

# **Danny the Champion of the World Study Guide**

## **Danny the Champion of the World**

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## Plot Summary

“Danny the Champion of the World” is a children’s novel by Roald Dahl which recounts the father-son relationship between Danny and his father as they seek to poach pheasants from the unkind Mr. Hazell. Danny begins the novel by speaking about life up to the age of nine, wherein his mother died and his father became his sole parent. Danny lives with his father in a cozy old gypsy caravan behind the gas and repair station his father owns and runs. Danny loves to help out at the station, and desires to be a mechanic like his father is. Danny also has a very close relationship with his father, and loves his father more than anything in the world.

As Danny grows and pays more attention to the world around him, he discovers that not all grown-ups are kind like his father, such as the wealthy and cruel Mr. Hazell. Even Danny’s own father is not what he believes him to be, as Danny learns his father practices the art of poaching, or stealing, pheasants. Poaching, an act done in the past as a matter of avoiding starvation, is now done for the sport, the thrill, and the art of the process itself. As Danny learns, even Doc Spence, police constable Sergeant Samways, and other important village leaders have done poaching in their lifetimes.

Danny hopes to go poaching with his father, but his father says this will happen when the time comes. When Danny’s father does not return on time from a poaching expedition to Hazell Wood, Danny heads out to find him. He learns his father has broken his ankle and fallen in a trap prepared by the groundskeepers to ward off poachers. Danny helps his father out of the trap pit, and waits up for Doc Spence to arrive. As Danny’s father recovers, he and Danny are unhappy to learn that all of the pheasants owned by Mr. Hazell are due to be killed during Hazell’s annual shooting party. Danny’s father dislikes the senseless killing of birds and animals, so wants to find a way to poach all the pheasants Hazell owns. Danny suggests feeding them raisins laced with sleeping pill powder, making the pheasants easier to poach. Danny’s father agrees.

Danny’s father brings Danny along with him to sneak into the woods and feed the pheasants the sleeping pill raisins. As night falls, the pheasants fall asleep and are very easily poached. This causes Danny’s father to believe they have broken a record for pheasant poaching, and to call Danny the “champion of the world.” The pheasants are dropped off with Reverend and Mrs. Clipstone, who always deliver poached pheasants the day after they are poached to avoid angry owners and policemen.

The next day, as Mrs. Clipstone delivers the pheasants, they awaken and block traffic in front of the station. Mr. Hazell arrives, angry and demanding Sergeant Samways return his pheasants. Samways is not convinced the pheasants belong to Mr. Hazell without evidence. When it is agreed to chase the pheasants away to see which way they fly, they fly in the opposite direction of Hazell Wood. The angry Mr. Hazell heads home, while Doc Spence reveals that six pheasants are still sleeping and can be eaten. The book ends with a message from Roald Dahl in which he encourages parents to be sparky rather than stodgy.



# Chapters 1 – 5

## Summary

In Chapter 1, *The Filling Station*, Danny explains how he was raised by his father following his mother's sudden death when Danny was four months old. Danny's father, a mechanic, owned a filling and repair station, and the two lived in an old gypsy caravan out in the back. Danny's father always allowed him to help out around the filling station, and Danny loved living such a simple, quiet life, especially because of living with his father.

In Chapter 2, *The Big Friendly Giant*, Danny speaks about his father. Danny explains his father appeared stern and serious because he smiled with his eyes rather than his mouth, and that his father was an uneducated man who loved stories. One such story involved the Big Friendly Giant (BFG) who lived in a large underground cavern near the filling station, and came out only at night to collect the dreams of children from which to make all kinds of magical powder. The BFG then used a blowpipe to scatter the powder into the rooms of children to give them the most amazing dreams ever, which turned real. Danny's father explained he himself once saw the BFG, but was not afraid.

In Chapter 3, *Cars and Kits and Fire Balloons*, Danny recalls how well-loved and well-respected his father was as both a person and a mechanic, as people brought their vehicles from miles around to be repaired by his father. Danny's father loved working with gasoline engines, because they brought together all sorts of pieces of metal to bring a car to life. Danny decided to become a mechanic as a result of his father's example, and Danny's own love of working with engines. By the age of seven, Danny could disassemble and reassemble a small engine, and Danny had come to even more deeply love and appreciate the time spent with his father. Each year, Danny and his father built something new for Danny's birthday, including a kite, a boomerang, a treehouse, stilts, a fire balloon, and a small car made from an old engine. Danny remembers looking forward to turning nine, but that it would turn out differently than expected.

In Chapter 4, *My Father's Deep Dark Secret*, Danny is now nine. He explains directly to readers that grown-ups are complicated, flawed people who have secret habits. On the first Saturday night in September, Danny goes to bed as usual, but he does not hear the sounds of his father working late in the filling station shop. Checking the shop, Danny cannot find his father anywhere. Suddenly, Danny's father returns from a walk, which calms Danny down quickly. Danny's father explains he has been thinking and has decided to let Danny in on the darkest secret of his life. Danny's father reveals he has been in Hazell's Wood, six and-a-half miles away, where he was practicing the art of poaching pheasants. Danny believes this is stealing, but his father does not think so, and explains that it is a family tradition based on the need for food, but is now done purely for the sport. The rich, from whom Danny's father poaches, buy pheasants only to hunt them. Danny then asks about the process for poaching.



In Chapter 5, The Secret Methods, Danny's father reveals that his own father discovered the best ways of poaching the way a scientist practices science. After Danny promises not to tell anyone, Danny's father reveals that pheasants are crazy about raisins. The first method using raisins is called the Horsehair Stopper, in which raisins are plumped up with water, then attached by a horsehair. This causes the raisin to get stuck in, but not hurt, the pheasant's throat. The pheasant stops moving to attempt to swallow the raisin, at which time the pheasant can simply be picked up. The second method, the Sticky Hat, in which a pheasant will eat raisins out of a paper hat, causing the hat to cover the pheasant's eyes, and the pheasant to be caught. Danny is excited and wants to go along on a poach, but his father tells him he will be allowed to come when the time is right.

## Analysis

"Danny the Champion of the World" is a children's novel by Roald Dahl that follows not only the father-son relationship between Danny and his father, William, but their efforts to poach pheasants. When the novel begins, Danny reveals his simple - but happy - living situation even though it is based on sadness. Danny happily lives with his father in an old but comfortable gypsy caravan, for his mother has been dead for several years. Danny was too young to remember his mother, but has grown up valuing his father all the more since he now only has one parent. Danny's world revolves around his father, and Danny emulates his father in every possible way – even wanting to grow up to be a mechanic.

