ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Welsh author, Roald Dahl, wrote many wacky, yet endearing, books for children, the most well known being *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. After spending time as a fighter pilot in World War II, Dahl left Britain to work in the British Embassy in United States. He published a few short stories and books for adults, but his first real success came with *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, both of which became bestsellers and children’s classics. Dahl has authored dozens of novels and picture books for children and is considered one of the most celebrated children’s book authors.

STORY SUMMARY
Charlie Bucket lives with his father, mother, and four bedridden grandparents in the same city as Willie Wonka’s magnificent chocolate factory. The family is so poor that they eat mostly cabbage. Charlie only gets one chocolate bar a year—for his birthday. This is a hard thing to endure, given their close proximity to the factory. When Mr. Wonka announces that he has hidden five golden tickets for five lucky children to tour his factory, Charlie can hardly believe it and longs to be one of the five.

By the time Charlie’s birthday arrives, he still holds onto the hope of finding a golden ticket, but his bar has only chocolate inside. Charlie and his Grandpa Joe try again, only to be disappointed a second time. By this time, four of the five tickets have been found. The Bucket family, however, has a lot more to worry about than chocolate bars and Golden Tickets. Mr. Bucket loses his job at the toothpaste factory and the family struggles to get enough food to eat. When Charlie finds some money in the street, he buys a chocolate bar to satisfy his hunger. To his surprise, he finds the last golden ticket.

The five children excitedly tour the factory, but, one by one, they drop from the tour because their vices lead to troublesome behaviors. At the end of the tour, Charlie is the only child left. Mr. Wonka, who had been searching for a child like Charlie all along, congratulates him and invites him and his family to come and live at the chocolate factory.
LIFE THEME: LIVING IN A CULTURE OF MATERIALISM

In Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, poverty has taught Charlie to value the things he does have—like his parents and grandparents and the things they do for him to make sure he has food to eat and a house in which to live. Charlie learns to be patient, become self-sufficient, and to enjoy the simple things of life. Through living in poverty, Charlie has come to value the time spent with his family more than he values material things, like finding a golden ticket. Even at the end of the novel, family is still more important to him than material goods or a great chocolate inheritance. Charlie’s only desire was to have enough food for his family to eat—and he gets just that.

In contrast, the other golden ticket winners believe that material goods will make them happy. Augustus gorges on food, Mike watches TV nonstop, Violet constantly chews gum, and Veruca demands whatever she desires at the moment. These children allow their vices (immortalized in the Oompa-Loompas’ songs) to become part of their personality. Instead of focusing on their dreams or their futures, these children only look as far as the material objects that surround them, blinding them to the opportunities that await them at Mr. Wonka’s marvelous factory. The four nasty children, who get whatever they want, end the novel as miserable creatures, stretched thin, covered in garbage, or stained purple. Even though the four children end up with a lifetime supply of chocolate, they still seem miserable and silly.

Mr. Wonka purposely chooses Charlie from among the materialistic kids because he doesn’t want someone who will destroy the chocolate factory out of greed and desire for money. Charlie never set out to win the factory; he cares more about his family than he does about money. Mr. Wonka’s choice and Charlie’s attitude show the reader that living a life of virtue is the only way to attain true happiness. Charlie didn’t “need” the factory to be happy—but it was a nice bonus!

HOW CAN I APPLY THIS TO MY LIFE?

It’s so easy to get wrapped up in a culture of materialism. When Christmas or birthdays roll around each year, it’s tempting to put together extensive lists of all the things we want. When we start to care more about material goods like toys, electronics, and clothes than actual people, we start to forget how valuable human life is and how each of us is a gift from God.

How often do we stop to think of those people around us who have nothing? Instead of asking for clothing, electronics, and games that we don’t actually need, we should focus on growing in the virtue of generosity and selflessness.

To help you grow in the virtue of generosity, try some of these activities:

- Volunteer with your family to help the poor or needy in your community.
- Go through your closet and find some gently used items to donate to someone who needs them more than you do.
- Go with your family to a nursing home and visit with the residents.

Do whatever you can in your life to help you live a spirit of generosity. People are more important than things. The only way we will ever truly be satisfied is if we have a solid relationship with God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is Charlie’s family different from the families of the other children?
   Charlie’s family is so poor that they can only afford to eat very meager meals. When Mr. Bucket loses his job, the family begins to starve. Unlike the other winners of the golden tickets, Charlie doesn’t demand that
his family buy him lots of chocolate or let him do whatever he wants. Charlie understands that spending time with his family is important. Charlie’s family barely has food to eat (besides cabbage soup), but everyone is happy because they have each other.

