

*Charlie and the
Chocolate Factory*
by Roald Dahl

A Teacher's Guide for Socratic Discussion
by Megan Andrews



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INTRODUCTION



CenterForLit’s teacher guide series is intended to assist teachers and parents in conducting meaningful discussions of literature in the classroom or home school. It is important to note that they are **not** intended to be workbooks for the student, but rather models and guides for discussion leaders. Questions and answers follow the pattern presented in *Teaching the Classics*, CenterForLit’s flagship literature seminar. Though the concepts underlying this approach to literary analysis are explained in detail in that seminar, the following brief summary presents the basic principles upon which this guide is based.

The *Teaching the Classics* approach to literary analysis and interpretation is built around **three unique ideas** which, when combined, produce a powerful instrument for understanding and teaching literature:

First: All works of fiction share the same basic elements — **Context, Structure, and Style**. A literature lesson that helps the student identify these elements in a story prepares them for meaningful discussion of the story’s themes.

Context encompasses all of the details of time and place surrounding the writing of a story, including the personal life of the author as well as historical events that shaped the author’s world.

Structure includes the essential building blocks that make up a story, and that all stories have in common: Conflict, Plot (which includes *exposition, rising action, climax, denouement, and conclusion*), Setting, Characters, and Theme.

Style refers to the literary devices used by authors to create the mood and atmosphere of their stories. Recognition of some basic literary devices (alliteration, simile, personification, metaphor, etc.) enables a reader not only to understand the author’s themes more readily, but also to appreciate his craftsmanship more fully.

Second: Because it is approachable and engaging, *children’s literature* is the best genre to employ in teaching the foundational principles of literary analysis. Children’s books present these building blocks in clear, memorable language, and are thus treasure mines of opportunities for the astute teacher—allowing him to present Context, Structure, and Style with ease to children and adults alike. Having learned to recognize these basic elements in the simple text of a classic children’s story, a student is well prepared to analyze complex works suitable for his own age and level of intellectual development.

Third: The best classroom technique for teaching literary analysis and interpretation is the *Socratic Method*. Named after the ancient gadfly who first popularized this style of teaching, the Socratic method employs the art of questioning, rather than lecturing, to accomplish education. Based upon the conviction that the process of discovery constitutes the better part of learning, our program uses well-placed questions to teach students how to think, rather than dictating to them what to think.

The *Teaching the Classics* seminar syllabus supplies a thorough list of Socratic questions for teachers to use in class discussion. The questions are general enough to be used with any book, but focused enough to lead the

student into meaningful contemplation of the themes of even the most difficult stories. Questions on the list are arranged in order of difficulty: from grammar-level questions which ask for the mere fact of a story, to rhetoric-level questions which require discussion of ideologies and transcendent themes. Properly employed, this list can help teachers engage their classes in important discussions of ideas, and can also provide a rich resource for essays and other writing assignments! Used in conjunction with a good writing program, *Teaching the Classics* produces **deep thinkers** at any age.

The questions used in this guide have been taken directly from the Socratic list, and will therefore be familiar to the seminar alumnus.

More information about *Teaching the Classics* may be found at www.centerforlit.com/teaching-the-classics.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Andrews", with a long, sweeping underline.

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QUICK CARD



Reference	<i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i> . Roald Dahl. (1964) ISBN: 978-0142410318
Plot	Elusive Mr. Willy Wonka, the fabulously wealthy, candy making genius whom nobody has seen in years, has decided to choose five children to tour his secret candy factory. This coveted privilege will go to those who find golden tickets in their Wonka Bars. Will underdog Charlie Bucket, the poor boy who lives with his family in a one room shack, be a winner?
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Buckets' ramshackle house on the edge of town • Wonka's chocolate factory • Charlie's childhood • The Bucket's financial condition: poverty
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie Bucket, young protagonist who longs to be one of the lucky winners of the golden ticket • Grandpa Joe, Charlie's best friend and fellow dreamer • Grandma Josephine, Grandpa Joe's bedridden wife. She and Grandpa Joe live with Charlie's family in their one-room shack. • Charlie's parents: his mother, who takes in laundry, and his father, who works in a toothpaste factory • Grandpa George and Grandma Georgina, Charlie's other grandparents, also bedridden, who live with his family in their one-room shack • Willy Wonka, magical and mysterious candy-maker, daydreamer, and observer of human character • Augustus Gloop, one of the lucky ticketfinders, whose gluttony is his downfall • Mike Teavee, another ticket finder, whose addiction to television reduces his stature • Veruca Salt, ticket holder whose wealthy father engages his factory workers in "shelling" candy bars to locate a golden ticket for his spoiled, insistent daughter • Violet Beauregarde, ticket holder whose penchant for gum gets her into a sticky situation • The Oompa-Loompas from Loompaland, who run Wonka's factory
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man vs Man • Man vs Society • Man vs Self

Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of integrity• The connection between honor and success• Retributive Justice• The nature of hope• The importance of dreams and dreamers• Generosity/ Rags to Riches
Literary Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irony• Satire• Rhyming verse

QUESTIONS ABOUT STRUCTURE: SETTING



The following questions are drawn from the “Setting” section of the Socratic List, found in Appendix A, pages 80-81 of the Teaching the Classics syllabus.