Danny's relationship with his father is the critical defining factor in Danny's life. The author argues through the course of the book that fathers are just as important in the lives of children as mothers, and that fathers are just as capable of raising children (even if the situation is not ideal – as it is later learned, Danny's father terribly misses his dead wife; and Danny is saddened to know he will never get to know his mother personally). Danny's father is ensuring that Danny not only have a proper education in school, but a proper education in practical matters, such as having a trade in the field of auto mechanics. Everyone respects and loves Danny's father, and they see how much of a good parent his father has been.

But despite Danny's happy living situation, all children grow up sooner or later and discover the world is not a fairy tale, and that not everything is always as it seems. As Danny learns, his father is a pheasant poacher. While it is not a serious crime, poaching is still stealing and morally questionable. Danny, however, recognizes that his father means no harm in his activities, and understands why his father would want to poach from the cruel and wealthy Mr. Hazell. Danny handles this very adult situation in good stride, recognizing that no human being is perfect, and recognizing that his father is still to be loved and admired.

As Danny learns about his father's secret poaching activities, Danny also begins a journey of coming of age, though he does not know this. As mentioned previously, eventually, children realize that the world and the people in it, though they may be good,



are also flawed. No one is perfect, and no one can live up to an ideal although people may rightly aspire to an ideal. Danny's acceptance of his father's poaching activities is reflective of his acceptance of his father as human – and this ultimately brings them much closer together in the long run. Already, Danny wants to go out on a poach, but Danny's father assures him this will happen when the time is right.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What is Danny's life like with his father as a sole parent? What is the relationship between Danny and his father like? Why?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is the deep, dark secret of Danny's father? Why does Danny's father say he participates in poaching?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Danny respond to his father's deep, dark secret? Why do you believe this is? Does their father-son relationship change as a result? Why or why not?

## **Vocabulary**

gypsy caravan, bore, stern, inevitable, majestically, poaching, splendiferous, ravenous



# Chapters 6 – 10

## Summary

In Chapter 6, Mr. Victor Hazell, Danny's father explains he always poaches in Mr. Hazell's Woods because he dislikes Mr. Hazell. Mr. Hazell owns a beer brewery, and is immensely wealthy, rude, and drinks too much. When Danny's father refuses Mr. Hazell service for being rude to Danny, Mr. Hazell uses his money and connections to have Danny's father harassed by having inspectors come to look at living conditions, business operations, and gasoline quality, among other things. This makes Danny's father like Mr. Hazell even less, and brings on a poaching night. Danny's father heads out to poach, and promises to be back by ten.

In Chapter 7, The Baby Austin, Danny decides to do homework while his father is out poaching, then falls asleep. When he wakes up, it is past two in the morning, and his father has not returned home. Danny is immediately panicked, and attempts to reassure himself do not work. Danny decides to head out to look for his father using one of the cars of a regular customer, the Baby Austin. Danny is terrified of driving, but even more terrified of what may have happened to his father. Danny must pull off the main road to avoid a police officer, and continues on when the police officer moves past. Danny then arrives at Hazell's Wood.

In Chapter 8, The Pit, Danny is terrified to be at the dark woods. With a flashlight in hand, he heads in. Danny shouts for his father as he moves, but at first hears no response. At last, he hears his father's voice, and discovers his father has fallen into a trap pit and broken his left ankle. Danny's father reveals that the property's gamekeepers saw him, and are bringing back Mr. Hazell in the morning. Danny's father says they must leave quickly, and is also stunned to learn that Danny has driven the Baby Austin over. Danny retrieves a rope from the car, and his father climbs out. The two then hobble to the car and head back. Danny's father explains he will spend the night in the garage, and call Doc Spencer to arrange a hospital visit about the broken ankle in the morning. Danny helps his father settle in, bringing him blankets and the phone.

In Chapter 9, Doc Spencer, the local, friendly, and elderly doctor comes to see about Danny's father. Doc Spencer admits that he, too, poached for sport as a young man. This surprises Danny and his father, who never would have guessed it. Doc Spencer arranges for an ambulance, and Danny's father promises to be back home by that night.

In Chapter 10, The Great Shooting Party, Danny's father returns home that evening, tired and happy to home. Doc Spencer explains Danny's father will be sleepy for a while, and then gives Danny some cold meat pie prepared by Mrs. Spencer. Danny then asks God to bless both Dr. and Mrs. Spencer. Over the next few days, Danny's father gets better, but is still very angry with Mr. Hazell. Danny's father reveals that pheasant season begins in a few days, which Mr. Hazell begins by having a shooting party for



hundreds of rich and elite people because it makes Hazell feel like a bigshot. Danny's father admits he would love to poach all the pheasants so there can be no such party on October first. Danny's father explains that Hazell's three keepers always go home as soon as the pheasants have roosted in the trees for the night.

## Analysis

Despite the crime of poaching, Danny's ancestors poached to avoid starvation. Danny's father, who now does it for the thrill and the art of the poach, only poaches from Mr. Hazell. Mr. Hazell is rich and cruel, and uses his money for unkind things. He raises pheasants only for them to be killed, whereas Danny's father poaches pheasants not only for fun, but to use as food. Danny recognizes that being rich is not the problem, but being cruel is. Additionally, Hazell's harassment of Danny's father with inspectors makes Danny's father's poaching seem less a minor crime than a deserved nuisance for Mr. Hazell.

Knowing that there are people like Mr. Hazell in the world is another step on Danny's journey of coming of age. Just because the adults around a child may be kind and gentle, does not mean that all adults are the same way. This is clearly the case with Mr. Hazell, who has no problem harassing a boy and his father when Danny's father refuses him service. Likewise, that people may kill animals purely for fun and without purpose is also something Danny must come to terms with. It is a very adult understanding that Danny must contend with.

Another adult situation Danny must contend with is when his father does not return from a poach. Danny, fearing the worst, heads out on his own to find his father. Danny here must act and behave as an adult, which is symbolized by his driving of a car (the Baby Austin). Danny must enter the dark and terrifying woods to find his father, and must do so alone. Danny has long been dependent on his father, but now Danny's father is dependent on him. Having to deal with such a dramatic situation is proof of the love Danny has for his father. It is then Danny who helps his father out of the trap, sees him home, and tucks him in while awaiting the arrival of Doc Spence.

As Danny's father recovers from his injury, the groundwork is laid for the greatest poach to come. Danny's father is unhappy to know that it will soon be October 1, the opening day of pheasant season. Danny's father wishes he could find a way to ruin the hunt for Hazell, and to steal all of the pheasants that Hazell owns. Here, Danny and his father are no longer merely father and son, but friends and allies with a common cause. Between this and the love Danny and his father have demonstrated for one another, Dahl's argument that the bond between parents and children is critical is well-illustrated.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the difference between Danny's father's poaching of a pheasant, and Hazell's shooting day for pheasants? Can either Danny or Mr. Hazell be held to be morally right in what they do? Why or why not?





