
How to Write Like Roald Dahl: A Rather Marvellous Guide to Magnificent Writing

Description

The Deliciously Dark Art of Dahlian Prose

I must confess, dear readers, that there's something utterly spiffing about the way Roald Dahl wrote his stories. It's rather like watching a master chocolatier at work – except instead of tempering chocolate, he was tempering the English language into the most scrumptious verbal confectionery imaginable.

Why Dahl's Writing Works (Even When It Shouldn't)

Now, here's something fascinating: Dahl broke practically every writing rule in existence, and yet his stories are absolutely magnificent. It's rather like driving on the wrong side of the road and discovering that, somehow, the traffic flows better that way. (Though please don't actually try that – I'm speaking metaphorically, you see.)

The Magic of Made-Up Words

Dahl didn't just use words – he invented them with gleeful abandon. 'Snozzcumbers', 'whizzpoppers', 'froboscottle' – absolute nonsense on paper, yet they're perfectly cromulent additions to the English language. (Yes, I know 'cromulent' isn't a Dahl word, but it jolly well could have been.)

The Art of Grotesque Exaggeration

What Dahl understood – and this is absolutely crucial – is that children don't want their villains to be merely bad. They want them to be monumentally, outrageously, preposterously horrible. Miss Trunchbull isn't just strict; she's a child-throwing, pigtail-swinging monster of magnificent proportions.

How to Channel Your Inner Dahl

1. Embrace the Revolting

First things first: don't shy away from the disgusting. Dahl knew that children (and secretly, adults) absolutely adore anything revolting. If you can describe something as 'squelchy', 'slimy', or 'pustulent', then by Jove, you absolutely should.

2. Take the Side of the Child

Here's a rather brilliant insight: Dahl always positioned adults as either magnificent allies or terrible enemies. There was rarely any middle ground. It's rather like politics, except far more honest about

who the baddies are.

3. Create Deliciously Evil Characters

Your villains should be so spectacularly awful that readers can't help but be fascinated by them. The Twits weren't just unpleasant – they were magnificently repulsive, with bits of food in their beards and souls as twisted as a pretzel in a hurricane.

The Secret Sauce: Voice and Tone

Now, here's the clever bit. Dahl's narrative voice is like having a slightly bonkers uncle telling you a story. He's clearly on your side, he's definitely up to something, and he's absolutely delighted to be sharing these outrageous tales with you.

How to Achieve This:

1. **Address the Reader Directly:** "You won't believe what happened next, my dear reader..."
2. **Use Parenthetical Asides:** (And these should be absolutely packed with delightful little secrets)
3. **Make the Ordinary Extraordinary:** Don't just say something is big – say it's "so enormously enormous that it made elephants look like earwigs"

The Grand Finale: Breaking Rules Brilliantly

The truly brilliant thing about Dahl's writing – and this is absolutely key – is that he knew exactly which rules to break and which to follow. His grammar was impeccable when it needed to be, but he'd happily invent words, stretch sentences to breaking point, and USE CAPITAL LETTERS FOR EMPHASIS in a way that would make your English teacher faint.

The Ultimate Test

If you're writing something and thinking, "Good heavens, my old headmaster would have a fit if he read this," you're probably on the right track. But – and this is crucial – it must be deliberately, skillfully, magnificently wrong, not just carelessly wrong.

In Conclusion: The Dahl Effect

Writing like Roald Dahl isn't just about being clever with words – it's about viewing the world through a lens that makes the ordinary extraordinary and the extraordinary utterly spellbinding. It's about understanding that sometimes the best way to tell the truth is through the most outrageous lies imaginable.

And remember, as Dahl might have said: "A little bit of nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men." (Actually, he did say that, which rather proves the point.)

Now, off you go, my dear readers. Make something magnificently, gloriously, spectacularly Dahlian.

And if anyone tells you you're being too outrageous, simply smile and know that you're in the very best of company.

Somewhere, in a little writing hut in Great Missenden, I like to think Roald Dahl is chuckling appreciatively at our efforts to capture his magic. Though he'd probably suggest adding more whizzpoppers.

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