George’s Marvellous Medicine by Roald Dahl

Age 7-9

Reasons for selection and synopsis

George's nasty old grandma needs teaching a lesson. George decides the best remedy for her grumpiness is a special home-made medicine. But Grandma gets more than she bargained for!

In George's Marvellous Medicine, published in 1981, George Kranky’s Grandma may not anticipate the results of the medicine fed to her by her grandson, but like George, Roald Dahl also had fun mixing marvellous concoctions. He called them witches potions and delivered them to his children just before bedtime. They included ingredients like tinned peaches blended with milk and either pink, blue or green food colouring. His were put together carefully, though - none of the nasty side effects George's Grandma experienced...

Before reading…

Ask the children to look at the front cover. What do you think the book will be about? What things can you see on the front cover? What sort of story will it be? Who might enjoy it?

Now read the blurb – were any of your predictions correct? What might be in the marvellous medicine?

The following questions are designed as prompts only – allow the children to come up with their own questions and ideas. They will be much more engaged this way!
| Vocabulary | What is mischief?  
|            | What does griping mean?  
|            | Find and copy a phrase on Page 7 that shows that Grandma is experiencing joy.  
|            | Define beckoning. Can you beckon someone?  
|            | What does it mean if something is marvellous?  
|            | Define ‘pondering’. |
| Infer      | How can you immediately tell that George regularly gets up to mischief?  
|            | Why doesn’t George like Grandma very much?  
|            | True or false: Grandma is demanding.  
|            | Do you think Grandma really does love eating bugs?  
|            | How does Grandma try to convince George that she is a witch? |
| Predict    | Predict what mischief George might get up to.  
|            | Predict George’s marvellous plan.  
|            | Predict what George’s new medicine will do to Grandma. |
| Explain    | Do you think it was fair that Grandma scalded George for growing? Why?  
|            | Explain how Dahl uses italics for effect. |
| Retrieve   | What time does Grandma need her medicine?  
|            | Why was George so bored?  
|            | How old is George?  
|            | What does Grandma tell George he needs to eat?  
|            | Why couldn’t George put a snake down Grandma’s back?  
|            | How long does George have to make a new medicine? |
| Summarise  | What impression do you get of Grandma? Pick one word to sum her up and explain why you chose that word.  
|            | Do the same for George. |
| **Vocabulary** | What word on Page 18 is a synonym for cure?  
Define ‘solemn’.
What does ‘the faintest idea’ mean?
What does it mean to ‘smell a rat’? |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Infer**      | Why might the medicine cupboard be dreaded?  
On Page 21, George doesn’t give reasons for some of the ingredients. Using the information on the page before, think of some of the reasons George might have for including them.  
Why does George think the medicine has to be brown?  
Why does George decide to boil the medicine? |
| **Predict**    | Predict what else George might put in the medicine, based on the chapter title ‘Animal Pills’. |
| **Explain**    | Do you think the medicine is a good idea? Why? |
| **Retrieve**   | How big is the pan George picks out?  
What is George’s methodology towards making his medicine?  
What’s the first thing that goes into Grandma’s medicine?  
How much washing powder does George put in?  
How does George treat Grandma?  
Which medicine does George remember? Why can he touch this one?  
What does George stir the medicine with? |
| **Summarise**  | Do you think George’s plan will work? Summarise why or why not in less than forty words. |
### The Cook Up & Brown Paint

| Vocabulary   | What is spluttering?  
<table>
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<th>What is the difference between steam and froth?</th>
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</table>
| Infer        | Why does Grandma assume George is up to mischief?  
|              | What does George’s song remind you of?  
|              | Why does George need the medicine to cool down?  |
| Predict      | Predict what will happen when George cooks the medicine.  
|              | Predict what will happen when George gives Grandma the medicine.  |
| Explain      | How does Dahl use poetry in this book?  |
| Retrieve     | What happens to the medicine, as it gets hotter?  
|              | What colour is the medicine? Why is this no good?  
|              | How does George turn it brown?  
|              | Why does George pour the original medicine away?  |
| Summarise    | Summarise George’s thought process in less than forty words.  |