## Discussion Question 2

What sorts of adult situations must Danny deal with in this section of the novel? How does Danny manage to handle them?

## Discussion Question 3

Although going into Hazell Wood at night is terrifying for Danny, he does so anyway in order to find his father. Why?

## Vocabulary

emergency, petrified, marvelous, flabbergasted, precious, infuriating, roosting



# Chapters 11 – 15

## Summary

In Chapter 11, *The Sleeping Beauty*, Danny comes up with a plan to fill raisins with sleeping pill powder, and to feed those raisins to the pheasants. Danny's father finds the plan brilliant. Because Danny has come up with the plan, his father agrees to allow him to come on the poaching expedition. Danny is thrilled. Danny's father decides to christen the new method, *The Sleepy Beauty*. To ensure the raisins are prepared, Danny's father will keep Danny home from school on Friday under the excuse of illness.

In Chapter 12, *Thursday and School*, Danny's father walks him to school, then heads to Stevens to purchase raisins. At school, Danny watches as Mr. Corrado, a decent man of 60 or so, serves the best meat at lunch to the young and beautiful kindergarten teacher, Miss Birdseye, with whom he is in love. Danny's own teacher, Captain Lancaster, however, is unkind and very strict. Mr. Snoddy, the headmaster who is married to an unkind witchy woman, handles the oldest students and sips gin disguised as water throughout the day – something discovered by Danny and his best friend, Sidney Morgan. When Danny helps Sidney with a math problem, Lancaster accuses Danny of cheating. He then whips the hands of both boys with the punishment cane. At home, Danny's father is angered by this, but agrees not to beat up Captain Lancaster because of the poaching plan. He and Danny get to work on the raisins.

In Chapter 13, *Friday*, Danny and his father add the sleeping powder to the raisins by cutting and stitching up slits in them. Danny's father reveals that Danny's mother was a wonderful sewer and a wonderful human being. He also reveals that Danny's mother loved to poach as well. This makes Danny happy. Danny tends to a pretty female customer, anxious to see her on her way so that he can return to work.

In Chapter 14, *In the Wood*, Danny and his father, with the raisins in hand, head out to Hazell's Wood. Danny's father reassures Danny's fears of being caught by saying the thrill of poaching is like a game of hide and seek, and reassures Danny's fears of falling into another pit by saying he will do his best to stay on the lookout this time. The two sneak into the woods, and come upon the feeding ground of the pheasants, overseen by a keeper with a gun. Lying on their stomachs, Danny's father begins throwing raisins to the pheasants. Once all of the raisins are thrown, Danny and his father sneak away, with Danny's father congratulating Danny on doing so well.

In Chapter 15, *The Keeper*, Danny and his father wait near the hedge of the Hazell property on a public footpath for the sun to go down. Suddenly, Rabbetts, the head keeper, comes along with a black lab and orders Danny and his father to leave. Danny's father explains they are on a public footpath, but Rabbetts believes that Danny and his father are up to no good. Danny's father makes a pretend show of going home.



## Analysis

Danny continues to wonder how all the pheasants may be poached from Hazell, and determines that sleeping pill powder may do the trick. Because Danny has come up with such an amazing plan, Danny will be allowed to go along on the poach. Danny's father's decision to allow Danny to come along on the poach is a testament to not only the bond between father and son, but a testament to how Danny has matured over the past few weeks. He has had to deal with the cruelty of Mr. Hazell, learned that all adults are flawed, and has helped to rescue his father. If Danny can handle such situations, he can also handle a poach. This is especially important given that the woods are full of traps and keepers with guns.

For Danny, this is a validation and a mark of how much his father really does think of him. Danny has been made to have a sound education, both in school and in the station; and now, Danny is to be given an education in a traditional and ancient art form which is done as much for the thrill as it is for the symbolic importance of the past in which poaching was a matter of survival. This underscores the point that people in all times have been flawed and had to face very serious situations which, on their face, may not always be seen wholly as good or bad.

Danny continues to accept that human beings are flawed, but what may be unusual is not necessarily wrong. This is seen through Danny's teachers at school. There is the unfolding relationship between the much younger Miss Birdseye and the much older Mr. Corrado; and there is Mr. Snoddy who sips gin all day in order to have some escape from his very unkind wife. Likewise, there are people who may just simply be unkind in and of themselves, such as Mrs. Snoddy, Mr. Hazell, and Captain Lancaster. Such people are not rare, but must still be dealt with and treated with respect where possible.

### Discussion Question 1

Why does Danny's father decide that Danny is now mature enough to handle a poach? Do you agree or disagree with Danny's father? Why?

### Discussion Question 2

Why does Danny spend so much time reflecting on the lives of his teachers at school? What does this say to Danny about human beings in general?

### Discussion Question 3

What is Danny's plan for poaching? Why does Danny's father find the plan to be brilliant? Does Danny's plan seem brilliant to you? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

chock, revolutionize, repulsive, guttersnipes, dandyprats, insolent, transfixed, ecstasy, loitering



# Chapters 16 – 20

## Summary

In Chapter 16, *The Champion of the World*, Danny and his father return to Hazell Wood in the darkness, and discover the pheasants beginning to roost. Suddenly, the pheasants begin dropping to the ground, fast asleep. Danny and his father are excited. They begin to pile up the pheasants, then place them in sacks. Danny's father believes they have hit a world record for poaching pheasants, so he names Danny the champion of the world. With the sacks full of pheasants, Danny and his father head to the road where Old Charlie Kinch, another poacher, is waiting in his taxi to give Danny and his father a ride.

In Chapter 17, *The Taxi*, Old Charlie Kinch is impressed with the poaching haul, and with Danny's role in things. Danny's father explains the pheasants will be divided up and given to friends, including Charlie and police constable Sergeant Enoch Samways, also a poacher. For the night, however, the pheasants will be dropped off at Mrs. Grace Clipstone's house. Mrs. Clipstone, the wife of the local vicar, the Reverend Lionel Clipstone, always delivers the pheasants. Danny is amazed.

In Chapter 18, *Home*, Danny and his father head home on foot. Danny's father is still thrilled about their September thirtieth poaching. Danny's father decides he wants to purchase a new oven, and a deep freezer. At home, Danny and his father have hot cocoa. Danny's father explains the evening was the best time he has ever had.