Where does the story happen? (1)

With a flair for the dramatic, Roald Dahl sets his story between two extreme atmospheres of want and plenty, cold and warmth, smallness and greatness, depression and joy. The story begins in a make-believe city full of crowding buildings and bustling crowds. Yet our characters live on the outskirts of this big city in a tiny, ramshackle wooden house that threatens to collapse around their ears. At night, the wind whistles through hundreds of chinks and holes in the walls. The Bucket family fear the coming winter, knowing that they are too poor to mend the walls and keep out the cold. They warm themselves with translucent cabbage water soup, which is unsatisfying in the extreme.

Just a few blocks from this breezy barn there stands a grand, castle-like factory. Day in and day out, it churns thick, mouth-watering steam into the air from hundreds of chimneys. The rich aroma of chocolate lingers in the streets outside, tempting passersby to lick their lips for tastes of haunting sweetness. Shrouded in mystery, this factory boasts legends of a fantastic little inventor, Mr. Willy Wonka, whose confections have charmed the world and won him everlasting fame.

Side by side, these two contrasting settings form the stage for our story.

What is the mood or atmosphere of the place where the story happens? Is it cheerful and sunny, or dark and bleak? What words or phrases or descriptions does the author use to create this atmosphere? (1d)

Though vivid, the mood of the story is bleak and uninviting. When we first meet the protagonist, Charlie Bucket, his shabby surroundings dominate our impression of him. The little shack where his family lives is far too small for six of them, boasting only one bed which all four grandparents must share while Charlie and his parents sleep on the floor. Poverty governs their lives as they struggle to scrape together an evening meal from Mr. Bucket’s meager earnings at the toothpaste factory. With bread and margarine for breakfast, cabbage and boiled potatoes for lunch, and cabbage soup for supper, the Buckets must make-do with bland and insubstantial provisions. Even after the evening meal, they struggle to quiet the gurgling of their hollow stomachs. On Sunday, a second helping of that same watery broth seems a luxury. Readers and Buckets alike feel starved for a taste of some exotic flavor or scintillating adventure.

Unsurprisingly, the bland, cold, wretched Buckets look with wraithlike longing at the towering Chocolate Factory. Solid, impenetrable, and sturdy, the massive edifice promises not just sufficiency, but extravagance. The heady smells that emanate from the chimneys and the boxes upon boxes of

thick, indulgent candies and creams that flood from the gates provide an almost comic contrast to the Bucket's struggle with starvation. The atmosphere surrounding this factory is one of twinkling possibility, wonder, and hope.

Is the setting a real or imaginary place? If it's imaginary, is it subject to the same physical laws as our world is? (1g)

This setting is certainly an imaginary place. For example, in the beginning of the story, whimsical elements intrude into the otherwise everyday scenario in the Bucket house. Mr. Bucket works in a toothpaste factory, but he does nothing more than "screw the little caps onto the tops of the tubes of toothpaste after the tubes had been filled" (5). Even though this is a preposterous profession, Mr. Bucket's work serves as an overdrawn example of the family's dire straits.

While Charlie and his family seem preposterous in their need and deprivation, Willy Wonka and his Chocolate Factory are fantastic in the opposite extreme. Legendary among the people in the city, Wonka is said to create magical confections which satisfy and delight all creatures. From common chocolate bars (of which he had designed 200 new flavors each with a different center and "far creamier and more delicious than anything the other factories can make") to a chocolate ice which stays cold without refrigeration, to marshmallows that taste like violets, to chewing gum that never loses its taste, Wonka's treats seem more outlandish, impossible, and wonderful by the moment. His gifts to the world are scrumptious, heavy, rich, and warm—quite the antidote to the drab and suffocating reality outside his gates. In order to make this contrast between the factory and Charlie Bucket's life all the more real, Dahl allows Wonka to defy the laws of our world and create the absurd and impossible (11).

Among what kinds of people is the story set? What is their economic class? How do they live? Are they hopeful? Downtrodden? Depressed? Why? (1h)

This story takes place among a great many different sorts of people. The Buckets, as previously stated, are poor and common, but they are good people who love one another dearly. Despite their depressing living conditions, they cling to the hope of better times to come. In contrast, the other finders of Golden Tickets who come into contact with Charlie over the course of the story are from affluent families who can afford to buy exorbitant amounts of frivolous candy just to win a chance to tour the factory for a day. These families are portrayed as snobby, ungrateful, and ill-behaved. They treat one another with selfish disdain and contempt, seeking only their own gain.