2. Charlie loves all of his grandparents, especially Grandpa Joe. What does Charlie love to do with Grandpa Joe?
Charlie loves to listen to Grandpa Joe tell stories about when he worked for Mr. Wonka in the chocolate factory. Charlie shows respect for his grandparents by listening to their stories and spending time with them.

What are some ways you can show your grandparents that you love them, even when they become old and sick?
Answers will vary, but some possible answers include: Call them, visit them, write them a note, make something special for them, etc.

3. Why were the Oompa-Loompas in trouble?
The Oompa-Loompas lived in treehouses in Loompaland to escape from the dangerous whangdoodles and snozzwangers. The Oompa-Loompas loved to eat cacao beans, but because it was too dangerous to live on the ground in the jungle, the Oompa-Loompas were forced to eat green caterpillars instead.

What did Mr. Wonka do for the Oompa-Loompas to help them?
When Mr. Wonka heard that the Oompa-Loompas loved cacao beans but were living in a dangerous place, he offered to have them come and live with him in his factory.

Throughout the book, how does Mr. Wonka show a caring attitude toward people who are less fortunate?
Mr. Wonka helps the Oompa-Loompas by inviting them to work for him. When he notices that Charlie and Grandpa Joe are thin and starving, he makes sure they get some chocolate to eat on the tour. In the end, he invites Charlie’s whole family to come and live with him in his factory so they can escape poverty.

4. Did Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, Violet Beauregarde, and Mike Teavee get what they deserve?
Answers will vary.

How did touring the chocolate factory change each of them?
At the end of the book, all of the characters are changed, at least in appearance. Augustus is thin (because of the pipe), Violet is the color violet, Veruca is covered in garbage, and Mike is too thin (the Oompa-Loompas over-stretched him). We don’t know if they changed their greedy, selfish ways, but we can at least hope that they can now see how their selfish ways and bad behavior led to this outcome.

5. How does Charlie win the chocolate factory?
Charlie wins the chocolate factory because he is the only child left at the end of the tour. The other children have disappeared because they were selfish and greedy.

What about Charlie’s character makes him a good choice for a winner?
Charlie loves chocolate. He also understands what it feels like to be hungry, so he appreciates his gifts so much more than the other children. Unlike the others, Charlie has no vices. He is a good child.

6. Why did Mr. Wonka hide the golden tickets?
Mr. Wonka holds the contest because he is getting old and doesn’t have any children of his own. He needs someone to take over his factory for him.
Why does Mr. Wonka want a child to inherit his factory?
Mr. Wonka understands the value of children and of having a family. A child will listen to him and his fantastical ideas much more than an adult would. Not only does Mr. Wonka give the factory to Charlie, but he also invites Charlie’s entire family—grandparents included—to come and live at the factory.

CATHOLIC CONNECTIONS

The seven deadly sins
What are the seven deadly sins? What virtues are the opposites of these sins?

Read the following Bible verses:
Proverbs 1:8
Proverbs 16:18
Proverbs 28:25
Sirach 37:29-31
Romans 8:5-11
Galatians 5:22-23

What does the Bible say about pride, greed, gluttony, disobedience, and sloth? How do the characters in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory exemplify these sins? How can the characters redeem themselves? What do each of them have to do to change and turn away from their vices?

Materialism
Read the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-34.
What did the rich man do that was so foolish? What should he have been doing instead? How are Augustus, Veruca, Violet, and Mike like the rich fool?

“JUST FOR FUN” BONUS ACTIVITIES
FOR FURTHER LEARNING AND EXPLORATION

1. Read about chocolate. Try to address some or all of the following questions: Where does chocolate come from? How is cocoa grown? How is cocoa harvested? What processes do the cocoa beans go through after they are harvested? What parts did Mr. Wonka’s chocolate river and waterfall play in the chocolate making process? How is a chocolate bar made? What is the history of chocolate? What cultures use chocolate as a dessert? What cultures use chocolate in savory and spicy, rather than sweet, dishes? What countries around the world are renowned for their chocolate products? What is the difference between white chocolate and dark or milk chocolate? Are there any health benefits related to eating chocolate (in moderation)?

2. For some family fun, get some different kinds of chocolate to sample as you read Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.