In Chapter 19, *Rockabye Baby*, Doc Spencer, Danny, and Danny's father watch as Mrs. Clipstone approaches the filling station with a baby carriage. Danny's father explains to Danny that the pheasants are kept under the baby in the baby carriage, to ensure safe and secret delivery. In the extra-large carriage is the toddler Christopher Clipstone. As they approach, a truck drives up, startling a pheasant, which flies up into the air. Dozens more fly up, the sleeping pills wearing off. The pheasants settle all over the filling station. A line of cars forms behind the truck, all of whom look with amusement at the scene. But then Danny notices one person in particular among the line of cars.

In Chapter 20, *Good-bye Mr. Hazell*, Mr. Hazell stops his silver Rolls-Royce at the filling station. He is furious and shouts curses as he demands the return of his pheasants. Danny's father counters that so long as the pheasants are on his land, they belong to him according to the law. Sergeant Samways suddenly arrives to see what all the fuss is about on the road. Hazell says the pheasants belong to him, and that Danny's father enticed them to fly onto his property. Samways does not find this likely, as more than six miles separates the filling station and Hazell Wood. Samways asks for evidence, but Hazell cannot provide it. Sergeant Samways leads an effort to chase the birds home, but they ultimately fly off in the opposite direction of Hazell's Wood.



## Analysis

Danny and his father head into Hazell Wood after feeding the pheasants to discover that, one by one, and then several by several, they begin to fall asleep. Danny's plan has worked perfectly. The pheasants are very easily and carefully collected and stored in sacks. Danny's father believes they must have set a world record for poaching, and so he calls Danny the champion of the world. This is where the book itself gains its title. It is also yet another common experience that brings father and son closer together.

As Danny and his father wrap up the poach, Danny is amazed to learn just how many of the people of the village have poached, or still poach. Among them are Doc Spence, Charlie Kinch, and even the policeman Sergeant Samways and the Reverend and Mrs. Clipstone. It is apparent to Danny that poaching is considered a very minor issue by the people of the town, especially when done against someone like Mr. Hazell. It is yet another lesson that Danny learns about the people who surround him – that they are generally more accepting and willing to let small things go. Much the way that Danny has accepted his father's poaching, the people of town have accepted that poaching is simply a way of life.

When Mrs. Clipstone delivers the pheasants in her baby carriage, a traffic jam builds up on the road behind a truck which stops to see the pheasants flying out. Among those stuck in the jam is Mr. Hazell, who immediately demands the return of his pheasants even though he has no evidence to support this claim. Sergeant Samways offers the commonsense solution of allowing the pheasants to fly off as they will, for they will surely return the way they came. Unfortunately for Hazell, the pheasants not only make a mess of his car, but fly off in the opposite direction of his property.

### Discussion Question 1

Why does Danny's father tell Danny he is the champion of the world? How does Danny respond to such a compliment? Why?

### Discussion Question 2

What importance for the relationship that Danny has with his father does the pheasant poach have? Why?

### Discussion Question 3

Why does Sergeant Samway not arrest Danny's father for the poaching of pheasants? Do you believe Samway is right to have handled the situation in the way that he does? Why or why not?



## Vocabulary

glimmers, suspicious, astounded, dainty, superbly, foul, enticed, scoundrels, rascallions, festooned



# Chapters 21 - 22

## Summary

In Chapter 21, Doc Spencer's Surprise, after everyone leaves, Sergeant Samways is interested to learn how the pheasants were poached in the first place. When he learns that it is all owed to Danny, Samways compliments Danny and says Danny will one day be a great inventor. Samways is sad to have seen the pheasants go. It is then that Doc Spence reveals that he removed six still-sleeping pheasants from the baby carriage. Two will go to Samways, two will go to the Clipstones, and two will go to Danny and his father. Sergeant Samways is quite happy, and heads off to return to work.

In Chapter 22, My Father, Danny's father decides to spend more time with Danny. They decide to close up shop for the day, and poach trout over Cobbler's Hill. They also decide to invite Dr. and Mrs. Spencer over for roast pheasant dinner. The book ends with a message to readers, telling them that when they become parents, to be sparky instead of stodgy.

## Analysis

When Mr. Hazell and the others leave, Samways is especially interested to know how the pheasant poach went. He is very impressed to learn that the plan was all Danny's, and compliments Danny for this. Danny feels very proud of having been accepted among adults in their poaching circle, and feels honored because he knows he would never have had the chance had it not been for his father. The poaching experience continues to bring father and son together. As the reader learns, Danny's father decides to spend more time with Danny, and to work a little less. The poaching experience is a reminder to Danny's father that Danny is growing up, and that these days of childhood will not last forever.

Danny's coming of age journey also comes to a close at the end of the novel. Not only has Danny discovered he is far braver and more capable of handling adult situations than he previously thought possible, but he has come to value friendship and community as well. This in turn leads him to a consideration of kindness, in which he asks to invite the Spencers over for dinner not only as a gesture of friendship, but of thanks for providing food for Danny when Danny's father was in the hospital. It is a very adult thing to do.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do the compliments of Sergeant Samways and the other adults matter so much to Danny? What do these compliments say about Danny's growth?





## Discussion Question 2

Why does Danny's father decide to spend more time with Danny? How does Danny feel about this? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

At the end of the novel, Danny wants to invite the Spencers to dinner. Why? What does this say about Danny's growth as a person?

## Vocabulary

jiggered, cautiously, luscious, obliged, stodgy, sparky



# Characters

## Danny

Danny is the nine-year-old narrator of the novel “Danny the Champion of the World” by Roald Dahl. Danny has a very close relationship with his father, William, for Danny has grown up without a mother after her tragic death many years before. Danny values his father and his simple, quiet, and happy life all the more because of this. Danny aspires to be a mechanic like his father, but is surprised to learn this his father is a poacher – something both of a family and a community tradition. This, in addition to his encounters with Mr. Hazell, cause Danny to realize that all adults have their secrets, and no human being is perfect.

As Danny learns more about poaching and undertakes a poach with this father, his relationship with his father continues to grow, for the two become equals in a vital and secret practice. It is Danny who crafts the sleeping pill plan to poach all of Mr. Hazell's pheasants. Danny must handle very adult situations, growing braver and more selfless when he must help rescue his father in the dead of night, and later inviting the Spencers to dine on pheasant with them. For Danny's efforts at poaching, his father pronounces him the champion of the world.

## Danny's father

William is the father of Danny. William is a very kind, very warm, and very supportive father. William, who deeply mourns the loss of his wife, must do his best to raise Danny as a single father, providing not only gentle care but the example of a man. William, a mechanic and owner of a filling and repair station, is delighted to learn that Danny also wants to be a mechanic, and encourages both Danny's academic as well as practical education.