Regardless of their stations, however, all the people in this story share a ravenous desire for the fantastic pleasures of Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. Sick of the hum-drum every-day realities of their lives, they long for a tour of a whimsical world where everything is possible.

Is the setting of the story important because of historical events which may have taken place there? How does this theme help you understand the themes of the story? (1j)

Early on in our story, Grandpa Joe tells Charlie and the others the famous legend of Willy Wonka and his Chocolate Factory. His account of the factory's history provides an important backdrop for the events of the story. According to the old man, Willy Wonka's Factory used to be a thriving corporation which employed many of the able-bodied men of the city. Wonka was a fine employer and the men enjoyed watching his fantastic creative process. But too many witnesses soon led to the leaking of secret recipes and rival factories began to produce Wonka's precious morsels without his

QUESTIONS ABOUT STRUCTURE: CHARACTERS



The following questions are drawn from the “Characters” section of the Socratic List, found in Appendix A, pages 82-83 of the Teaching the Classics syllabus.

Who is the story about? (3)

Young Charlie Bucket is the obvious protagonist in our story. Dangerously small and thin due to his family’s starvation diet, he manages to be a bulwark of cheerful support to his struggling parents and grandparents. Selfless and innocent, he insists on taking care of the others, refusing their shares of the food when there is little and forcing them to share in his birthday chocolate that he receives but once a year. In addition to being selfless and cheerful, Charlie has an excellent imagination and an insatiable hunger for the magical and the fantastical, especially in the form of chocolate.

What do other characters think or say about him? (3k)

Charlie’s parents and grandparents talk of him often, wondering at his indomitable cheerfulness and his giving heart. In fact, his presence in the evening makes all the grown-ups forget their troubles so that they can’t even remember a day when they were hungry and poor. (30) Yet they are anxious for him too, considering his youth and worrying that he will starve to death before their eyes, since he is too good and generous to accept their sacrifices. He is a good boy, who deserves a good break. Even the candy-shop-keeper who sells Charlie the winning bar of chocolate notices Charlie’s quality. He remarks: “you know something, I have a feeling you needed a break like this. I’m awfully glad you got it. Good luck to you, sonny” (46).

What does the character think is the most important thing in life? How do you know this? Does the character say this out loud, or do his thoughts and actions give him away? (3m)

Beyond his most obvious desire for the comfort and well-being of his family, Charlie considers Willy Wonka and his chocolate-making to be the pinnacle of happiness. In his hardest moments, he clings to the hope of seeing Wonka’s factory for himself, entering that fantastic realm and leaving all the starvation and suffering behind. He longs to have enough to eat. More than just sustenance, though, he dreams of rich, sumptuous chocolate which would fill him deliciously and stave off all hunger pains forever. Just as Willy Wonka’s tour feels out of reach, this glorious feeling of fullness taunts Charlie with its impossibility.

Is the character a “sympathetic character”? Do you identify with him and hope he will succeed? Do you pity him? Do you scorn or despise his weakness in some way? Why? (3q)

While Charlie has no sins, faults, or flaws with which the reader might identify, he garners our sympathy even so. Readers pity his family’s misfortune and admire his unflagging hope in the happy times to come. They certainly want him to succeed, wishing to see the end of his unearned suffering.

Who else is the story about? (4)

The most important character in the plot (besides Charlie, of course) seems to be the enigmatic Mr. Willy Wonka himself. First described by Grandpa Joe, Willy Wonka enters the story in a fog of fame. Grandpa Joe uses hyperbolic language in an attempt to communicate the wonder which shrouds the man. His listeners protest that Wonka's famed accomplishments are "impossible" and "absurd," and Grandpa Joe agrees: "Yet Mr. Willy Wonka has done it!" Little more than a shadowy legend at the start, Wonka is merely the genius who can do the impossible with just a few confections.

Over the course of the tour, Wonka becomes solid and real, but doesn't lose his fascination for all that. In person, Wonka retains the legendary, awe-inspiring whimsy that is the source of all his best inventions. Neatly dressed in outlandish colors and possessed of the most marvelous, bright, and twinkly eyes, Wonka seems clever, keen, and full of life. He exudes infectious warmth. As the characters explore the dream-land of Wonka's imagining, all the hyperbolic legends suddenly seem quite apt.

