

# The Landlady

## Roald Dahl

### Introduction

**The Project.** The BritLit project was started in 2003 with the intention of providing Portuguese teachers of English in the state sector additional resource material for the extensive reading requirements of years 10 and 11. The usefulness of the Portuguese project as an international model was recognised quickly and generic versions of the resources kits have since been developed.

**The Resource Kits.** The kits are not intended as a complete set of course material to be worked through, rather as source material to be dipped into, expanded and contracted as required. Much of the material provided is intended to be used with mixed ability classes and while the input from the materials is the same, the output from the students will vary considerably. Other materials are generally classed according to their degree of difficulty using the [Framework guidelines](#) now adopted by many European countries through the Council of Europe as benchmark criteria for language assessment. The resource kits provide a never-ending source of material for the teacher inasmuch as teachers are asked to contribute their own experiences and ideas to the project; we would like to see the materials mutate and mature with use. One of the advantages of using an electronic form is that each section can easily be personalised; we would be interested to hear of examples of this approach.

**We strongly advise that the section 'Before Reading' is attempted before the students are asked to read the story. This section includes preparatory material including familiarisation with some key sections of the text.**

**Summary of the story.** Billy Weaver, a young man visiting the City of Bath for the first time, is looking for accommodation. He is inexplicably drawn to a house where the landlady seems to be expecting him. The house and the landlady seem friendly and welcoming, and he looks forward to staying there. Signing the guest book, two names disturb him. Where has he heard them before? Why aren't there any other guests? What actually happens is left very much up to the reader, but Roald Dahl, the master of this kind of story, gives us all the clues we need to concoct a grisly ending.

**The Resource Kit:** The resources provided for the teacher are designed to introduce the student to the background of the story before they even look at a page of the book. Extracts from the story are used to provide context for certain aspects to enhance understanding. One result of this technique is that whole chunks of the text will therefore be familiar to the student before they start to read the complete story.

The material is divided into three sections: **Before Reading**, **After Reading** and **Word Work**.

- **Before Reading** examines the main characters and presents the students with opportunities to invent their own stories with these characters.
- **After Reading** looks at some of the issues that can be explored after reading the story: the year in which it was set (1959), embalming, witches and a look at some famous poisoners!

- **Word Work** takes some aspects of language in use from the text - the use of reflexive pronouns and ways of comparing and offers some practice work for the student. There is also a 'glossary' of words and phrases used in the story.

Ideas for project work and homework are presented throughout the worksheets.

The teacher should decide how much, or how little of the material they want to use in class or as homework. If all the materials are used then this would take in the region of eight hours of combined class work and homework.

Additional background material and language work can be obtained by accessing the internet links provided.

Copyright for reproduction of original material, including from the original story 'The Landlady' has been obtained. Teachers may make copies of the material in the kit for use in class.

Fitch O'Connell  
 Porto, Portugal  
 September 2003  
 This kit revised 2007, 2013

## Contents

		<i>CEFR Level</i>
Before Reading	Pre-reading	A2/B2
	Billy Weaver	B1/2
	The Landlady	B2
After Reading	1959	A2/B2
	Famous Poisoners	B1
	Taxidermy	B1/2
	Embalming	A2/B1
	Witches	B2
Word Work	Reflexive pronouns	B1/2
	Comparatives	B1/2
	Glossary - English	B2
	Glossary - Portuguese	A2

# Key

## Before Reading

### Characters

#### Billy

1 C - Cold (He's wearing an overcoat. Raining: umbrella or raincoat? Hot: coat? Foggy: brisk?)

#### Landlady

Warm Welcoming Round Pink Gentle (Terribly) Nice Best

There are no negative adjectives, though one might speculate on the reason for 'quickly moving hands', which could sound a little threatening

**Observation** 1 slightly dotty 2. Off her rocker

**Own version of *The Landlady*** Allow students to work in small groups (4 or 5) to create their own story. They can use any information they have already gained from the activities, or invent their own from scratch. They are to use their imaginations to create their own story, but they must answer all the questions and they must answer them (i.e. present them as a story) in the same order in which they are asked.

NOTE: Do **not** ask students to write their story (but they may make notes). When you have given them enough time to create (but not finish) a story, ask them to share the story orally with the rest of the class.

## After Reading

### Preserving the body

1. They had died 2. She had stuffed them 3. Admiration 4. Two 5 All implies more than two; are others stuffed? (If more has been read - the other guests?)

**Taxidermy:** 1. representation 2. completely 3. Greek 4. definition 5. lifelike 6. artistic 7. natural 8. incorporates 9. created 10. harmlessly

**Embalming:** 1 D 2 A 3 F 4 B 5 C or E 6 G 7 E or C 8 K 9 J 10 H 11 I

### Explaining how things are done

1. His body is then washed (by the embalmers) with .....
2. A cut in the left side of the body is made (by one of the embalmers) and many of the internal organs (are) removed
3. The body is now covered and stuffed with natron to be dried out.
4. Over many years the embalming practices were changed and internal organs were returned to bodies (by the embalmers) after the organs had been dried....

WRITING This is best done individually, probably as homework, but can be done in class in pairs if pairs can agree on the game to describe. Try to discourage football as being too obvious.

### Poisoners

1. B, C, D 2 E 3 A, B 4 D 5 D 6 B, E 7 A 8 D 9 D 10 C

**Dr Pritchard** purchased/ standing/ became/ look after/ died/ found/ hanged/ watched

**Witches**

Item	Billy	You
green curtains		
flowers in the window	√	
fire burning in the hearth	√	
carpet		
dog sleeping in front of the fire	√	
piano		
comfortable sofa and armchairs	√	
parrot	√	

For part 2, let students imaginations take over - items not there could range from TV and computer - to mum!

1. 1. held/holding 2 compelling 3 forcing
2. 1. moving 2 climbing 3 reaching

List

"then at once...the door swung open" / "Yes, I know"  
 "It's all ready for you" ..... "all ready for someone to get in"  
 "I'm so glad you appeared....I was beginning to get worried"

Speculation: prompt for 'could/might/must be' etc

**Hansel and Gretel** There are no exercises for this. Use it as a reading aloud exercise.

**Witches and Folk Tales**

1. from 2. labelled/called 3. were 4. whose 5. that 6. therefore 7. had 8. been 9. in 10. by 11. only 12. also 13. not 14. especially 15. still 16. had 17. of 18. which 19. up 20. rid 21. which 22. looking 23. be 24. No 25. as

MCQs

1. C 2. B 3. C 4. A 5. C 6. C

**Harry Potter**

Words: **dark forces**: occult; **goods**: merchandise; **prohibited**: banned; **incredible**: phenomenal  
**absolute**: sheer; **serious**: grave; **enchant**: spell/curse; **invoke**: conjure up

## Word Work

### Pronouns

Extracts: reflexive/ reflexive/reflexive/emphasis

1.1. ... and 2. are given 3. ....a pretty little dachshund had curled itself up asleep...

4 ...he couldn't help himself staying where he was....

5. And this one is all for yourself

6. ...if you want to warm yourself.

7. ...he congratulated himself....

8. ...they have the whole floor to themselves.

9. Help yourself

10. I did it myself

2.1...can feed himself

2. ...asking myself...

3. ..expressing herself.

4. ...hurt herself

5. ..behaved himself

6. ...introduce himself...

7. ..blame yourself.

8. ..talking (to) herself...

9. ...cut herself...

10. ...enjoy yourself....

### Comparatives

Many examples, such as

Gregory's teeth weren't so/as white as Christopher's

Billy's shoes weren't so/as small as Christopher's

+

Billy was as handsome as Gregory

Billy was as old as Christopher