William is also secretly a pheasant poacher, stealing from Mr. Hazell in response for Hazell's cruelty. When William is injured on a poach, it is Danny who rescues him. It is also Danny who crafts the plan to poach all of Hazell's pheasants prior to Hazell's shooting party, making William very proud. As the novel ends, William recognizes that Danny is beginning to grow up, and that his childhood will not last forever. Because of this, William decides to spend more time with Danny, and to enjoy what time the two have together.

## Mr. Hazell

Mr. Victor Hazell is a rich and cruel man who lives six-and-a-half miles from Danny and his father. Hazell is known not only for his unkindness, but for the annual shooting parties that he holds in which the pheasants he buys and raises are killed for no purpose other than killing. Hazell uses his power, money, and influence to harass locals



with whom he has disagreements, such as Danny's father. Hazell is later enraged to learn that his pheasants have been poached, and is further angered when the pheasants do not return to his property.

## **Doc Spencer**

Doc Spencer is the local family doctor who makes house calls. He is a fixture in the village and surrounding area, much loved and much admired. He is happily married to Mrs. Spencer, and the two become something of grandparent figures to Danny when they provide Danny with food after Danny's father breaks his ankle and must go to the hospital. Doc Spencer, it is later learned, is an old poacher himself, poaching both pheasants and trout. He and Mrs. Spencer are invited to dinner with Danny and his father at the end of the novel as a measure of friendship and thanks for providing Danny with food.

## **Old Charlie Kinch**

Old Charlie Kinch is the local taxicab driver, a poacher, and the primary method of escape for poachers the night of a poach. Charlie is kind, warm, and always eager to participate in a poach. Charlie collects Danny, his father, and their poaching from Hazell's Wood, and drops them off at the Clipstone residence.

## **Sergeant Samways**

Sergeant Enoch Samways is the local police constable who is well-admired and well-liked by residents, but always avoided by children because he does his best to keep them out of trouble. Danny is amazed to learn that Samways is a poacher himself. It is Samways who later decides to try to chase away the pheasants at the filling station due to a lack of evidence provided by Hazell. When the birds fly in the opposite direction of Hazell's property, Samways has no legal evidence to proceed on, so he does not pursue an investigation.

## **Mrs. Clipstone**

Mrs. Clipstone is the mother of Christopher, and the wife of the local vicar, the Reverend Lionel Clipstone, is a poaching accomplice. Pheasants are always dropped off at her house to be hidden immediately after the poaching to avoid angry owners and policemen, and are then delivered by Mrs. Clipstone the next day in her baby carriage. Danny and his father drop the pheasants off with Mrs. Clipstone that night, after which she delivers them the next day.



## **Mr. Rabbetts**

Mr. Rabbetts is the chief groundskeeper and gamekeeper for Mr. Hazell. Rabbetts is a foul, unkind man due to his dealings with Hazell, and repeated poaching of pheasants. Rabbett nearly catches Danny and his father preparing to poach, and orders them to leave.

## **Captain Lancaster**

Captain Lancaster is a cruel teacher at Danny's school. A World War II veteran, Lancaster has no time for nonsense and handles his classroom with an iron fist. Lancaster, like Hazell and Mrs. Snoddy, demonstrate that not all adults are kind or warm people.

## **Danny's mother**

Danny's mother has been deceased since Danny was four months old. She was killed in a tragic, but unidentified accident. Danny is too young to remember his mother, and so thrives on the memories of his father. By all accounts, Danny's mother was a beautiful, loving, sweet, and talented woman who made life better for Danny and his father. To this day, Danny's father still deeply mourns her loss, and remains in love with her.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Poaching

Poaching is the act of stealing or hunting an animal. Poaching (when only stealing) is considered to be a relatively harmless crime, and more of a family and community tradition in the town and surrounding area where Danny and his father live. Danny learns through the course of the novel that poaching was originally done in order to feed hungry mouths, but is now done primarily for the fun, the thrill, and the art of it. Danny's father, Sergeant Samways, Doc Spencer, Charlie Kinch, and the Clipstones are among those who have poached or who still poach.

## Pheasants

Pheasants are a small ground bird that roosts in trees only at night, love raisins, and are capable of flying short distances. Pheasants are regularly raised and hunted for food, but they are raised only to be killed for sport by Mr. Hazell and his guests. This disappoints Danny and many other locals, who poach pheasants with the ultimate intent to eat them. Danny later goes out on a poach with his father to steal all the pheasants from Hazell so they cannot be killed purely for enjoyment. When Hazell demands the return of his pheasants, the pheasants fly off in the opposite direction of his property.

## Gypsy caravan

A gypsy caravan serves as the home of Danny and his father, and is representative of the halt to life that Danny and his father have experienced without the presence of Danny's mother in their lives. The caravan is mounted on cinderblocks behind the filling and repair station owned and operated by Danny's father. The gypsy caravan is well-maintained, comfortable, and very homey. Danny loves living in the caravan.

## Raisins

Raisins are the single irresistible food for pheasants, as Danny's father explains to Danny. Raisins are often used in poaching attempts to lure, trick, or distract pheasants. When Danny and his father decide to poach all of Hazell's pheasants, Danny suggests lacing raisins with sleeping pill powder in order to put the pheasants to sleep, thus making them easier to poach.

## The Baby Austin

The Baby Austin is a fancy old car driven by Danny to rescue his father, and symbolizes Danny's acting and behaving as an adult. The Baby Austin is regularly brought in for



maintenance to Danny's father's shop by a local who loves the work that Danny's father does. When Danny's father is injured on a poach, Danny must act as the adult and drive the Baby Austin to rescue his father.

## **Pit**

The pit symbolizes Danny's opportunity to prove his maturity to his father. A pit is dug in Hazell's Wood and covered with sticks and leaves as a trap for would-be poachers. While Danny's father is out poaching in the Wood, he falls into such a pit and breaks his ankle. Danny must use a rope to help his father climb out of the pit, and must then help his father away from the pit to get to the car to return home.

## **Sleeping pill powder**

Sleeping pill powder is used by Danny and his father to lace raisins to feed to the pheasants they intend to poach. The sleeping pill powder is divided up and sewn into raisins, which are then collected in sacks. The sleeping pill powder puts the pheasants to sleep after they eat the raisins, and allows Danny and his father to easily collect and poach the pheasants.

## **Taxi**

A taxi is driven by Old Charlie Kinch. Charlie often employs his taxi as a means for helping poachers get away with their haul. After Danny and his father complete their poaching of Hazell's Wood, they rely on Charlie's taxi to drive them and their haul of pheasants to the Clipstones' house.

