-uld. He was named for the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, who was the first person to reach the South Pole.

Roald Dahl wrote some of the most popular children’s books in the world. His book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was made into two movies. His novels *James and the Giant Peach* and *Matilda* are also loved by young readers.

### Keywords

boarding school	headmaster	cane
tuck-box		

### Sources

- “Roald Dahl,” Encyclopedia Britannica, [britannica.com](http://britannica.com)
- Dahl biography, [Roalddahlfans.com](http://Roalddahlfans.com)





## 6B: Mysteries & Investigations

### Texts

*Fever 1793* by Laurie Halse Anderson

*The Secret of the Yellow Death* by Suzanne Jurmain

“The Adventure of the Speckled Band” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

“The Red-Headed League” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

### Introduction to the Texts

In the novel *Fever 1793*, Laurie Halse Anderson tells the fictional story of Matilda Cook, a girl living in Philadelphia in 1793. At that time, many people in the city were dying of a disease called yellow fever.

*The Secret of the Yellow Death* by Suzanne Jurmain is also about yellow fever, but it is non-fiction. Jurmain describes how a group of American doctors traveled to Cuba in the 1920s to research the cause of yellow fever.

In “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” a woman named Helen Stoner asks detective Sherlock Holmes for help. Her sister died mysteriously at their family home, and now Helen believes she may be in danger. Her stepfather, Dr. Grimesby Roylott, gets angry often. He has even been to jail for murder. Holmes visits Helen’s home to look for clues.

In “The Red-Headed League,” Sherlock Holmes helps Jabez Wilson solve a mystery. Wilson was hired for an unusual job. He did very easy work for the Red-Headed League and earned a lot of money. The Red-Headed League hires workers who have red hair. Wilson’s work ended suddenly, and he wants Holmes to find out why.

### Background and Context

#### Philadelphia in the 1700s

Philadelphia is the largest city in Pennsylvania. It was the capital of the United States for the first twenty years of the nation’s history. In the excerpt from *Fever 1793*, two kinds of workers are mentioned: masons, who build things with brick or stone, and glaziers, who use glass to make windows.

#### Yellow Fever

In *The Secret of the Yellow Fever*, the author describes an epidemic of yellow fever, a disease that spread quickly and affected many people. People with yellow fever experience delirium, have trouble thinking clearly, and might see things that aren’t really there. Yellow fever remains a serious disease today, especially in countries near the equator, such as Brazil and Ethiopia.



## Sherlock Holmes in 1800s England

Sherlock Holmes is perhaps the most famous fictional detective. He was created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a British author who lived from 1859 to 1930. Before he became a writer, Conan Doyle graduated from medical school in Scotland. One of his professors was highly skilled in identifying diseases by studying patients. This professor served as a model for Sherlock Holmes. In "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," Dr. Watson mentions Holmes's skill at making deductions. A deduction is a conclusion based on evidence or clues.

**Word Count:** 400

In "The Red-Headed League," Jabez Wilson owns a pawnshop. A pawnshop is a place people go when they need money right away. They take something they own and sell it to the pawnshop. If they have enough money later on, they can buy the thing back from the pawnshop.

A group called the Red-Headed League hires Wilson to copy encyclopedias by hand. Holmes thinks that this is suspicious, because machines called printing presses can easily produce books, including encyclopedias.

## Keywords

masons

epidemic

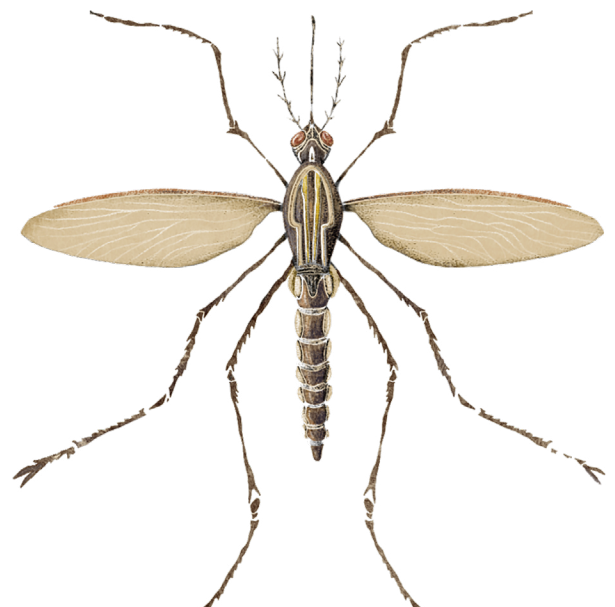
pawnshop

delirium

deduction

## Sources

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- "Yellow Fever in Brazil," Centers for Disease Control, [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- "Yellow fever—Annual Epidemiological Report 2016," European Centers for Disease Control, [ecdc.europa.eu/en/home](http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/home)

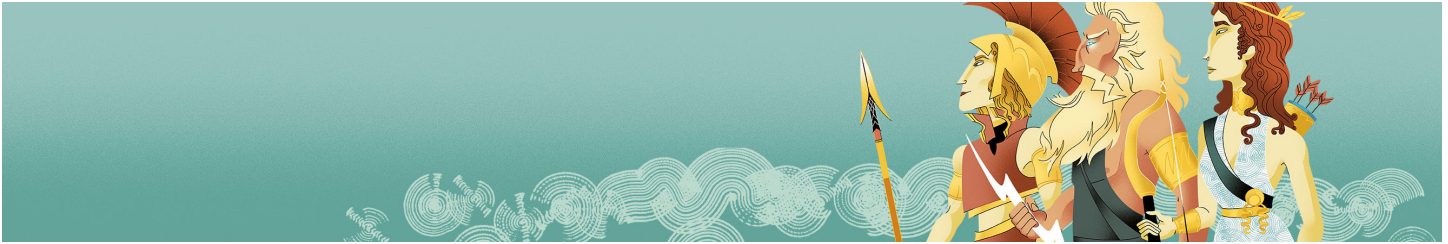




# 6C: The Chocolate Collection

## **Unit Overview**

The Aztecs used it for money, early explorers took it to the Antarctic, and at least once it was turned into a bomb. The 3,700-year-long history of chocolate is full of twists and turns and big surprises. You will discover that there are a lot of questions that need answers: Can chocolate make you smarter? What does chocolate have to do with slavery? Should school lunches include chocolate?