What does the character think is the most important thing in life? How do you know this? Does the character say this out loud, or do his thoughts and actions give him away? (3m)

Though Willy Wonka doesn't state his utmost goals and desires aloud until the end of the story, his values are quite clear from the mystery that shrouds his past. He prizes integrity and honesty. Since spies and deceivers once ruined his business, Wonka has lost faith in men, and now he relies heavily on secrecy in his candy-making efforts. Despite his jaded resolve to distrust everyone, Wonka struggles to decide who to train to take over the factory when he has gone. Though the Oompa Loompas make great workers, Wonka hesitates to turn over his factory to anyone who fails to prize it as highly as he does. If he cannot find a worthy person, will all the secrets of his magical trade die with him?

Is there a single character (or group of characters) that opposes the protagonist in the story? In other words, is there an antagonist? (4a)

A group of characters stand between Charlie Bucket and his goals throughout the story. The other ticket-finders, who could not be more different from Charlie in motive and conduct, are competing with him for the tour and the lifetime supply of chocolate (and, unwittingly, for the inheritance of the chocolate factory itself). These greedy little monsters are certainly antagonistic, but also simply loathsome.

Augustus Gloop is the first to find a golden ticket. An obese glutton, Augustus hardly thinks of anything but food. He eats his way to victory, shoving hundreds of candy-bars a day into his doughy, piggy little face. Dahl describes Augustus to perfection, noting his eyes peer out like "greedy currants" (21). Instead of punishing his vice, his mother rather encourages it, declaring to the media that "eating is his hobby" and "he needs nourishment" (22). Proud of her little piggy, she prepares to accompany him to the factory for the adventure of a lifetime.

Next, Veruca Salt cracks open a lucky chocolate bar. A pompous, pampered little heiress of a peanut factory, she holds sovereign sway over the wills of her pandering parents. She coerces them into using the employees of the factory as slave-labor to shell all the chocolate bars they can find until she discovers a golden ticket. Grandma Georgina describes her best when she remarks, "that girl needs a real good spanking" (25).

Violet Beauregard snags a ticket too. Already enjoying small-town limelight for winning a gum-chewing contest, Violet sees herself as something of a celebrity and flaunts her gum-chewing prowess at every chance she gets. She's a beastly little thing, dim-witted as she is malicious. She drives her meek, submissive parents to Wonka's factory as her escorts.

Finally, scrawny little Mike Teavee lassos the final ticket (save Charlie's, of course). A nine-year-old couch-potato, Mike prefers cowboy shows and virtual shoot-outs to real-life interactions, even when reporters and cameras flood into his living room. He entertains a passing curiosity about Wonka's factory, but only as it relates to possibilities for better amusement in the future. Like all the others, Mike Teavee is a disrespectful brat who doesn't half deserve the coveted trip to the factory.

Together, these four little fiends stand between Charlie and his dreams.

Is he reprehensible, so that none would wish to be like him? (4g)

All four of these children are reprehensible—appallingly so. In fact, one might even call them caricatures of bad character-traits which Dahl felt to be particularly frustrating. Each of the children proves to be a foil for Charlie.

Does the author believe this character to be responsible for his own sinfulness, or does he believe him to be a product of a “negative environment”? (4l)

Interestingly enough, Dahl never presents one of his little gremlin characters without reference to their parents. Augustus stands silent by his flabby, beaming mother. Veruca sits between her wheedling parents, ordering them about with unseemly boldness. Violet Beauregard and Mike Teavee shush their parents rudely even as they demand service from them. Dahl points out the link between the behavior of the child and the leniency of the parent, sometimes subtly and sometimes outright in a moralistic aside. For example, one of the Oompa Loompa songs deals with the parents' influence over their children's development overtly. As Veruca Salt and her unfortunate parents slide screaming down the garbage chute, the Oompa Loompas sing:

Is she the only one at fault?
For though she's spoiled, and dreadfully so,
a girl can't spoil herself you know.
Who spoiled her then?
Ah, who indeed?
Who pandered to her every need?
Who turned her into such a brat?
Who are the culprits? Who did that?
Alas! You needn't look so far
to find out who those sinners are.
They are (and this is very sad)
her loving parents, MUM and DAD.
And that is why we're glad they fell
into the garbage chute as well. (118)

Comic and heavy-handed, this treatment of parenting and its pitfalls sounds like a soap-box sermon. Perhaps Dahl suffered an embittering experience with nasty young ones.

QUESTIONS ABOUT STRUCTURE: CONFLICT AND PLOT



The following questions are drawn from the “Conflict” and “Plot” sections of the Socratic List, found in Appendix A, pages 84-86 of the Teaching the Classics syllabus.

What does the protagonist want? (5)

Little Charlie Bucket seems the most obvious choice for the protagonist. His struggles and victories are the ones we follow and his fortunes are the ones irrevocably changed by the events of the tale. That being said, his desires are not subtle. He wants to find a golden ticket, to help his starving family, and to be a good boy.