## **Baby carriage**

The baby carriage symbolizes the idea that things are not always what they seem. A baby carriage is pushed by Mrs. Clipstone to not only get her baby Christopher out and about, but to secretly deliver pheasants. Mrs. Clipstone uses a particularly large baby carriage to transport the pheasants poached by Danny and his father. But near the station, most of the pheasants awaken and fly out of the carriage, where they settle all over the filling station.

## **Pheasant dinner**

A pheasant dinner is to be prepared by Danny's father using two pheasants from the poach, and symbolizes Danny's growth as a person. Danny requests that his father invite the Spencers to dinner not only as a measure of friendship, but as thanks for the meal provided to Danny by the Spencers when his father was in the hospital. Danny's

request demonstrates selflessness and kindness toward others, which in term demonstrates strong character as a person.



# Settings

## Filling and repair station

The filling and repair station is located between the local, unnamed village, and the nearby town of Wendover. It is also noted as being six-and-a-half miles down the road from Hazell Wood. The filling and repair station is owned and operated by Danny's father, and is also where Danny lends a hand in both car repair, car maintenance, and the filling of cars with gasoline. Behind the filling station is the small caravan where Danny and his father live. The filling station is where Danny and his father await the delivery of the poached pheasants, and becomes the scene of a showdown between Mr. Hazell, Sergeant Samways, Danny's father, and the pheasants over who owns the pheasants.

## Hazell Wood

Hazell Wood, also called Hazell's Wood, is a patch of woodland on the property of Mr. Hazell, and is located six-and-a-half miles away from Danny's father's filling and repair station. Hazell Wood is where Mr. Hazell has three gamekeepers, led by Mr. Rabbetts, to tend to and watch over flocks of pheasants. These pheasants are raised specifically each year to be killed purely for sport rather than for eating. Because of Mr. Hazell's cruelty, and the way he handles his pheasants, Hazell's Wood is a favorite spot for local poaching, especially for Danny's father. Danny must enter Hazell's Wood at night for the first time ever when his father is injured in a pit trap, a terrifying experience second only to the thought of what may have happened to his father. Danny and his father later return to Hazell Wood to carry out their poaching of Hazell's pheasants.

## The Clipstones'

The Clipstones' is the house in town belonging to the Reverend Lionel Clipstone, his wife Grace, and their son, Christopher. The Clipstone residence is used commonly by poachers to temporarily hide their poached animals until the coast is clear. At that point, using a baby carriage, Grace delivers the poached animals. When Danny and his father complete their poach, they drop the pheasants off at the Clipstone's in town before heading home.

## Wendover

Wendover is a small town not far from where Danny and his father live. Not much is said about Wendover, other than the fact that it is down the road, and that people from Wendover often stop at the filling station to fill up or have their cars repaired. This provides evidence for the quality service that Danny's father provides in that residents





from the town of Wendover, farther away than the town near the station, would rather drive the extra distance than go to a mechanic nearby.

## Danny's school

Danny's school is located two miles up the road from the filling station. Danny and his father walk there each day, even after Danny's father breaks his ankle. It is Danny's observations of his teachers at school that cause him to consider that adults are not all the same, that they live differently, that many of them are flawed, and that some of them are just mean by nature. For example, Captain Lancaster is very strict and unkind, while Mrs. Snoddy is a witchy woman who drives her husband, the headmaster, to drink.



## Themes and Motifs

### **Children are far more capable of handling difficult situations than most people believe**

Roald Dahl argues in his novel “Danny the Champion of the World” that children are far more capable of handling difficult situations than most people believe. He does this through Danny, who is forced to handle serious situations throughout the course of the novel. Each time, Danny struggles but manages to come through the situation.

Danny learns soon after turning nine that adults are not flawless people, and that most people have some sort of secret that they hide. Danny’s father is no such exception. Rather than shelter Danny from the truth about his poaching, Danny’s father entrusts Danny with the truth. Danny is a little taken aback at first, but later comes to accept that adults are people too, and are not perfect despite the way adults often attempt to portray themselves to children.

When Danny’s father goes missing during a poaching expedition, finding him becomes Danny’s responsibility. Danny does his best not to panic, knowing that he is his father’s only hope for help. Danny knows he cannot report his father missing on a poaching trip to the police, so he sets out to find his father himself. While it is not advisable for young readers to drive cars without licenses, Danny manages to drive Baby Austin to Hazell’s Wood to find his father. Driving is something that is considered impossible for children, but Danny proves otherwise.

In what is a terrifying situation, Danny is able to handle himself well beyond his age to be courageous and reasonable to find his father. Children are often considered incapable by adults of handling such a difficult situation (like a missing parent), but Danny proves otherwise through his struggle to remain calm and committed to the task at hand. Danny also demonstrates a great knack for planning and plotting, displaying a cleverness most do not associate with children. Danny is able to craft the sleeping pill plan for poaching the pheasants, which turns out to be a plan wise beyond Danny’s years.

### **Children must sometimes expect to handle very adult situations**

Children must sometimes expect to handle very adult situations, argues Roald Dahl in his novel “Danny the Champion of the World.” Children, when they are young, live in worlds that are sheltered and protected by their parents. They are rarely exposed to the realities of life beyond childhood, and Dahl uses his novel to demonstrate that children must be better prepared for the realities of life beyond childhood by having exposure to it.



When Danny turns nine, he receives such an exposure. Prior to his ninth year, apart from the death of his mother, Danny has lived a quiet, peaceful, and sheltered life consisting of his father, the station, the caravan, friends, friendly adults, and school. The cruel behavior of Mr. Hazell, and the news that his father practices the art of poaching, causes Danny to realize that all adults have flaws, and that not all adults – specifically Hazell – are kind. This better prepares Danny for handling the world of adults to which he will one day become a part.

Difficult situations often arise unexpectedly. Although Danny is too young to remember his mother, he still feels her absence in only having his father to hold onto. This, however, helps make Danny even closer to his father, the one parent he still has. In turn, this compels Danny to panic and become terrified when his father does not return home from poaching at the expected time. Danny must then find a way to find and help his father, for going to the police is out of the question because Danny wishes to protect his father.

In order to help his father, Danny must travel the six and-a-half miles to Hazell Wood by driving a car – something Danny has never done before. He helps his father to escape a pit, and helps to tend to his injured father back at the shop. Here, the child takes on the role of the parent, and the parent the child – something which usually never happens until much later in life. Yet at the age of nine, Danny has his first exposure to such a reality, that he will not always be the one being taken care of.

## **Danny's journey to find his father and to poach is also a coming of age journey**

Danny's journey to find his father and to poach is also a coming of age journey in Roald Dahl's novel "Danny the Champion of the World." The difficult and real-world experiences people face can transform their lives in important and better ways. The same is certainly true for Danny in his novel, as his journey first to find his father, and then his journey to help his father poach the pheasants from Hazell Wood demonstrate tremendous growth in Danny's character.

