



Mackenzie Crook I Wish I'd Written

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I Wish I'd Written

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Mackenzie Crook marvels at Dahl

I don't actually wish that I had written **Danny the Champion of the World** of course. Then I wouldn't have had the pleasure of it being read to me when I was a boy. But I would like to come up with a story as beautifully simple and exciting.

I enjoyed Roald Dahl's books as much as the next child of the 70s, but **Danny the Champion of the World** spoke to me in ways the other books didn't.

It's about the only one of Dahl's children's books that is set in the real world.

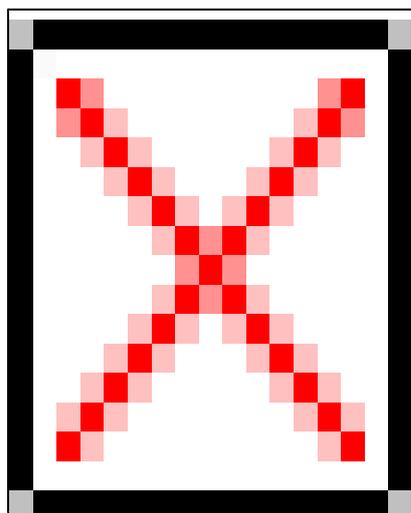
There is no magic, no talking animals. The BFG makes a brief appearance but only in the form of a bedtime story.

The characters in this book, though they retain some of Dahl's trademark grotesquery, are more subtly drawn and make me wonder if Dahl wasn't reading Dickens at the time.

The boy Danny's relationship with his Dad is really touching, so is the beautiful calmness in which they live together in an old gypsy caravan. But the comfortable home life threatens to come to an end when Danny discovers his Dad is a poacher.

I can still conjure up the feelings of terror and excitement on first hearing the passage when Danny steals a car and drives through the night on country lanes to rescue his Dad.

The fact that Danny indulges in the illegal practices of poaching and car theft and is hailed the 'Champion of the World' is extraordinary in a children's book.



Mackenzie Crook's new book **The Lost Journals of Benjamin Tooth** (978-0571295586) is published by Faber & Faber at £9.99.

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