Does the protagonist try to capture an object? (5d)

Initially, the plot rides on the search for the golden tickets. With the whole world frantically tearing through chocolate bars in pursuit of the adventure of a lifetime, the Bucket family watches as their hopes for the impossible dream wither away. Charlie tries to participate in the search at every opportunity. Though his chances are slim, he searches for the golden ticket on three separate occasions. This tangible goal is an obvious source of conflict in the story.

Is the conflict an external one, having to do with circumstances in the protagonist’s physical world, or is it an internal conflict, taking place in his mind and emotions? (5e)

This search for the golden tickets is definitely an external conflict, governed by the physical laws of this world. Charlie and the other searchers are hindered by the existence of only five tickets, the limitations of finances and opportunity, and the constraints of the rules of Wonka’s game.

The second conflict, Charlie’s family’s starvation, is also an external conflict. It’s the physical elements of money, bread, and water that elude the wretched family. Their physical hunger pains torment them.

That last conflict, however, the matter of Charlie’s good character, is an internal conflict. His decisions to consider his grandparents and parents’ well-being even when he is starving are internal struggles. In the same way, his seemly behavior during the tour of Wonka’s factory is evidence of his self-control. This maturity and good character is an internal matter, rather than an external one.

Why can’t he have it? (6)

Initially, Charlie longs most for a golden ticket. His family warns him that his chances are slim, but he clings to a small hope while tickets last. In this race for the golden tickets, there are inanimate elements standing in his way: namely finances and dwindling time. These obstacles represent a Man vs. Nature conflict. Yet the greatest obstacle to Charlie’s finding the golden ticket are the other

ticket-finders. The whole world frantically searches for the golden tickets, but there are only five to be found. Thus, with every ticket discovered, the rest of the world's chances (and most importantly Charlie's own chances) at discovering the remaining few dwindle. This is a Man vs. Society conflict: Charlie vs. the rest of the world and the greediness that runs rampant in it.

Charlie's desire to help his starving family seems to be a Man vs. Fate conflict. The Buckets are good people and Mr. Bucket is a hard worker, but he has terribly bad luck. With a wretched, poorly paying job at the toothpaste factory, he can't provide for his family no matter how many hours he works. The family has no choice but to slowly endure the deprivations of poverty. Charlie supports the flagging spirits of the family with his indomitable hope, but even he is slowly wasting away when he discovers the 25 cents in the street, quite by chance. But those 25 cents open a whole new world of possibility and salvation, leading Charlie to buy the fateful chocolate bar that holds a ticket to opportunity and fantastic provision.

As for Charlie's desire to be a good boy, he has many opportunities to behave badly in the story. No one would blame him for wanting to eat his birthday chocolate (granted only once a year) all by himself instead of sharing it with all his family. In the same way, no one would blame him for taking his grandparents' offered portions of thin cabbage soup in the family's darkest times. Even as Charlie has opportunities to cultivate selfishness, he also has negative models of behaviors to observe. The other ticket-finders display unbridled selfishness and nastiness at every turn. Yet Charlie remains a good boy in spite of these temptations. Such internal resistance is a Man vs. Himself conflict.

What other problems are there in the story? Do the characters' actions provoke further conflict in the story? (7b)

The plot in this story begins right away, when Charlie and his family, starved for the faintest whiff of a juicy mystery or a sumptuous tale, hear the intriguing legend of Willy Wonka and his amazing chocolate factory. Interest piqued, Charlie walks past the factory often, his imagination alive with wonderings. Not long after, the famous Wonka announces that he'll be giving a tour of his factory for the first time in 10 years, but only to the five lucky finders of the golden tickets. With this announcement, the listening world dissolves into a chaotic scramble. Meanwhile, the poor Bucket family salivates hopelessly at the thought of "a lifetime supply of chocolate," the prize for all five golden ticket holders. The adult Buckets strive to keep Charlie from unrealistic expectations, worried that he will be crushed when their chronic misfortune proves itself again. This tension in the Bucket household continues to heighten as one after another of the precious tickets are discovered.

In addition, winter sets in as the worldwide search continues. With a drafty shack as their only protection against the elements, the Buckets are not only starving, but freezing as well. Their nightly cabbage soup gets thinner and thinner, its warmth a meager comfort against the fierce drafts and hollow tummies.

What happens in the story? (8)

Even as four little monster children have discovered golden tickets, leaving just one ticket left in circulation, Charlie refuses to stop hoping in his chances, however slim. Each of his few attempts to discover the ticket is more crushing than the last. First his birthday chocolate, then Grandpa Joe's extravagant gift, then the first of two bars bought with the chance 25 cent piece is disappointingly void of the golden glint. Finally, on the day before the big tour, Charlie tears open a chance chocolate bar and stares dumbfounded at his dream, tangibly gleaming in his hands. Though some might place the

climax at this point in the story, Charlie's other two conflicts: the starvation of his family and his own struggle to be a good boy, remain a haunting presence in the story. Regardless, this discovery allows Charlie a brief respite from the cold and the hunger of his home. He brings Grandpa Joe with him on the great adventure the very next morning, exulting in their good fortune.

