

George sat himself down at the table in the kitchen. He was shaking a little. Oh, how he hated Grandma! He really hated that horrid old witchy woman. And all of a sudden he had a tremendous urge to do something about her. Something whooping. Something absolutely terrific. A real shocker. A sort of explosion. He wanted to blow away the witchy smell that hung about her in the next room. He may have been only eight years old but he was a brave little boy. He was ready to take this old woman on.

'I'm not going to be frightened by her,' he said softly to himself. But he was frightened. And that's why he wanted suddenly to explode her away.

Well ... not quite away. But he did want to shake the old woman up a bit.

Very well, then. What should it be, this whooping terrific exploding shocker for Grandma?

He would have liked to put a firework banger under her chair but he didn't have one. He would have liked to put a long green snake down the back of her dress but he didn't have a long green snake. He would have liked to put six big black rats in the room with her and lock the door but he didn't have six black rats.

As George sat there pondering this interesting problem, his eye fell upon the bottle of Grandma's brown medicine standing on the sideboard. Rotten stuff it seemed to be. Four times a day a large spoonful of it shovelled into her mouth and it didn't do her the slightest bit of good. She was always just as horrid after she'd had it as she'd been before. The whole point of medicine, surely, was to make a person better. If it didn't do that, then it was quite useless.

So-ho! thought George suddenly. Ah-ha! Ho-hum! I know exactly what I'll do. I shall make her a new medicine, one that is so strong and so fierce and so fantastic it will either cure her completely or blow off the top of her head. I'll make her a magic medicine, a medicine no doctor in the world has ever made before.

George looked at the kitchen clock. It said five past ten. There was nearly an hour left before Grandma's next dose was due at eleven. 'Here we go, then!' cried George, jumping up from the table. 'A magic medicine it shall be!'



Comprehension and vocabulary

1. How old is George in the story?
2. Copy down the phrase that tells you how often Grandma takes her medicine.
3. Why does George think that Grandma's medicine is "useless"?
4. Do you think George gets on with his Grandma? Explain your answer fully, using at least two pieces of evidence from the text to support your view.

Techniques and effect

5. In the first paragraph, Roald Dahl uses lots of short, punchy sentences. Why do you think he has chosen to do this? What effect does it have?
6. Look at the paragraph that begins, "He would have liked to...". In this paragraph, the same repeating structure is used. Why do you think Roald Dahl has used repetition in this way? What effect does it have?

Extended writing

7. Think about a "medicine" that you could invent to "cure" a particular problem. Explain how you would make your medicine, the ingredients you would use, and how you would use it. Write creatively, using lots of imaginative description.