

NAME: _____



Activity One - Famous Authors

Matilda loves to read. There aren't too many five year-olds who can read a novel by Charles Dickens or John Steinbeck. In fact that might be a challenge for many adults!

In the first chapter of the novel the author lists some of Matilda's favorite books along with their authors. All of the books listed are novels, and many have been popular for several generations. Jane Austen, for instance, was a writer who lived over two centuries ago, and Dickens wrote his last novel in the 1860's. Some of the authors mentioned are American (Hemingway, Steinbeck) and some are British (Dickens, Kipling).

Consider this...

Although H.G. Wells wrote many different types of books including ones on history and politics, he is best known for his science fiction novels (like the one read by Matilda). Along with Jules Verne, he is known as "The Father of Science Fiction".



Your task is to peruse the list of books and authors presented in the first chapter and select one of Matilda's favorite authors. Investigate your choice and write a synopsis [a short summary] of the author's life and accomplishments.

You might consider relating something of the author's personal life as well as some of his/her most famous books.

NAME: _____



Activity Two - The Hammer Throw

This activity can be done individually or in small groups.

It mentions in the novel that Miss Trunchbull was an Olympic participant in the hammer throw.

The **hammer throw** is an event where the object is to throw a heavy metal ball attached to a wire and handle. At one time the participants actually threw a sledge hammer. The men's hammer weighs 16 lb (7.257 kg), and the women's hammer weighs almost nine pounds (4 kg) and is four feet (119 cm) in length. The winner is decided by who can throw the "hammer" the farthest. Competitors begin by spinning the hammer above their head, then they pick up speed by completing one to four turns in the circle. The ball moves in a circular path, gradually increasing in velocity with each turn. The thrower releases the "hammer" from the front of the circle. The two most important factors for a long throw are the angle of release and the speed of the "hammer".



The **hammer throw**, of course, is just one event featured in the Summer Olympics. The Summer Olympics presently features 302 events in 28 sports, and the Winter Olympics features 84 events in 7 sports.

Your task is to investigate one event in either the Summer or Winter Olympics and prepare an **Information Sheet** on the details of that sport. You should include a description of the event; its origins; equipment used; record holders, etc.

Your Information Sheet should include a title, an appropriate picture, and about a page of information.



Activity Three - Parrots



In the fourth chapter Matilda borrows a parrot from her friend, Fred, to teach her parents a lesson. Fred's parrot is quite talented and knows two expressions very well: "Hullo, hullo, hullo" and "Rattle my bones".

Many parrots are even more talented than Fred's and can say dozens of expressions they have learned from their owners.

There are, in fact, over 350 species of parrots in the world and are usually grouped into two families, the **Psittacidae** (true parrots) and the **Cacatuidae** (cockatoos).

Your task is to investigate the parrot family (using references from your school library or the Internet) and write **a brief report** (approximately one page in length) on the species of your choice. You may wish to include one or more of the following subtopics:

- appearance
- diet
- where this species is found
- how easy is it to train this species to speak
- its cost

Consider this...

Along with crows, ravens, and jays, parrots are considered the most intelligent of birds.

"Live that you wouldn't be ashamed to sell the family parrot to the town gossip."

- Will Rogers quote

NAME: _____



Activity Four - Small Town England

Although we don't know the name of the town in which the story takes place, we do know that it is a fairly small town in England.

It certainly seems to be a nice place to live. It has some areas which are quite rustic and out-of-the-way (like the spot where Miss Honey lives). Yet it also has a lot of the conveniences of a larger center (i.e. stores, schools, airport).



The town council of this village has approached you with a problem. The council would like to attract more tourists to the vicinity to support the local economy (i.e. shoppers for their stores, diners in their restaurants, people to stay in their inns and hotels). They would like you to design a travel brochure that will be sent out to thousands of travel agencies world-wide.

Your task is to design such a brochure to help these people out. You may wish to investigate the format and appearance of such brochures. Then using your imagination, prepare a brochure for the town, complete with pictures, data and information that will appeal to the average tourist interested in visiting this quaint little town. You may have to use your imagination and fill in some of the "blanks" when it comes to the particulars of the community.

The Internet may be an invaluable source in researching this topic.

NAME: _____



Activity Five - An Alternate Ending

This activity can be done individually or in small groups.

The conclusion of *Matilda* is quite effective and does an admirable job of piecing together a number of loose ends. It does leave the reader wondering what might become of Matilda's family in Spain and whether Miss Trunchbull might show up again at some point and make Miss Honey's life miserable.

What, though, if the author had not tied things up so nicely at the end? What if Miss Trunchbull had not fallen for Matilda's little trick, or her parents had not left her with Miss Honey?

Although we will never know the answers to these questions, you will be given the opportunity of putting your imagination to work in coming up with what might have happened if the author's imagination had worked its way in an entirely different direction.

If working with a group, brainstorm possible alternative endings to the novel. Remember to consider all of the principal characters. From your list of ideas choose one ending to present to the class. Write a detailed synopsis of your alternate conclusion presenting as much detail as possible. After presenting it to the class, you may wish to get their input as to additional changes that might be made to further improve your alternative ending.

Have fun!

NAME: _____



Activity Six - Magic Tricks!

Matilda certainly is on to a very interesting trick when she is able to move objects with the power of her mind. This feat is actually called **telekinesis** – *movement of objects with mind power*. Some performing magicians claim to have this kind of power – the power of *telekinesis*.

Many magicians, however, will admit that all of the acts they perform in public are the result of hours and hours of practice, and do not involve “magic” – they are simply *slights of hand* – a way of tricking their audience. Some magic tricks are quite famous – sawing a woman in half, for instance.

There have been many famous magicians during the past hundred years or so: Harry Houdini, David Copperfield, Siegfried and Roy, and Doug Henning are just a few. Many have amazed us with their acts of magic and we wonder – “how did he do that?”

Your task is to investigate a famous trick that one or more of these magicians have performed. It could be one of the following:

- Sawing someone in half
- Floating a person in air
- Escaping from the Water Torture Cell (Houdini)
- A lady turns into a tiger
- Or it could be one of your own favorite magic tricks.

Check for sources on magic tricks in your school library or the Internet.

Once you have discovered how this trick is done, your task is to explain the procedure carefully step-by-step so that someone else is able to perform the trick from your explanation. Good luck!