How do the protagonist and the antagonist respond to the conflict at first? Do these actions provoke further conflict? (8b)

Once in the company of the other ticket-finders, Charlie and Grandpa Joe meet the famous Willy Wonka at last and feel a quiet delight as they witness his kindness and quirky hospitality. With a dramatic flair and a delighted flourish, Willy Wonka invites the whole troupe into his factory for the long-awaited tour. Room after room of startling and fantastic wonders dazzle the children. For a moment at the beginning of the tour, they are unified by a common awe and appreciation. All too soon, however, their individual personalities and vices begin to appear. In the underground candy-land which boasts a great chocolate waterfall, greedy Augustus Gloop dives headfirst into the frothy waves, ignoring Wonka's pleas and shouted warnings. The naughty boy is soon sucked up into the glass pipes and off into the chocolate-making wing of the factory to be made into fudge. Too head-strong and hungry to respect Mr. Wonka's wishes, Augustus might meet a sticky end. Charlie watches these proceedings with more than a little horror, but remains demure and attentive to Wonka's directions as the tour proceeds.

A few rooms later, the children gather round a magical piece of chewing gum which Wonka promises will treat the chewer to a full three course meal. Even as Wonka cautions her against the dangers of the unfinished formula, stubborn and slow-witted Violet Beauregard snatches the stick of gum and starts chewing. All too soon, she becomes a living blueberry. Dubious looking Oompa Loompas trundle her out of the room to squeeze the blue juices out of her once more, a painful sounding treatment for bull-headed disobedience. Just as with Augustus Gloop, Charlie witnesses this consequence attentively and makes an effort at both civility and respect.

Right on the heels of this encounter, Veruca Salt, the spoiled brat of the nut factory king, finds a room that strikes her fancy. Hundreds of trained squirrels swarm about in The Nut Room, tapping at nuts and tossing the rotten ones into the garbage chute. Demanding her own trained squirrel, Veruca will not be dissuaded and she marches into the room despite Wonka's warnings and pleas. Her weak parents trail after her, wheedling and begging her to return with them to safety. Before they can catch her, all three of them find themselves swarmed, checked, and tossed into the garbage chute, declared "bad nuts" by Wonka's pets.

Despite these disastrous occurrences, Wonka leads the way onwards to the TV room, which throws little Mike Teavee into paroxysms of joy. As he listens to Wonka's explanation of a theory that chocolate bars (and other things) might be atomized and sent to different locations just like the pictures in a TV screen, Mike leaps with excitement and resolves that he will be the first person ever to travel into a TV screen. Before Wonka can stop him, he sends himself through space to appear on the other side of the room, safe and whole but small enough to fit in his father's shirt pocket. Like the others before him, Mike Teavee is hustled off to another wing of the factory to be "stretched out" once more to his appropriate size.

Only little Charlie Bucket is left.

With the loss of each ticket holder, Wonka's enthusiasm never flags, but he watches intently the remaining members of the group. Charlie sees clearly each character flaw in the rotten children, but

he himself remains apart. He enjoys the tour and respects Wonka's wishes, modeling good behavior in the face of all the disobedience of his peers—and Wonka is watching. This saga of nastiness and consequences heightens the tension in the story as Wonka watches Charlie and the others, searching for something—who knows what?

How is the main problem solved? Does the protagonist solve his own dilemma? Is it solved by some external source or third party? Is he helpless in the end to achieve his goal. Or does he triumph by virtue of his own efforts? (9e)

Charlie alone remains at the end of the tour. Bewildered by the strange events of the day, he turns to the chocolate master, intending to obey his next instructions with the same obedience which he has been demonstrating all day. To his surprise, Wonka declares: "You're the only one left? But my dear boy, that means you've won!" (142). Unbeknownst to Charlie and the others, Wonka has been performing a great experiment all day with these lucky ticket finders. He has been testing them to see if any of them were qualified to learn all of Wonka's secrets and to take over the factory someday. With a merry laugh, Wonka remarks that Charlie has proven himself "a good sensible loving child, one to whom I can tell all my most precious candy-making secrets—while I am still alive" (151). Not only does Wonka's assertion prove the climactic moment in Charlie's efforts at goodness and character, but it also leads to the final solution for Charlie's starving family. Overjoyed that Charlie loves his factory as much as Wonka himself, and delighted at the prospect of teaching him everything just as soon as possible, Wonka implores Charlie and Grandpa Joe to move their whole family into the magical chocolate factory to live in luxury and comfort forever. Deliriously happy, Charlie and his grandfather agree and they all set off to collect the rest of the Buckets and convince them of their salvation.

