

CTYOnline Young Readers' Series for Grades 4 & 5



Magical Life Lessons Sample Assignment

In *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J. K. Rowling, and *Inkheart* by Cornelia Funke, three young people learn the joys and pitfalls of acquiring unexpected powers. *Matilda's* life is transformed when she learns to harness her powers to teach cruel Miss Trunchbull a lesson. In *Harry's* third year at Hogwarts, the young wizard learns how to overcome his fears and how to travel through time to right an injustice. *Meggie* finds out that she has the power to read characters out of books--often a dangerous activity.

Designed for 4th and 5th grade children reading at a middle-school level or above, students in this critical reading series:

- read three thematically connected, age-appropriate books of increasing difficulty
- participate in online discussions with gifted classmates from Boston to Beijing
- post book-related writing assignments such as alternate story endings and talk shows with characters as guests
- analyze the authors' writing styles and use of literary devices
- learn sophisticated vocabulary words and literary devices with the help of online games and puzzles

Instructors encourage students to read carefully and cite the text to support their points. Students become conscious of the importance of interpreting an author's inferences in understanding plot and character. Students typically read and share written responses every other day (fall, spring, and early summer sessions) or daily (midsummer intensive session). Work is posted in the virtual classrooms at the student's convenience as long as deadlines are met. Parents should review the books in each theme before choosing in order to find the most interesting and appropriate theme for their child.

To give you an idea of the type of assignments involved, the following is the first of ten lessons:

Instructions for Lesson One

All work is due by the following Sunday at midnight. (That's the end of Sunday, not the beginning!) This means that your assigned reading should be started early and completed by Thursday night--at the latest--to allow you enough time to finish all the assignments (reading, poll, blog, discussion forum, and optional games, crossword puzzles, and wikis) by Sunday night.

1. Begin reading *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, preferably reading in the following reading chunks:

Pages 7-29 ("The Reader of Books;" "Mr Wormwood, the Great Car Dealer")

Pages 30-65 ("The Hat and the Superglue;" "The Ghost; Arithmetic;" "The Platinum-Blond Man")

Pages 66-89 ("Miss Honey;" "The Trunchbull")

Pages 90-116 ("The Parents;" "Throwing the Hammer")

2. Vote your opinion in the [Poll](#).

3. Post ONE of the following two blog assignments (your choice) to the Blog forum:

a. Using the explanations of 1st Person [Point of View](#) found in the terms [Narrator](#) and [Point of View](#) in the Glossary, pretend you are a character in *Matilda*, and write a 100-300 word diary account from "your" 1st person [point of view](#) describing some event that occurs in the book. You can be any character other than Matilda herself.

b. Matilda made up the following [limerick](#) about Miss Honey:

The thing we all ask about Jenny
Is, "Surely there cannot be many
Young girls in the place
With so lovely a face?
The answer to that is, "Not any!"

Why should Matilda have all the fun? Using the explanation of a [Limerick](#) found in the Glossary, write 3 or 4 of your own 5-line [limericks](#) describing various characters in *Matilda*.

4. Contribute two (or more) thoughtful posts to the Discussion Board in response to any of the following questions. (Remember! At least one of your two thoughtful posts should be in reply to a discussion post made by another student.)

a. **Matilda's reading list.** Have you ever heard of any of the books on Matilda's reading list in the first chapter? Which ones? Do you have any books that you would like Matilda to read? Name one or two books and explain why Matilda would like the books and what she could learn from these books that might help her cope with her situation.

b. **Compare Matilda's dirty tricks with those of her father.** How are the dirty tricks that Matilda plays on her parents similar to those that Mr. Wormwood plays on his customers? How are they different?

c. **Does revenge help Matilda?** Matilda seems to feel that her "punishments" improve her parents' behavior--at least for a while. How likely do you think it is that such punishments would improve a person's behavior if the person did not know the reason for the punishment? Has Matilda actually helped herself by her acts of revenge against her parents? Explain your opinion.

d. **Knowing right from wrong.** Matilda obviously has never been taught about right and wrong by her parents. So how does she know that her father's chosen way of making money (selling cars that are "lemons" to trusting people) is wrong? Do you think Matilda's parents and Michael know that cheating people is wrong? Do they care? Can good people honestly disagree about what is right and what is wrong? (This is not assuming, of course, that Mr. Wormwood should ever be considered a "good" person!)

e. **Should all children's books contain humor?** Matilda tells Miss Honey at the end of the chapter titled "Miss Honey" that all children's books should contain "funny bits" because children are not so serious as grown-ups and they love to laugh. Do you agree that all books read by children should contain humor? Have you read any good books that did not contain humor?

f. **Miss Trunchbull's rule.** At the end of the chapter titled "Miss Trunchbull, the headmistress tells Miss Honey that she has a rule that all children must remain in their own age groups regardless of ability. Can you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of enforcing such a rule in a school?

Note: You are provided with a list of “50 Mind-Expanding Vocabulary Words from *Matilda*” that you can use to help better understand the book and increase your knowledge of vocabulary words in general.

OPTIONAL-Not Required- fun activities are also provided:

- Share your favorite stories and authors with other students in the [Recommended Reading Wiki](#).
- Print out and work on the crossword puzzles that have been provided to help reinforce your knowledge of the "mind-expanding" vocabulary words.
- Participate in the [Magical Life Lessons Adventure Wiki](#), a group writing activity.
- Play some literary terms review games.