Early in the novel, Danny is happy to live with his father, and enjoys a quiet life. While his father encourages Danny to learn things both academic (at school) and practical (at the filling station shop), Danny has dealt with few serious situations in his life. He is a moral, clear-eyed kid who deeply loves his father and endeavors to always do the right thing. His learning that his father is a poacher is morally questionable to Danny, until Danny learns the poaching is only done against the cruel and immoral Mr. Hazell. Danny comes to understand that all adults are flawed, that no adult is perfect, and that right and wrong is not always clearly determined. This helps him to understand situations in different ways than he otherwise might have done.

When Danny's father goes missing while poaching, Danny is panicked. He must rely only on himself to help his father, for he cannot ask for help from anyone else in order to protect his father's secret poaching activities. Danny becomes courageous and resilient



when he must drive the Baby Austin six-and-a-half miles to Hazell Wood, avoiding the police, and successfully handling the roads to the Wood. When he arrives in the wood, he must again demonstrate courage, for it is the middle of the night and little can be seen.

When he discovers his father trapped in a pit, he must demonstrate strength not only to help his father out, but help his father to the car and drive home. At home, Danny must temporarily become the parent to care for his father, demonstrating great selflessness and love to ensure his father will be okay. Danny must again rely on courage and cleverness when poaching pheasants with his father in order to avoid keepers and traps. When the poaching is over, and Danny and his father end up with two pheasants to cook, Danny asks to invite the Spencers over as a matter of friendship and thanks for making Danny food when Danny's father was in the hospital. Here, Danny exhibits concern, care, gratitude, and appreciation for the people in his life, and is able to extend hospitality in a way he was not before.

## **Dahl argues that the bond between parents and children is critical**

In his novel "Danny the Champion of the World," Dahl argues that the bond between parents and children is critical. The purpose of marriage and family – the raising of children – has long been the foundation of civilization. The children that parents raise turn out to be tomorrow's parents, and to determine how the world will turn out. At the same time, Dahl ends his book with a note to young readers, urging them to be sparky rather than stodgy parents.

Dahl provides as a role model Danny's father, William, and the relationship that Danny has with him. Danny's father dearly misses his dead wife, and knows he must be both gentle and caring, and provide the role model of a man for his son. Danny's father encourages Danny to attend school and to apply himself in his studies so that Danny might have a traditional, academic education; yet, Danny's father also instructs his son in practical matters, such as car repair. Danny receives a well-rounded education between academics and practical matters as a result.

At the same time, Danny's father ensures that Danny is in bed at a certain time, has completed his homework, and attends school. The traditional boundaries of parenthood are well in place – but Danny's father also serves as his son's best friend so long as Danny does as he is told. Danny's father is happy to spend time with his son, crafting projects like kites and fire balloons, and telling stories. Danny's father is also very protective of Danny, such as when Captain Lancaster accuses Danny of cheating. Danny's father is also very gentle and kind with Danny, taking time to tuck Danny in, to listen to Danny's fears and ideas, hopes and dreams, and thoughts.

The relationship between Danny and his father is one that relies on traditional parent-child boundaries (Danny has expectations to live up to that vary from doing well in school to behaving at home), but also relies on a closeness and warmth between father



and son (the sharing of secrets and the time spent together building things like go-karts) to more exciting activities (such as poaching). As a result, Danny's father is a sparky, rather than stodgy parent, because Danny's father wishes to be an active part of Danny's life, and to include Danny in his own life. Danny therein has a very balanced, proper, and exceptional upbringing.

## **Dahl argues that fathers are just as important as mothers in the life of a child**

Roald Dahl argues that fathers are just as important as mothers in the life of a child, in his novel "Danny the Champion of the World." Ideally and traditionally, a two-parent mother and father household is seen as crucial for the life of a child, with the mother having the greatest impact on the child. Dahl disagrees with this generally held conception, arguing that fathers are just as important, and just as capable of raising a child well.

Danny's own mother tragically died when Danny was only four months old. Danny is not old enough to remember his mother, and knows what little he does know about her through his father, who is still in love with her nine years later. Because Danny has only a single parent to rely on, Danny's father is especially important to him. His father is his entire world, being both homemaker and provider for the both of them. It is Danny's father who works, earns money, and tends to cooking, cleaning, the house, and ensuring Danny is raised well.

Danny's father does this by holding firm on traditional parental boundaries – such as ensuring Danny does everything from his homework to behaving – while ensuring a warmth and closeness with his son, such as when the two embark on projects together, such as building a go-kart. At the same time, Danny's father's sensitivities – such as tucking in Danny, seeing to the meals they both eat, and so on – are reflective of the motherly influence in a child's life. Danny's father's courage, work ethic, and practical experience provide a manly influence in Danny's life, both of which complement one another and make Danny a well-rounded kid like his own father.

The reader should also note that Danny's father did not send Danny away to be raised by another relative, to be raised in an orphanage, or to be raised in a school of some sort after the death of his wife, but has chosen to raise Danny himself. Even in the present day and age (the 2010s; the novel was originally published in 1975), single fathers are still unusual and are often considered inferior to single mothers. Dahl reveals that is not the case at all, as fathers are very capable of raising good children who feel loved and capable themselves. This is demonstrated through Danny's courage in finding his father during the pit accident, and again demonstrated through Danny's determination to remain loyal to his father by keeping his poaching a secret.



# Styles

## Point of View

Roald Dahl tells his novel “Danny the Champion of the World” in the first-person reflective perspective from the point of view of main character and principal protagonist, Danny. In the first three chapters, Danny speaks about his life up until the age of nine to set the stage for the poaching event. As a result, he uses past-tense reflective language, such as in Chapter 1 where a photograph of the baby Danny is presented with the sentence, “This is how I looked at the time (p. 1).” In Chapter 4, Danny begins to relate the events of the present at the age of nine, in which he breaks the fourth wall numerous times to directly address the reader to talk about how things have turned out. For example, in Chapter 4, Danny says, “Grown-ups are complicated creatures, full of quirks and secrets... The rest of this book is about a most private and secret habit my father had, and about the strange adventures it led us both into (pp. 25-26).” In other words, Danny has a story to tell, and he is clearly explaining to readers that he is going to tell it. The reader should also note that at the very end of the novel, Roald Dahl himself breaks the fourth wall by directly addressing readers, telling them to be sparky rather than stodgy parents. Essentially, Dahl’s story is not just a story, but full of important messages that readers must take seriously.