# 6D: The Greeks

### Texts

- “Prometheus” from *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths* by Bernard Evslin
- “The Cyclops” from *The Odyssey* by Homer
- “Arachne” by Ted Hughes

### Introduction to the Texts

#### “Prometheus”

Zeus is the king of the gods. Prometheus, a young god, asks Zeus to give humans the gift of fire. With fire, humans could cook food, warm themselves, and protect themselves from beasts. But Zeus refuses. He thinks that fire would make people think they were as powerful as the gods. This myth describes how the world became the way it is. It also shows conflict between the gods. Both are important themes in Greek myths.

#### “The Cyclops”

Many Greek myths involve conflicts between heroes and monsters. The ancient Greek tale *The Odyssey* tells the story of the hero Odysseus. Odysseus and his men have spent ten years fighting a war far from their homes. When they journey back, they are stopped by many monsters. One of these monsters is a Cyclops. A Cyclops has just one eye, but is very big and strong. Odysseus has to find a clever way to escape because he and his men cannot defeat the Cyclops. The story of Odysseus and the Cyclops is one of the most famous Greek myths.

#### “Arachne”

Ancient Romans borrowed many of their gods and myths from the ancient Greeks. The Roman poet Ovid wrote down many of these myths. He was especially interested in stories about people who were transformed, or changed into something else, by the gods. One of the myths Ovid retold is the story of Arachne. Arachne is a weaver who makes cloth. Arachne’s cloth is so good that people compare it to cloth made by the goddess Minerva. Minerva becomes jealous of Arachne’s skill, and offended by Arachne’s pride. This myth describes how the world became the way it is. It also shows what can happen if people do not thank the gods.

## Background and Context

### Greek Myths

A myth is a made-up story about gods or goddesses, or humans who do remarkable things. Some of the most famous myths were told by the ancient Greeks. Ancient Greek myth subjects include Zeus, the king of the gods, and Athena, the goddess of wisdom and courage. Ancient Greek myths also have fictional heroes. Some myths explain why the world is the way it is, and some are about the gods and heroes and their adventures.



**Word Count:** 454

## Keywords

myth  
hero

Cyclops

transformed

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## Sources

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- "Greek Gods and Religious Practices," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, [metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org)
- "Metamorphoses," Encyclopedia Britannica, [britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com)





# 6E: *Summer of the Mariposas*

by Guadalupe Garcia McCall

## Texts

*Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall

Excerpt from *Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario

## Introduction to the Texts

Guadalupe Garcia McCall was born in Piedras Negras, Mexico. Her family immigrated to the United States when she was six years old. Garcia McCall's Mexican American ancestry influences her writing. Her hometown of Eagle Pass, Texas, is the setting of her novel *Summer of the Mariposas*. In the novel, five sisters find a dead body. The sisters go on a quest to take the body to Mexico. They face many challenges, such as an evil witch and a wild *chupacabras*. Thankfully, they have help from La Llorona, a legendary figure from Mexican folklore. *Summer of the Mariposas* is inspired by a well-known Greek myth.

In *Enrique's Journey*, Sonia Nazario writes about a long and dangerous real-life trip taken by a teenage boy. Enrique leaves his home in Honduras, a country in Central America, hoping to be reunited with his mother, who went to the United States when he was younger. This part of the story tells of Enrique's traveling by train through Mexico.

## Background and Context

### La Llorona

La Llorona, or "the wailing woman," is a legendary figure from Mexican folklore. Folklore means stories passed down in a community or culture. In the story of La Llorona, she drowns her children because she is overcome with anger. Her ghost then cries and looks for her lost children. There are different versions of the story. One version connects La Llorona to the fall of the Aztec Empire. Another version traces La Llorona back to the Aztec goddess Coatlicue.

### *The Odyssey*

*The Odyssey* is an epic poem written by the ancient Greek poet Homer. The poem tells the story of the hero Odysseus, who is traveling home after the Trojan War. Odysseus and his men sail for ten years. They fight many monsters along the way. Gods and goddesses help and hurt them on their difficult journey. *The Odyssey* is a Greek myth. A myth is a made-up story about gods and goddesses or brave humans.



Word Count: 277

## Keywords

ancestry

myth

legend

folklore

journey

hero

## Sources

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- *Summer of the Mariposas*, Lee & Low Books, [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com)
- Miscellanies: "Wailing Woman," History Today, [historytoday.com](http://historytoday.com)
- About the Book, *Enrique's Journey*, [enriquesjourney.com](http://enriquesjourney.com)



# 6F: The *Titanic* Collection

## Unit Overview

Everything about the *Titanic* was enormous. The contents of the kitchen alone illustrate the scale: Its pantries contained 40 tons of potatoes, 40,000 fresh eggs, and 36,000 apples, enough food to feed the 2,207 people on board. When disaster struck, it was also on an epic scale. Of those 2,207 people, only 712 survived. You'll discover that there are a lot of questions that need answers: Who was really to blame for the ship's sinking? Who were the *Titanic* orphans? Were third-class passengers really served gruel for supper (and what is gruel)? And that's just the tip of the iceberg—bon voyage!

