

On Stage at the Center

Teacher's Guide

The Gruffalo's Child



About the performance

One wild and windy night the Gruffalo's Child ignores her father's warnings about the Big Bad Mouse and tiptoes out into the night. She follows snowy tracks and encounters all sorts of woodland creatures, including a debonair snake, an eccentric owl, and a cunning fox. But the Big Bad Mouse doesn't really exist, does he? And what will the Gruffalo's Child do when she finds him? Follow the Gruffalo's Child on her adventurous mission in Tall Stories' enchanting adaptation of the much-loved picture book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler. This production features Tall Stories' distinctive style of physical storytelling combined with humor and catchy original music to create a lively performance.

About the artist

Tall Stories is a registered charity which tours the UK and the world with its exciting blend of storytelling theater, catchy music, and lots of laughs. Founded in 1997 by Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell, Tall Stories shows have played in the West End, on Broadway, and at the Sydney Opera House, as well as all sorts of venues and countries in between. Tall Stories creates opportunities for everyone to get involved with theater. The company offers accessible relaxed performances and provides free shows and experiences, helping to remove barriers that might otherwise prevent families from getting involved. From its studio base in Islington, London, Tall Stories nurtures new creatives and performers, whilst also delivering community events and projects. Tall Stories' previous performances at Segerstrom Center include [Room on the Broom](#), [Emily Brown and the Thing](#), and [The Gruffalo](#).

About the main characters

Gruffalo's Child is a young and curious creature who wants adventure. She has a brave spirit and a playful personality that shines as she meets all the other creatures in the Deep Dark Wood. The Gruffalo's Child is independent but still needs her Stickman friend to help her along the way. Her fuzzy fur, big paws, and purple spikes, portray how she's a loveable creature with a big appetite.

Mouse is smart and creative, always finding ways to trick the Gruffalo and his Child. In the play, Mouse has a white belly and round ears after transforming from being the narrator, with a beanie and brown clothes, showing us how we are the ones that can control our own story.

Gruffalo is the father of our title character who does his best to protect his child. He is big and furry like the Gruffalo's Child and likes to tell stories to his daughter before bed. In the show, the same actor portrays Snake, Owl, and Fox, reminding us that even creatures big and small get scared sometimes.

Theater etiquette

Please share these tips on how to be a respectful audience member.

1. Be an engaged and polite listener. The show requires your full attention!
2. Refrain from talking to your neighbor. Students enjoy the performance more if they can hear and pay attention uninterrupted.
3. Applaud if you like something. Normally, the audience applauds at the end of an act or scene. However, great audiences applaud when they are impressed with a scene or laugh when something is funny.
4. Entering and exiting the performance space in an organized and calm manner is important for your safety and the safety of the performing artists.



Before the performance

1. In the *Gruffalo's Child*, the Gruffalo warns his Child about the Big Bad Mouse, but the Gruffalo's Child says she is not afraid and goes out into the Deep Dark Wood to find him. What is something that you used to be scared of and what did you do with that feeling? How did you feel when you were scared and how do you feel now that you aren't scared anymore? K.TH.Re7.1, RL.2.3
2. The Gruffalo's Child brings her stick toy with her on her journey as her companion and to help her be brave. Do you have someone or something that makes you feel brave? Why do you think it helps you? Draw a picture of what helps you be brave and write one sentence on how it helps you be courageous. 3.TH.Re8.1
3. In this show, there are many different kinds of creatures. As the Gruffalo's Child journeys through the Deep Dark Wood, she meets many of them in their different homes. Think of your favorite animal, do you know where they live? Is it a tree, a lake, or a hole? Write a story convincing us about your favorite animal and why their home is the best. RL.4.3, W.4.3

After the performance

1. Throughout the show, we see that the actors all play multiple roles throughout the performance. We can tell they changed characters because they will adjust what they are wearing to have a different costume. A costume is what an actor wears to help the audience know who they are and what story they are telling. How do we know that the Gruffalo and Snake are different characters by how they look? What costume pieces did the characters wear that told you what the weather was like or the time of day? Did the costume make the character move in a certain way? Can you show the class how your favorite character moved? 2.VA.Re7.1, SL.3.4
2. The Mouse is the narrator in the show and helps the Gruffalo's Child go through the entire story. What about the show would've been different if maybe the Fox was the narrator, or Snake, or Owl? What makes a good narrator? Can you be like the narrator and write down the order of events that happened in the show? What happened in the beginning, middle, and end? RL.5.6, 4.TH.Re7.1
3. Each of the characters in the show have a different song they sing. What kind of song did the Gruffalo sing? The Gruffalo's Child? Snake? Owl? Fox? Mouse? What do we learn about each character through their song? How did their songs make you feel? RL.3.7, 5.MU.Cr3.1, 2.MU.Pr4.3, 5.MU.Re7.2
4. The Gruffalo and all of the creatures of the show live in the Deep Dark Wood. The stage is designed to look like a forest, with things like big trees, leaves, and maybe even fog to make it feel real! This is called the set, which is everything on the stage that helps tell the story. Now, think about where you live. If your home was on a stage, what would the set look like? Would you have a bunk bed? Would there be toys? Who else would live there with you? What could you put on stage to make it feel just like home? Choose 3 things that you would use to help an audience understand your home and draw a stage version of your home to share with the class. 4.VA.Cr3.1, 3.3.1

Follow up activities

Acting Out Creatures

In *The Gruffalo*, each animal has a special voice and way of moving that helps the audience understand who they are. Pick two students (Student A and Student B) to stand in front of the class. Then, pick two more students to gently move their arms, legs, and faces into fun new positions—maybe they bend forward, stand up tall, or lean way back. Now, Student A and Student B will create voices to match their new positions! Does their character have a squeaky voice or a deep one? Do they talk fast or slow? Maybe they even have a funny accent! Try different voices and see what happens. Does a big character always need a big voice? What if a tiny character has a booming voice? The rest of the class can vote on which voice fits best! Have each pair will create two characters using fun names—just like the animals in *The Gruffalo*! Think about more than just faces—how does your character stand, walk, or move? Are they heavy or light? Do they have straight or bent legs? After practicing, everyone can introduce their new characters to the class. Let's see what you create! TH:Cr1.1.K-3; SL.3.4

New Toys for the Gruffalo's Child

"Stickman" is the Gruffalo's Child trusty stick toy that she carries with her on her journey into the Deep Dark Wood. Ask the students if they have a favorite toy that they carry around with them. What is their toy's name? Who gave it to them? Ask students to create a new toy for the Gruffalo's Child using a variety of sticks and art supplies, make sure to give the toy a name! LA-LITERACY.SL.K-3.4; VA:Cr1.2.K-3

Rhyme and Pantomime

In the show, rhyming and pantomime are used to paint the picture of the story of *The Gruffalo's Child* and the creatures of the Deep Dark Wood. Pantomime is acting without words, using only your face, body, and movements to tell a story! Split your students into groups of 4-5. In their groups, have them write 3-4 lines of a story that rhymes. Once they are finished, they will present their story to the class. Have each group pick a Narrator, who will read their rhyming story, and the rest of the group will pantomime (act without sound) as the story is read aloud. For a further challenge, have the groups swap stories and see how different groups will interpret the words of the story. ELA-LITERACY.RF.K-3.2.A; TH:Cr3.1.1-3

We'd love to hear from you! Have your class draw a picture of their favorite part of their visit or write us a letter about their experience. You can email it to bus-ins@scfta.org or share it on social media and tag us @segerstromarts. We can't wait to see what you create!