This whole solution comes to Charlie completely unbidden. He has had no hand in orchestrating his salvation. Mr. Willy Wonka proves to be a gracious benefactor, pulling the unlucky family out of poverty and into a living fantasy.

How does the story end? (10)

Together, Charlie and Willy Wonka and Grandpa Joe ride in a flying glass elevator out into the city itself. They descend with a crash of breaking timbers and shattering windows right into the main room of the Bucket's shack. Even as they calm the frightened grandparents and soothe their wailing cries that the house has been irreparably ruined, they declare the news of the glorious truth to the rest of the Buckets. Charlie's world of want is destroyed and replaced by plenty. They all re-board the flying elevator and set off into a bright future.

Do you believe the characters' responses to the cataclysmic events, or are they anti-climactic in some regard? (10c)

As they circle high above the chocolate factory, Wonka and Charlie see the unlucky ticket holders traipsing out of the factory gates once more, exhausted from the eventful day. While Charlie exclaims compassionately at the grievous changes which have befallen each child, Wonka seems comically unconcerned. Augustus Gloop, once swollen with excess, now teeters towards the gate on spindly thin legs. Wonka laughs and explains that this fate was obvious when Augustus got squeezed in the pipe. Similarly, Violet Beauregard now seems to be de-juiced and human once more, but for a bright blue tinge to her skin. Wonka shakes his head, "Nothing we can do about that!" The Salt family scrambles from the garbage chute, covered head to toe in refuse and Wonka only laughs. Lastly,

QUESTIONS ABOUT CONTEXT



The following questions are drawn from the “Context” section of the Socratic List, found in Appendix A, pages 91-92 of the Teaching the Classics syllabus.

Who is the author? (18)

Roald Dahl was born in 1916 in Cardiff, Wales. The only son out of four children, Dahl lost his father and one of his three sisters before he turned three. Thus, all through his schoolboy years, his mother raised him and the girls on her own.

A sensitive child from an early age, Dahl hated the boarding schools he attended throughout his younger years. Struggling with homesickness and resenting the vicious forms of punishment inflicted at the school, he distracted himself with sports, dreams of inventing the world’s perfect chocolate bar, and writing the whimsical stories that would eventually make him a legend. Though his teachers didn’t notice any particular writing talent in the boy, he was an avid reader and writer from a young age. The seeds of his famous whimsical prose existed there in his early scribblings, though he was not “noticed” until his later years when he was working as a diplomat to America during WWII.

Fresh out of school, Dahl enlisted in the RAF to serve in the war. Starting out as a fighter pilot, Dahl showed great promise and soon earned glory and honor. Promoted to wing commander, squadron leader, and eventually “flying ace” due to his five aerial victories during the war, he was “invalided” out of the RAF for injuries he suffered in a crash. Thus, Dahl found himself employed as a diplomat in America, the go-between for Roosevelt and Churchill’s communications. It was at this time that C.S. Forester swapped war stories with Dahl and, marveling at Dahl’s charming writing voice, had one of his stories published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The tale was received with great acclaim, marking the beginning of a long love affair between the public and Dahl’s charming work.

After the war, Dahl wrote prolifically. Inspired by his own youth, his experiences in the war, and his love for his five children, Dahl soon earned international recognition as “one of the greatest storytellers for children of the 20th century.” *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was such a success that movie directors soon clamored to make it into a film. Dahl aided in the writing of the screenplay. Awarded the 1983 Fantasy Award for Life Achievement and the 1990 British Book Awards Children’s Author of the Year in his lifetime, he was added to the list of greatest British authors in the British journal, *The Times*, in 2008. Generations of children and grown-ups alike have been delighted with Dahl’s fantastical and whimsical tales.

Dahl passed away in Oxford on November 23, 1990. When he was buried at St. Peter and St. Paul’s Church in Buckinghamshire, England, his family obliged his last wish for a sort of “Viking funeral.” They buried him with a number of odd accoutrements: among them, some very good burgundy, HB pencils, and, of course, a bar of chocolate.

ESSAY QUESTIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS



Hints for effective writing assignments can be found on pages 73-74 of the Teaching the Classics syllabus and Chapter 6 of Reading Roadmaps.

1. Compare and contrast the settings in the story: that of Charlie's home and that of the magical chocolate factory.
2. Is Charlie a sympathetic character? Is Willy Wonka? In light of this, who do you think is the protagonist of the story?
3. Considering the conflicts of the story, where would you place the climactic moment? Explain.
4. Is Charlie changed by the events of the story? Does he learn anything through them? Is he ennobled? If not, why not? If so, how?
5. Consider the poems interspersed throughout the story. Do they have a purpose? Why might Dahl have chosen not to state their themes in prose?

