

**“James and the Giant Peach” starring Susan Sarandon, Paul Terry, Richard Dreyfuss, 1996, PG, 79 minutes**

### **Major themes:**

- Friendship
- Bullying
- Resourcefulness
- Ingenuity
- Loss
- Fear
- Hope
- Confidence
- Joy
- Adventure
- Bugs

### **Major characters:**

- James Henry Trotter
- Aunt Sponge
- Aunt Spiker
- Narrator / The Magic Man
- Mr. Grasshopper
- Mr. Centipede
- Mrs. Ladybug
- Miss Spider
- Earthworm
- Glowworm

## Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

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### Background info:

- This musical fantasy film is based on Roald Dahl's 1961 novel of the same name. Dahl was a British novelist, short-story writer, poet, screenwriter, and wartime fighter pilot whose books have sold more than 250 million copies worldwide. Roald Dahl said of this book, "*It was a tiny seed of an idea. I walked around it, looked at it, and sniffed it for a long time.*"
- Olivia Dahl, Roald Dahl's eldest child, died at the age of seven from encephalitis caused by measles, before a vaccine against the disease had been developed. He dedicated this novel (and another, "*The BFG*") to her. As a result of her death, Dahl later became a pro-vaccination advocate, writing the 1988 pamphlet "*Measles, a Dangerous Illness*".
- Another of Dahl's five children suffered from hydrocephalus as an infant after his baby carriage was struck by a car. As a result, Dahl became involved in the development of what became known as the "*Wade-Dahl-Till*" (or WDT) valve, a device to improve the shunt used to alleviate the condition. The valve was a collaboration between Dahl, a hydraulic engineer, and a neurosurgeon, and was used successfully on almost 3,000 children around the world.
- Two of the film's taglines include: "*Adventures this big don't grow on trees*" and "*Climb aboard for the adventure of your life!*"
- According to the newspapers at the end, the movie takes place in 1949.
- The happy tune which the Grasshopper plays for James is Johann Sebastian Bach's *Partita for Violin Solo No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006: 3rd movement, Gavotte en rondeau*.
- Spiker and Sponge's car is a 1947 Jaguar Mark IV 3½ Litre.
- Roald Dahl invented over 500 words, six of which have been added to the Oxford English Dictionary: *Golden ticket*, *Human bean*, *Witching hour*, *Oompa Loompa*, *Scrumdiddlyumptious*, and *Dahlesque* ("*eccentric plots, villainous or loathsome adult characters, and gruesome or black humour*").

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### Scriptures:

Psalm 71:1-7 (The Message) – *“I run for dear life to God, I’ll never live to regret it. Do what you do so well: get me out of this mess and up on my feet. Put your ear to the ground and listen, give me space for salvation. Be a guest room where I can retreat; you said your door was always open! You’re my salvation—my vast, granite fortress. My God, free me from the grip of Wicked, from the clutch of Bad and Bully. You keep me going when times are tough—my bedrock, God, since my childhood. I’ve hung on you from the day of my birth, the day you took me from the cradle; I’ll never run out of praise. Many gasp in alarm when they see me, but you take me in stride.”*

Proverbs 3:27-35 (The Message) – *“Never walk away from someone who deserves help; your hand is God’s hand for that person. Don’t tell your neighbor ‘Maybe some other time’ or ‘Try me tomorrow’ when the money’s right there in your pocket. Don’t figure ways of taking advantage of your neighbor when he’s sitting there trusting and unsuspecting. Don’t walk around with a chip on your shoulder, always spoiling for a fight. Don’t try to be like those who shoulder their way through life. Why be a bully? ‘Why not?’ you say. Because God can’t stand twisted souls. It’s the straightforward who get his respect. God’s curse blights the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. He gives proud skeptics a cold shoulder, but if you’re down on your luck, he’s right there to help. Wise living gets rewarded with honor; stupid living gets the booby prize.”*

Isaiah 32:16-20 (NLT) – *“Justice will rule in the wilderness and righteousness in the fertile field. And this righteousness will bring peace. Yes, it will bring quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in safety, quietly at home. They will be at rest. Even if the forest should be destroyed and the city torn down, the LORD will greatly bless his people. Wherever they plant seed, bountiful crops will spring up. Their cattle and donkeys will graze freely.”*

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### Discussion points:

1. How did James's traveling companions help him gain confidence?
2. What does this film teach us about how giving attention to things (both positive and negative) can make them grow?
3. Which character in this film was your favorite, and why? Who was your least favorite, and why?
4. What was the most memorable part of this story in which you noticed someone being a true friend? What quality of friendship was displayed?
5. In which character did you notice an attitude change? What did you notice? What can we learn from that?
6. What advice would you have given to James (and at what point of the story)?
7. What do you see as the greatest challenge addressed in this film?
8. To whom would you recommend this film?