## Language and Meaning

Roald Dahl tells his novel “Danny the Champion of the World” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least three reasons. First, Danny is a nine-year-old boy who has only an average education and a relatively rural upbringing. It is only natural that the language Dahl uses to give life to Danny be reflective of both Danny’s age, level of education, and circumstances of upbringing. Second, Dahl’s novel is primarily aimed at a target audience of children. It is only fitting that the language Dahl uses be reflective of the age and level of education of general young readers. This makes the story easy to read, easy to follow and easy to understand. Third, this simple and straightforward language allows Dahl to make his points clearly to his readers. One such point is delivered directly and clearly to readers at the very end of the novel, when Dahl implores young readers to become sparky, rather than stodgy parents (p. 206).

## Structure

Roald Dahl divides his novel “Danny the Champion of the World” into 22 consecutive, linear, and numbered and titled chapters (from 1 to 22), which are themselves interspersed with black-and-white pen-and-ink illustrations by Quentin Blake. The first three chapters of the novel deal with events leading up to Danny’s ninth birthday party; the remaining 19 deal with Danny’s experiences relating to his relationship with his father, and the night of poaching Danny undertakes with his father. Each chapter and its

title deal with a specific set of events or occurrences relating to the overall plot. For example, Chapter 18, Home, concerns the return of Danny and his father to their home after poaching, and in which they discuss how they might prepare the pheasants to eat. The illustrations themselves are reflective of events occurring in the chapters in which they appear. For example, the first illustration in Chapter 18, Home, shows Danny and his father walking home.



## Quotes

I really loved living in that gypsy caravan... Most wonderful of all was the feeling that when I went to sleep, my father would still be there, very close to me, sitting in his chair by the fire, or lying in the bunk above my own.

-- Danny (Chapter 1)

**Importance:** Here, Danny explains his simple but happy upbringing. Following the death of his mother some years before, Danny went on to be raised by his father. While Danny enjoyed living in a caravan behind his father's filling station where Danny helped out, his fondest memories are of simply spending time with his father. Danny is very appreciative of the few things he has, and most important of all is his father.

Grown-ups are complicated creatures, full of quirks and secrets... The rest of this book is about a most private and secret habit my father had, and about the strange adventures it led us both into.

-- Danny (Chapter 4)

**Importance:** Here, Danny explains directly to readers that his father, like all adults, are very human. All have flaws and secrets. His father is no exception to this rule. As Danny reveals, his father's own secret habit (the poaching of pheasants) is the foundation for the adventures contained in the rest of the book.

It'll always be Hazell's Wood," he said. "First, because that's where all the pheasants are. And second, because I don't like Mr. Hazell one little bit, and it's a pleasure to poach his birds.

-- Danny (Chapter 6)

**Importance:** As Danny learns about his father's secret habit of poaching pheasants, Danny also learns about the process and where his father carries it out. Danny's father explains he always poaches the pheasants from Mr. Hazell's woods, not only because the pheasants are there, but because Danny's father dislikes Mr. Hazell intensely.

At that moment, a frightful sense of doom came over me. Something really had happened to him this time. I felt quite certain of it.

-- Danny (Chapter 7)

**Importance:** Here, Danny awakens at two in the morning to learn that his father has not yet returned from a round of poaching at Hazell's Wood. Danny is panicked, believing something has happened. Although he tries to reassure himself nothing is wrong, he cannot shake the feeling that something is wrong. It ultimately turns out that Danny is very much correct.

I cannot possibly explain to you what it felt like to be standing alone in the pitchy blackness of that silent wood in the small hours of the night.

-- Danny (Chapter 8)





**Importance:** Danny, worried about his father's safety when his father is late in getting home from poaching, heads to Hazell's Wood to find his father. There, he enters the darkened woods in the middle of the night, which terrifies him. Danny heads on, more terrified that something bad has happened to his father.

We have a nice clean-looking raisin chock full of sleeping-pill powder and that ought to be enough to put any pheasant to sleep. Don't you think so?  
-- Danny (Chapter 11)

**Importance:** Danny's father decides that he will find a way to poach all of Mr. Hazell's pheasants to ruin the October first hunting party. Danny comes up with the plan to put sleeping pill powder into raisins, so that the pheasants will eat the raisins and fall asleep. This will make things much easier for the poaching of the pheasants.

You must be there to see it happening!  
-- Danny's father (Chapter 11)

**Importance:** After Danny comes up with the plan to put the pheasants to sleep, he asks his father if he can come along on the poach. Danny's father agrees to allow this to happen, as Danny has come up with the plan. Danny is thrilled, because he never before has been allowed out on such an outing.

That's the fun of the whole thing. That's what it's all about. It's hide and seek. It's the greatest game of hide and seek in the world.  
-- Danny's father (Chapter 14)

**Importance:** As Danny and his father set out to implement the Sleeping Beauty Method, Danny worries about being seen and chased out by the keepers. Danny's father explains they will be careful to avoid the keepers. He explains that the thrill of poaching comes from playing hide and seek with the keepers, and doing one's best to remain hidden.

They're pheasants!  
-- Danny (Chapter 16)

**Importance:** Danny and his father impatiently wait for the sleeping pills to take effect. At long last, they begin to hear thumping sounds, as the pheasants are falling asleep and falling from the trees. Danny's excitement can be seen in his declaring the thumping sound to be pheasants.

It makes you the champion of the world!"  
-- Danny's father (Chapter 16)

**Importance:** As Danny and his father collect the sleeping pheasants, Danny's father counts them. Danny's father believes they have broken a world record for pheasant



poaching. He credits Danny with the plan, and calls Danny the champion of the world. Danny is quite pleased with this.

I didn't nab them. I had a hunch.  
-- Doc Spencer (Chapter 21)

**Importance:** When Mr. Hazell swings by and demands Sergeant Samway chase the pheasants back home, the pheasants fly off in the opposite direction. The angry Mr. Hazell heads home. Doc Spence then reveals he has collected six still-sleeping pheasants from the baby carriage. Two will go to the Clipstones for their help, two to Samways for his, and two to Danny and his father for their efforts in poaching.

A MESSAGE to children who have read this book. When you grow up and have children of your own, do please remember something important. A stodgy parent is no fun at all! What a child wants – and DESERVES – is a parent who is SPARKY!  
-- Roald Dahl (Chapter 22)

**Importance:** Dahl ends his book with a message to young readers. He tells them that, when they grow up and have children, they must be warm and engaging parents, not unnecessarily strict and no fun. Dahl uses Danny's father as an example of the parent-child relationship, in which clear boundaries – such as going to school and getting a good education – are established, but also one in which there is a closeness between parent and child that speaks to trust, honesty, and love in addition to adventure and excitement.