

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. Who did Dahl work with to design his invention?
2. What does 'came to be' mean?
What other word/s could you use?
3. Why do you think Dahl chose Stanley Wade – a friend who flew model aeroplanes – to help design a medical device?
4. Do you think giving the Wade-Dahl-Till valve away for free was the right decision? Use evidence from the text to justify your answer.
5. In a short paragraph, explain why Roald Dahl deserves to be considered a STEM Hero.