***The Witches***

***Chapter 5***

***The Meeting***

***Summary:***

* In walks this group of women, all chatting, filling up the seats farthest from the platform. Our narrator doesn't mind, he'll just keep on doing his thing, hidden behind the screen.
* Being a seven-year-old, though, he is curious, so he checks out the scene. One of the ladies is scratching her head. The narrator's a little embarrassed for her. (Maybe *he* should be embarrassed – he doesn't catch on too quickly, does he?)
* Then he realizes they're *all* scratching their heads. Ah, they must have head lice. Gross. (He's still a little slow on the uptake...)
* Then one of the women pushes her fingers *underneath* the hair on her head – she is wearing a wig… and gloves... and so are the rest of them. (Light bulb!) Now it's a real uh-oh.
* Needless to say, our narrator freaks out.
* He can't leave, because the doors are chained shut. He needs to stay still so they don't notice him, but he's so scared that he faints. When he comes to, it's silent around him, but he still hasn't been spotted. Phew! So far so good.

***Brief Synopsis:***

The women welcome each other warmly. All of them wear pretty clothes and hats, and as they fill in the seats of the ballroom, the boy notices that one woman is scratching the back of her neck quite a lot. Just when the boy is feeling embarrassed for her, he notices that all of the women are doing the same thing. The boy thinks that maybe they have fleas or nits in their hair. However, when he sees one of the women not only scratching the hair on her neck but actually venturing beneath her hair, he realizes the truth; all of the women are wearing wigs and, he notices suddenly, they are all wearing gloves as well. They are witches.

The boy sits very still, making sure not to make any noise. Looking to the door and thinking of making a quick escape, he sees one of the women fastening a big chain and lock to the door. The boy faints briefly but remains behind the screen. He gets back to his knees and begins to watch the meeting through a crack in the screen.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

At that point, I think I fainted. The whole thing was altogether too much for a small boy to cope with. (6.19)

Our narrator is very aware that he's still a "small boy." Do you think this is a good awareness for a young person, or does it make him less likely to enjoy his childhood? What other parts of the book make you answer that way?