STORY CHARTS



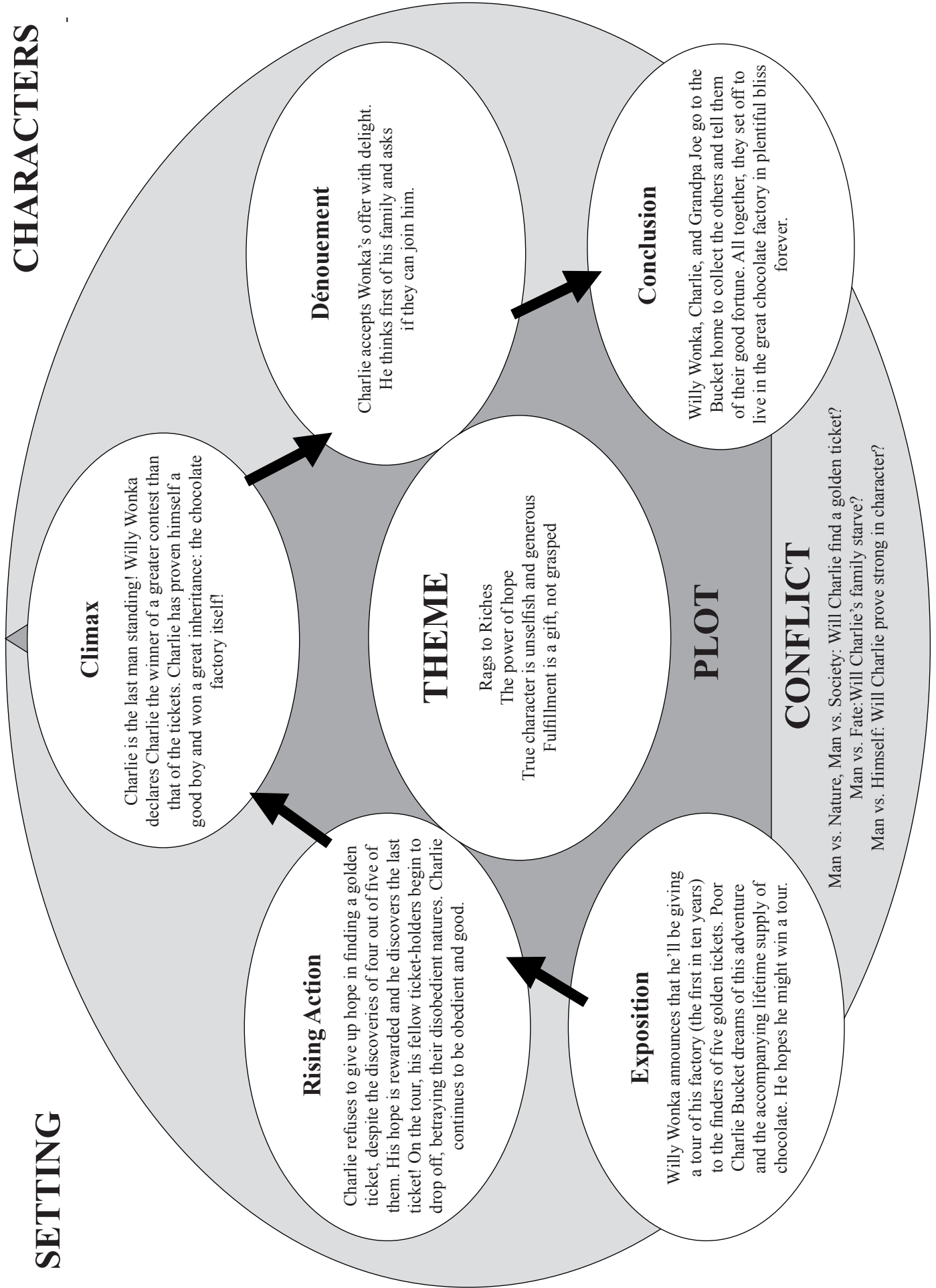
The following pages contain story charts of the type presented in the live seminar *Teaching the Classics*. As is made clear in that seminar, a separate story chart may be constructed for each of the conflicts present in a work of fiction. In particular, the reader's decision as to the *climax* and central *themes* of the plot structure will depend upon his understanding of the story's central conflict. As a result, though the details of setting, characters, exposition, and conclusion may be identical from analysis to analysis, significant variation may be found in those components which appear down the center of the story chart: Conflict, Climax, and Theme. This of course results from the fact that literary interpretation is the work of active minds, and differences of opinion are to be expected—even encouraged!

For the teacher's information, one story chart has been filled in on the next page. In addition, a blank chart is included to allow the teacher to examine different conflicts in the same format.

Story Chart: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

CHARACTERS

SETTING



Story Chart: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

SETTING

CHARACTERS

