

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Exploring Drugs that Excite Our Brains

Introduction

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is about a poor boy who lives with his parents and grandparents and wins both a lifetime supply of sweet treats and a visit to the deliciously mysterious factory where they're made. Along with four other "lucky" kids, Charlie learns how eccentric factory owner Willy Wonka and his secret workers from a far-away land make the finest chocolate products in the world and perfect the most unique delights. But only the most deserving of the children at the end of the tour, the mild-mannered and thoughtful Charlie, gets the ultimate prize—the factory itself, and with it the opportunity to move his family out of poverty.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is also about—well, chocolate—and the cacao bean, "the thing from which all chocolate is made." Cacao, like other plants such as tobacco and cannabis, or substances like alcohol, has special properties that excite our brains and makes us feel good. But, as with all these other substances, chocolate has a "dark" side (think Darth Vader) that we must learn to manage if we are going to truly enjoy the magic without losing our heads.

Roald Dahl (1916-1990) is one of the world's best-known children's authors. He was born in Wales to Norwegian parents, attended boarding school in England, and travelled and worked in Africa and elsewhere. He served as a fighter pilot in WWII, was injured, and moved to the US where he started writing short stories and novels. Dahl suffered many losses in his youth and adulthood, and he was candid about his beliefs about greed and injustice in the world, but he remained an admirer of mischief and humour his whole life.

This lesson is designed to be a part of a larger book study. It seeks to help students build drug literacy as they consider the psychoactive properties of one of our favourite drugs – chocolate. Roald Dahl provides rich content for exploring the positive attractiveness, but also the destructive potential, of psychoactive substances. Exploring this ambivalence with respect to chocolate provides a relatively uncharged setting to learn an important framework for understanding other psychoactive drugs.

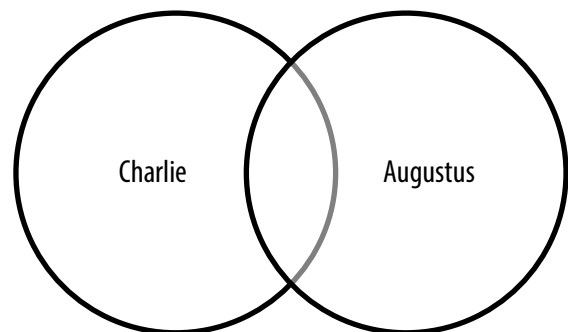
Instructional strategies

1. Review with students that chocolate has a substance in it that stimulates the pleasure centres in our brains. This is why most of us like good chocolate. Then draw attention to Augustus and Charlie and their experiences with chocolate in the book. For Augustus, have students review how he found the first ticket (Chapter 6) and his behaviour at the chocolate river (Chapter 17). For Charlie, draw attention to his birthday (Chapter 7), how he ate the bar at the store (Chapter 11) and his experience with the mug of chocolate from the river (Chapter 18). But students can also draw in other details from the story.

Then, have the students use a Venn diagram, such as the one on the right, to compare and contrast Augustus' and Charlie's experiences with chocolate.

Use questions like the following to engage the class in deeper reflection on these experiences:

- a. Why did Augustus take "not the slightest notice of his mother or Mr. Wonka" when he was drinking from the river?
- b. Why couldn't Charlie stop when he was eating the bar in the store?



- c. Why was Charlie able to not go bananas in the factory when the other children were not able to control themselves?
 - d. Have you ever tried something that you were warned not to? How did you feel afterwards? Give examples.
2. Explore the self-destructive behaviour theme (linked to excessive behaviour or being out-of-control) in the book by examining the different characters of the children on the factory tour with Charlie.
 - a. Have students work in small groups. Ask them to:
 - o identify what it was about the character of each of the four children (other than Charlie) that contributed to their self-destructive (excessive, out-of-control) behaviour,
 - o identify in what ways Charlie was different, and
 - o suggest things that might have helped the other children behave differently.
 - b. As a class, debrief the ideas generated. List the self-destructive factors identified by students on one side of the board and the protective or mitigating factors (things that helped Charlie or could have helped the other children) on the other side.
 - c. Then have a class discussion about how something that is good can become bad when we use it too much, too often or in the wrong way. Ask students to provide other examples. Brainstorm ways that we can help ourselves and each other avoid these problems.

Drug literacy

Big ideas

- Drugs can be tremendously helpful and also very harmful
- As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage the drugs in our lives
- We can learn how to control drugs by examining human thinking through time, exploring stories from various cultures and listening to each other

Competencies

- Assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and well-being of individuals, communities and societies
- Recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- Develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs
- Develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks and harms related to drugs

For a complete look at the drug literacy competencies, as defined by the Centre for Addictions Research of BC, see: www.uvic.ca/research/centres/carbc/assets/docs/iminds/hs-pp-drug-curriculum.pdf

Links to Curriculum

First Peoples' principles of learning

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity



English Language Arts 4 & 5

Big ideas

- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world
- Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens

Competencies

- Use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading, listening, or viewing to deepen understanding of text
- Apply a variety of thinking skills to gain meaning from texts
- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and deepen understanding of self, community, and world
- Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding

English Language Arts 6

Big ideas

- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world
- Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens

Competencies

- Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, and visual texts, guide inquiry, and extend thinking
- Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
- Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world
- Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways
- Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking