



*James and the Giant Peach*

# synopsis

2024-25 Sensory-friendly programming



## Act 1 (45 minutes)

On a tour of New York City, a tour guide's final stop is the home of James, his insect friends, and a giant peach stone house. James introduces himself and his friends, Old Green Grasshopper, Ladybug, Earthworm, Miss Spider, and Centipede, who all happen to have found great success in their careers. Knowing the audience might be curious how this strange situation came to be, James tells their story.

Long ago, James lived a happy life with his parents in England. One day, when James was four, his parents went to London. But, while wandering the city shopping, they were tragically killed by an escaped rhinoceros.

A very sad James was sent miles away to live with his horrible aunts, Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker. When he arrives, Aunt Spiker takes away his teddy bear while telling him he won't need toys any more. They both demand he get to work cleaning and cooking for them.

Years pass and James continues to slave away for his awful aunts. While they sip cold beverages, poor James must work. He dreams of playing or reading a book or climbing the old peach tree in the yard. Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker call James ugly names and threaten to lock him up if he doesn't work. When his aunts begin to fight about who is more beautiful, they notice James watching and threaten to beat him. Instead, they angrily stomp off.

Suddenly, James sees a small old man. Although James is frightened, he approaches the old man when beckoned. The old man shows James a bag filled with glowing green things. He tells James they are crocodile tongues and, if James consumes them, they will do "marvelous, magical things" for James. As James takes the bag, the old man warns him not to let them escape. Aunt Sponge enters, banging a saucepan and screaming James's name. But, James stays hidden until she leaves. Oh, no! James trips over the peach tree and all the crocodile tongues tumble out of the bag. He tries to gather them, but they crawl away. Defeated, James falls asleep.

The next morning, Aunt Spiker wakes James and demands that he go back in the house and cook their breakfast. The aunts notice a big peach has grown overnight on the peach tree. They are shocked! The tree had never borne fruit before. They call for James to come and pick the peach for them. But, as they watch, the it grows bigger and bigger. It's a giant peach now! Although they want to eat it, Aunt Spiker realizes this peach could make a lot of money for them.

A TV reporter interviews Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker in front of the peach tree. People have come from all over to see it, much to the aunts' greedy happiness. And, according to the report, everyone thinks it's "amazing." But, while excited crowds viewed the peach, James was locked in his bedroom. He's finally let out and Aunt Spiker tells him to clean up the mess left by the visitors. As the aunts leave, the old man's voice echoes "marvelous things." Curious, James enters the now glowing peach.

Inside the peach, James is greeted by quite a sight! Old Green Grasshopper, Centipede, Ladybug, Earthworm, and Miss Spider, all the size of humans, welcome him. After they introduces themselves, James discovers that they each ate a bit of the escaped crocodile tongues. The insects explain it's time to go on a journey. And, James is invited to come along with them and escape his awful aunts. Centipede nibbles the stem and the peach begins rolling away. It rolls right over Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge, squishing them flat. The peach keeps rolling, faster and faster, until it falls over a cliff.

## Intermission (15 minutes)

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## Act 2 (30 minutes)

The peach falls with a splash. James and the insects are disoriented until Ladybug points out that they appear to be bobbing. They realize they've fallen in to the sea and begin to panic until James reassures them that they are safe inside the peach. Relieved, James and the insects relax on the peach. But, soon they see they are in great danger. Sharks are circling and eating the peach! The insects beg James to think of a way out. James notices the seagulls circling above and thinks maybe they could be of help. Using Miss Spider's thread and the reluctant Earthworm as bait, they harness hundreds of seagulls to the peach until it finally rises in the air.

As the peach floats above the sea, a sea captain spots it. With his Number One and Number Two looking on, the captain is horrified to see the peach with a boy and giant insects aboard it through his telescope. He runs off screaming.

James and the insects are starving. But, James finally realizes that they could satisfy their hunger with bites from the peach. As they enjoy their food, Centipede begins singing about how he loves the tasty peach more than anything he's eaten. Uh, oh! Centipede falls overboard. James jumps in to save him.

Under the water, glowing sea creatures swim about. Centipede comes in to view and gets wrapped in an enormous octopus's tentacles. James pries him loose and they swim away. Using Miss Spider's thread, the other insects pull them back up to the peach. But, the trouble is not over yet. Thunder sounds and rain pours down on the bedraggled group.

The next morning, James and the insects see land. James realizes they have made it all the way to America. He asks Centipede to nibble a few pieces of thread so that they can slowly descend. But, a plane flies past severing all the lines and the peach begins falling. It is plummeting towards the biggest skyscraper in the city and, fortunately, lands safely on the very top. They have arrived in New York City and landed on the Empire State Building! When the New Yorkers hear their amazing story, James and the insects are greeted with tickertape and a parade. A little girl runs up to James and asks for a bite of his peach. After he agrees, children swarm the peach until all that is left is the stone. The mayor of New York asks James and the insects to live in Central Park. They happily agree and move in to their peach stone home in New York City.

### Notes:

- This story is suspenseful and the music sometimes reflects this.
- This is a musical.
- Most of the characters speak with British accents.
- Some character's experience tragic endings (including James's parents and aunts).
- The insects have elaborate costumes and make-up.
- The aunts are often menacing and mean. They use rough language.
- There are some parts of the story that bring up some "icky" ideas (eating crocodile tongues, the Centipede detailing what he's eaten in the past, etc.).
- There are scenes that may seem particularly scary to some audience members (the sharks attacking, the Centipede wrapped in octopus's tentacles, the falling peach, etc.).

**For further understanding of the content, we strongly encourage you to read Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*.**

**DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER**

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