### Grandma Gets The Medicine & The Brown Hen

| Vocabulary   | How do you sit hunched? Can you demonstrate it?  
|              | What does suspended in air mean?  
|              | Find words and phrases that show Grandma is ablaze.  
|              | What does bulge mean?  
|              | Define ‘gradual’.  
|              | Find a phrase that shows that Grandma went through the ceiling.  |
| Infer        | Why does Grandma always think George is lying?  
|              | Why would Grandma’s reaction be akin to swallowing a red-hot poker?  
|              | Why is it amazing that Grandma stands up?  
|              | Why did George think Grandma was bound to stop when she reached the ceiling?  
|              | Why do you think Grandma wanted more medicine?  
|              | Why doesn’t George want Grandma to go through the roof?  |
| Predict          | When the medicine goes in, predict what will happen to Grandma.  
|                 | When Grandma begins to bulge, predict what George will do.  
|                 | Predict what will happen when George gives the chicken some medicine.  
| Explain         | Do you think it was right for George to test the medicine on a chicken? Why?  
| Retrieve        | What is Grandma's first reaction?  
|                 | Why does Grandma want George to phone the fire brigade?  
|                 | How does George extinguish Grandma?  
|                 | What colours does Grandma go?  
|                 | How tall does Grandma get?  
|                 | What bird was sat on the roof?  
|                 | How does Grandma believe she got so tall?  
|                 | What is the first thing that happens to the chicken?  
|                 | What is the difference between the way Grandma grows and the way the hen grows?  
| Summarise       | Summarise these two chapters in less than thirty words.  
|                 | What is the first sign that Grandma is coming through the roof?  
|                 | Why does George give the chicken some medicine?
<table>
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<th><strong>The Pig, The Bullocks, The Sheep, The Pony and The Nanny-Goat &amp; A Crane For Grandma</strong></th>
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| **Vocabulary** | Find and copy a phrase that shows mother's shock.  
What does stammered mean?  
Define ‘colossal’.  
What does it mean if someone is ‘idle’? |
| **Infer** | Why does mum drop the bottle of milk?  
Given that even the smallest thing gets George’s father worked up, what do you think his reaction will be?  
Why does George’s father give all the animals the medicine?  
Why was Grandma getting annoyed? |
| **Predict** | Predict what mother’s reaction will be.  
Predict why they need a crane for Grandma. |
| **Explain** | Do you think it is ethical for George’s father to give all the animals the medicine? Outline your reasons.  
How was this chapter named? |
| **Retrieve** | What is mum carrying?  
What is the name of George’s father?  
What is George’s father most excited about?  
How big was the hen egg?  
Why do they give some medicine to Alma the nanny-goat?  
How did they get Grandma out?  
Where did Grandma have to sleep? |
| **Summarise** | Summarise Mr Kranky's thoughts in a thought bubble with less than thirty words. |
### Mr Kranky's Great Idea and Marvellous Medicine Number Two

| Vocabulary | What does frisky mean?  
| | What is mass a synonym for?  
| | Find and copy a phrase that shows that Mr Kranky went really quickly.  
| Infer | What problem might present itself when remaking the marvellous medicine?  
| | Why does Mr Kranky want more medicine?  
| Predict | Predict why George’s father had been awake all night.  
| | Predict if the new marvellous medicine will work in the same way.  
| Explain | What do you think about Mr Kranky? Why do you feel this way?  
| Retrieve | What is Mr Kranky’s great idea?  
| | Why can’t George remember everything he used?  
| | What did George forget?  
| | What was different about the effect of the medicine this time?  
| | What other things did George forget?  
| Summarise | Imagine you are the chicken. Rewrite the end of this chapter from the chicken’s perspective.  

### Marvellous Medicine Number Three and Marvellous Medicine Number Four

| Vocabulary | Find examples of onomatopoeia.  
| | What does it mean if something is vital?  
| | Why does Mr Kranky say ‘eureka’?  
| | What does it mean to do something ‘anxiously’?  
| Infer | Why do they try the medicine on an ordinary chicken?  
| | Why were they anxious?  
| | Why doesn’t mum think it will work?  
| Predict | Predict what medicines three and four will do.  
| Explain | How do the pictures contribute to these chapters?  
| Retrieve | What happens to the cockerel?  
| | How long does its neck get?  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summarise</th>
<th>Summarise these chapters by writing a short diary entry as Mr Kranky.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td><strong>Goodbye Grandma</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does ‘forlorn’ mean?</td>
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<td>What is a beanpole?</td>
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<td>What is a synonym for very loud on Page 98?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>Why do you think Mr Kranky decides to give Grandma the cup?</td>
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<td>Why does Mrs Kranky wail?</td>
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<td>Are they upset Grandma is gone?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Predict what will happen to Grandma.</td>
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<td>What might happen in a sequel to this book?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Do you think this story had a moral? What was it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retrieve</td>
<td>What does Grandma assume is in George’s hand?</td>
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<td>What happens to Grandma?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summarise</td>
<td>Summarise the whole story in less than 100 words.</td>
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