***The Witches***

***Chapter 6***

***Formula 86 Delayed Action Mouse Maker***

***Summary:***

* This chapter is one to be read. By you. Seriously. Go do it.
* It's pretty much a back and forth between the GHW and the other witches, who basically just praise and confirm and ooh and ahh at everything she says. It is kind of like Sesame Street meets Fascism. If that doesn't make you want to check it out, what will?
* In case you don't get around to it, though, the GHW gives the witches their plan, and here it is: all the witches will buy the best sweet shops in their towns (with the money the GHW makes herself). Then they will each have a Great Gala Opening and give out free sweets to all the children.
* Here's the catch. Each of those sweets will have a magic formula inside – FORMULA 86 DELAYED ACTION MOUSE-MAKER.
* In case you're not familiar with FORMULA 86 DELAYED ACTION MOUSE-MAKER, here's what happens to children who ingest it: they turn into mice. (Not right away, though – hence, delayed action). Naturally, once they're transformed and there are mice running around everywhere, people will set-up mouse traps and all the mice (a.k.a. children) will die.
* As if this isn't creepy and violent enough, the GHW finishes with a really spooky and ominous song (again, just check it out).

***Brief Synopsis:***

Now that she has sufficiently scared the other witches, The Grand High Witch launches into a description of her plan to kill all the children in England. She tells the witches to all go home and quit their jobs and then to buy reputable sweet-shops in each of their towns. The witches are very excited, responding back to The Grand High Witch en masse, until one witch speaks too vehemently by saying that she "will feed them poisoned sweets and poisoned chocs and wipe them all out like weasels" (74). The Grand High Witch scolds the outspoken witch for this, saying that if children eat poisoned sweets the witches will be quickly caught, and that anyway witches work with magic.

The Grand High Witch tells them that they will all hold grand openings at their sweet shops and invite all of the children around. Then, they will put one drop of something called "Formula 86 Delayed Action Mouse-Maker" (76) in each chocolate and sweet in the shop. The children will eat these, feel fine directly after and even at home in the evening and the morning, but at exactly 9 o'clock the next day they will turn into mice. Then, since all the children will be at school, all the teachers will panic and kill them with mouse traps. The audience goes wild at this idea, clapping and stomping their feet along with the strange dance The Grand High Witch has started doing; over this noise, The Grand High Witch starts to scream a long, frightening, rhyming song about children turning into mice and being killed.

***Analysis (Ch 4-7):***

As the boy and the grandmother prepare to set off for their summer holiday in southern England, the motif of mice is further developed with the grandmother buying the boy two white mice. The names that he gives these mice are important, as they likely allude to William and Mary of Orange, who reigned over England, Scotland, and Ireland in the late 17th century. Thus, though it has seemed like the boy loves and aspires to live in Norway, these names connect the boy to England.

The fact that the grandmother is the one to give the boy the mice is also quite important to the reader's characterization of the old woman. Like the way she smokes a large cigar, against the orders of the doctor and the norms of her gender, she differs from all other women in the book by not being afraid of mice. It is unclear whether this makes her like a man or a child, but it can certainly be said that she stands alone in the book and is one of the most vivid and iconoclastic characters in Dahl's arsenal, thanks likely to her being based on his mother, whom he respected greatly.

Soon, the reader meets another important female character: [The Witches](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-witches)'s great villain, The Grand High Witch. While the convention taking place at the hotel is made up of English witches, it is unclear where The Grand High Witch herself is from. Dahl takes great pains to make her sound "foreign," however, and likely means to cast her as Eastern European with her rolled r's, mixed up w's and v's, and switched g's and k's. Dahl uses The Grand High Witch's foreignness to create fear in the readers; we can be seen that this was a purposeful move from the fact that the grandmother, whose native tongue is also not English, speaks without any specific accent markers throughout the book.

