

A Gruffalo Adventure: Puzzles, Play, and Potions!

Materials Needed

- **Book:** "The Gruffalo" by Julia Donaldson
- **Puzzle:** A large-piece Gruffalo floor puzzle or tabletop puzzle
- **Sensory Bin:**
 - A shallow bin or tray
 - Base material: Dry oats, dirt, or brown crinkle paper ("Logpile House")
 - Mix-ins: Twigs, small smooth stones ("Knobbly Knees"), green pom-poms ("Poisonous Wart"), purple-painted pasta ("Purple Prickles")
 - Small scoops, cups, and toy characters from the story (if available)
- **Craft Supplies:**
 - Paper plates (1 per child)
 - Brown, orange, green, and white non-toxic paint or crayons
 - Child-safe scissors (for adult use)
 - Glue sticks
 - Pre-cut shapes: orange circles (eyes), white triangles (tusks), small black horns, purple paper strips (prickles)
- **Music:** A speaker to play "The Gruffalo Song" (optional)

Learning Objectives (Developmental Goals)

- **Fine Motor Skills:** Students will be able to grasp puzzle pieces with a pincer or palmar grasp and attempt to place them.
- **Problem-Solving:** Students will begin to recognize and match colors, shapes, and parts of a whole image to solve the puzzle.
- **Language & Literacy:** Students will listen to the story, recognize characters, and use character names or descriptive words (e.g., "orange eyes," "big").
- **Social-Emotional Skills:** Students will practice taking turns and sharing materials (the puzzle pieces, sensory bin tools) with gentle reminders.
- **Creativity & Sensory Exploration:** Students will engage with different textures in the sensory bin and create their own interpretation of a character.

Lesson Activities & Procedure

Part 1: The Story Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Goal: To engage Oliver, Mila, and Reggie and set the context for the puzzle.

1. Gather the children in a cozy reading area. Show them the cover of "The Gruffalo." Ask, "Who do you see on the cover?"
2. Read the story with lots of expression. Use different voices for the characters.
3. As you read, point to the details on the Gruffalo when the mouse describes him. "Look at his terrible tusks!" and "See his knobbly knees?" This primes them to look for these details in the puzzle.

Part 2: The Gruffalo Puzzle Challenge (10-15 minutes)

Goal: To develop fine motor skills, spatial awareness, and collaborative problem-solving.

1. **"I Do" (Modeling):** Lay out all the puzzle pieces picture-side up. Pick one obvious piece, like the Gruffalo's orange eye. Say, "I am looking for the Gruffalo's orange eye. Here it is! I think it goes right here." Place the piece.
2. **"We Do" (Guided Practice):** Hand a piece to each child. To Mila, you might say, "Mila, you have a piece with a purple prickles! Can we find where it goes?" Guide her hand if needed. Ask Oliver, "Oliver, can you find a piece with a tusk?" Help Reggie find an edge piece and show him how it connects.
3. **"You Do" (Independent Attempt):** Encourage the children to pick their own pieces and try to fit them. Offer praise for any attempt: "Great try, Reggie! It has the right color." or "Oliver, you found where the foot goes!"
4. **Celebrate:** Once the puzzle is complete, cheer and point out all the different parts they found. "Look! Mila found the nose, Oliver found the knees, and Reggie found the toes! We built the Gruffalo!"

Part 3: Deep Dark Wood Sensory Bin (10 minutes)

Goal: To provide a tactile, imaginative play experience that reinforces the story's vocabulary.

1. Introduce the "Deep Dark Wood" sensory bin. Let the children run their hands through the oat base.
2. Point to the different materials and connect them to the story. "Look, we found purple prickles!" (pasta) and "Feel these knobbly knees!" (stones).
3. Provide scoops and cups and allow for free play. Oliver might enjoy scooping and pouring, while Mila might focus on collecting all the "poisonous warts" (pom-poms). Let Reggie hide a toy mouse under the oats. This is a time for child-led exploration.

Part 4: Create a Creature Mask (10 minutes)

Goal: To foster creativity and practice fine motor skills through art.

1. Give each child a paper plate. Say, "We read about the Gruffalo, now let's make our own creature!"
2. Offer brown paint or crayons for the face. Let them freely apply the color.
3. Set out the pre-cut shapes (eyes, horns, tusks, prickles) in small bowls. Encourage them to glue the pieces onto their plate. There is no right or wrong way. If Reggie wants to give his creature five eyes and no tusks, that's fantastic!
4. While they work, ask questions like, "Mila, what color are your creature's eyes?" or "Oliver, does your creature have purple prickles all over his back?"

Part 5: Gruffalo Goodbye Dance (3-5 minutes)

Goal: A fun, physical way to transition and end the lesson.

1. Put on "The Gruffalo Song" (if available) or simply sing it.
2. Encourage the children to stomp around like the Gruffalo, show their "terrible claws," and "terrible tusks."
3. End the song with a big "ROAR!" and then a quiet calm-down moment, praising them for their wonderful work.

Assessment (Observational)

During the activities, informally observe and note progress:

- **Puzzle Time:** Did the child attempt to place a piece? Did they look for matching colors or shapes? Could they orient a piece correctly with help?
- **Language:** Did they point to a character when named? Did they use any words from the story (e.g., "mouse," "Gruffalo," "eye")?
- **Participation:** Did they engage with at least two of the activities? Did they share space and materials with their peers?

Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **For Extra Support:**
 - Use a simpler puzzle with fewer, larger pieces (a 6-9 piece puzzle).
 - Provide hand-over-hand assistance to guide a puzzle piece into place.
 - Focus on just one or two descriptive words, like "brown" or "big."
 - In the craft, focus on the sensory experience of painting or gluing, rather than the final product.
- **For an Extra Challenge:**
 - Ask the child to find puzzle pieces based on a description ("Can you find the piece with the black tongue?").
 - Encourage them to retell a part of the story using the completed puzzle as a guide.
 - Ask them to sort the items in the sensory bin by color or texture.
- **Inclusivity:**
 - Ensure each child's name (Oliver, Mila, Reggie) is used frequently and positively.
 - Provide enough materials so that sharing is manageable and doesn't lead to frustration.
 - Celebrate every child's unique craft creation, emphasizing creative expression over accuracy.