

Roald Dahl

AUTHOR & MEDICAL INVENTOR

We know Roald Dahl designed machines in his books, dreamt up schemes for his characters and even created brand new words (quite swashboggling achievements in themselves). But few people know that Dahl also invented a marvellous medicine machine of his own: the Wade-Dahl-Till valve.

In 1960, Dahl was in New York when his baby son, Theo, was hit by a taxi. The accident caused a build-up of fluid in Theo's brain. A device called a shunt is used to drain this fluid, but the shunts used at that time often got blocked. This caused a lot of pain and risked brain damage.

Dahl spoke to his friend Stanley Wade, an engineer who flew model aeroplanes with him. Together they worked with a children's brain surgeon called Kenneth Till to come up with a better shunt that wouldn't block so easily.

And so the Wade-Dahl-Till valve came to be. They gave the device to the NHS for free and it helped thousands of children around the world.



1. What happened to Roald Dahl's son in 1960?
2. What was the name of the device that Dahl helped to invent?
3. The text says the accident "risked brain damage." What do you think "risked" means?
 - a. definitely caused
 - b. could have caused
 - c. stopped
4. Why do you think Dahl wanted to build a better shunt instead of just using the old one?
5. In your own words, explain why Roald Dahl is a STEM Hero.