The Grand High Witch sings an elaborate, multi-page song about how the children of England will be changed into mice and the teachers of England will kill them. The song has a fairly simple structure—the rhyme scheme aabbcc... of many children's poems—but the actual content is vivid and terrifying. The song uses onomatopoeia to reinforce the spooky sounds that The Grand High Witch hopes will accompany the children's demise: "Now mouse-trrraps come and every trrrap/Goes *snippy-snip*and *snappy-snap*/The mouse-trrraps have a powerful spring/The springs go *crack* and *snap* and *ping*!" (80). These details add to the story being told to the witches, making the witches more excited for their terrible deeds to come, and the details also help young readers use their imagination.

Dahl at times seems to include humor more suited for an adult or older child than young child, often in the form of irony. The name the witches of England choose to masquerade behind is one of the most clearly ironic aspects of Dahl's work. While the group's name, "The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children," leads the boy and others at the hotel to trust them, they are the last people anyone, especially a child, should trust.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

"After tventy-six seconds, child is not a child any longer. It is a mouse!" (8.54)

***Explanation:***

After our narrator's transformation, we find out that this isn't exactly true. A child is no longer a child, but it's not a mouse either – it's a child-mouse. A child-mouse can still do most of the things a child can do, he's just a little smaller.

***Quotation 2:***

"He's not feeling very well," my grandmother said. "He's staying in his room." (18.17)

***Explanation***:

Aha! We caught Grandmamma in one of her lies. This raises the question though: is it okay to tell a white lie if is serves a greater purpose? When is it okay to lie?

***Quotation 3:***

"All over school, mouse-trrraps is going <em>snappety-snap</em> and mouse-heads is rrrolling across the floors like marbles!" (8.62)

***Explanation***:

Sometimes, when reading <em>The Witches, </em>we just get so used to these violent images that they don't shock us anymore. In this case, maybe it's because mice getting caught in traps isn't anything new to us. Still, though, we have to remember that these mice are actually children (who think and feel like humans still) and it is <em>their</em> heads that are "rrrolling across the floor like marbles!"

***Quotation 4:***

"Children are foul and filthy!" thundered The Grand High Witch.  
  
"They are! They are!" chorused the English witches. "They are foul and filthy!"  
  
"Children are dirty and stinky!" screamed The Grand High Witch.  
  
"Dirty and stinky!" cried the audience, getting more and more worked up. (8.3-6)

***Explanation***:

Everything the Grand High Witch says is echoed by the rest of the witches. This very clearly shows the power of a charismatic leader to inspire hatred. The Grand High Witch comes from a long line of hateful leaders who created a following – can you think of any examples?

***Quotation 5:***

"AND ALL US VITCHES SHOUT HOORAY!" (8.64)

***Explanation***:

Here, the witches take it beyond just killing children. It is not enough to kill a child, they must rejoice in his or her death, too, and "shout hooray!" Recently, the world's most wanted man, Osama Bin Laden, was killed. Many people rejoiced in his death – saying that he killed thousands of people, so he deserved it – and others argued that it's never appropriate to celebrate death. What do you think?

***Quotation 6:***

"I have brrrought vith me six trrrunks stuffed full of Inklish banknotes, all new and crrrisp. And all of them," she added with a fiendish leer, "all of them homemade." (8.29)

***Explanation***:

The fact that the Grand High Witch makes counterfeit money shows that she's clever not only in her plans to squelch children, but also in other circumstances. Are there any other instances in the book where she proves to be extra sneaky?

***Quotation 7:***

"You brrrainless bogvumper! Are you not rrree-alising that if you are going rrround poisoning little children you vill be caught in five minutes flat? Never in my life am I hearing such a boshvolloping suggestion coming from a vitch!" (8.34)

***Explanation***:

Like the brainless bogvumper of a vitch that suggested poisoning the children, anyone can come up with a plan. The tough part is figuring out how to not get caught. When our narrator hatches his plan, what efforts does <em>he</em> put into not getting caught?