

# The Gruffalo

Are you looking for a different way to teach descriptions to your German classes?

Here is a novel approach one teacher took. By using the German translation of "The Gruffalo", S2 German learners were exposed to different and unusual vocabulary in an engaging and interesting way.

Read on to discover how he did it...



With grateful thanks to Gordon McCreath of Greenwood Academy for agreeing to share this with us

# Der Grüffelo

## Literacy in Modern Languages

### The Lessons

I wanted to take a different approach to teaching descriptions which moved away from the usual activities which involve describing a family member or a person you admire. When I read “The Gruffalo” to my son his reaction was very positive, so it occurred to me that here was an opportunity to do something different with the S2 German class and also build in some literacy work at the same time.

### Aims

The lessons based on “The Gruffalo” involve familiarisation of the story; working on related grammar and language tasks; and producing materials in a choice of formats, including ICT, using some new and unusual vocabulary.

Having completed some work on descriptions, I started to read the first page of “Der Grüffelo” in German and invited the class to guess what story I was reading. In most classes someone always guessed the story before I came to the giveaway word **der Grüffelo** on the last line.

A large number of the class already knew the book and responded very positively. For those pupils who were not familiar with the story, I read the original English version. As it is a poem some things had to be changed to make it rhyme in German. “The Gruffalo” was written by Julia Donaldson, who lives near Glasgow, and illustrated by Axel Scheffler, who was born in Hamburg in North Germany.

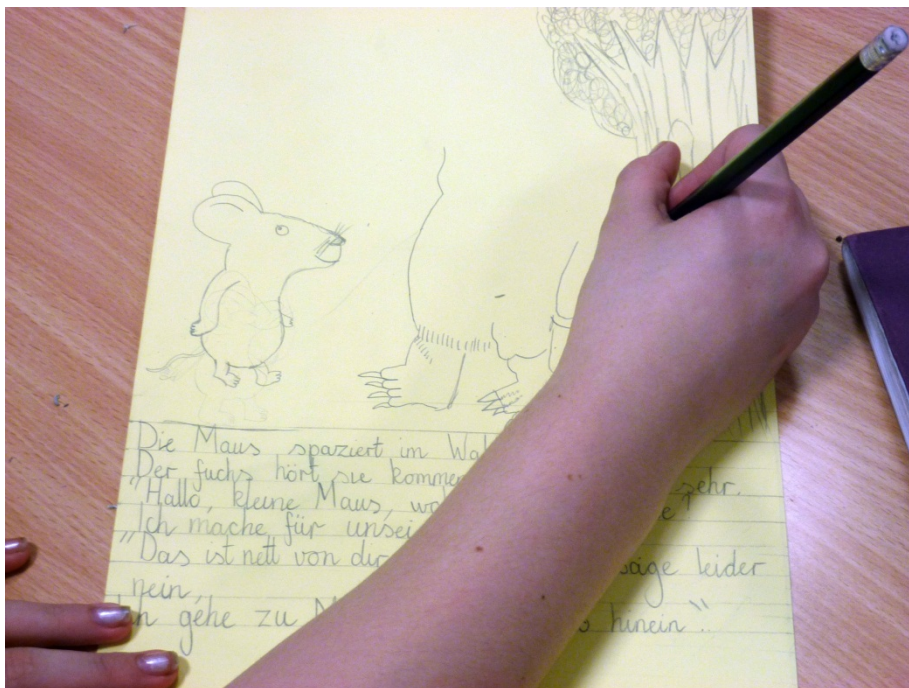
I then explained that we were going to do some grammar and some language exercises based on the story and then see if we could produce a translation of the Gruffalo’s description in German.

### The Grammar

From their first day in German the classes have been using verbs in sentences, mainly in the 1<sup>st</sup> person (e.g. *ich heiße, ich wohne, ich lerne, ich habe, ich esse, ich trage* etc).

It was now time to look at the importance of verbs, how they look in dictionaries and how to make them fit into sentences in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person.

Drawing on the pupils' knowledge of the 1<sup>st</sup> person in the Present Tense and also the less familiar 2<sup>nd</sup> person, which they had encountered in question forms, we discussed what verbs were and then copied a short note (with tasks to complete) from the interactive whiteboard. This was in three main parts; verb infinitives, how to find the stem of a regular verb and the verb endings in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person.



The classes were then given a text which was based on the first page of “Der Gruffelo” but re-written in the Present Tense (the book was written in the Imperfect Tense). In the text, every verb was presented to the class in its infinitive form (i.e. how it would look in a dictionary) and the pupils' task was to re-write the text making the verbs fit the sentences by first finding the stem, then adding on the appropriate ending.

### **The Description**

The description of the gruffalo appears in instalments spread over several scenes in the book. The parts of the description were gathered together into a paragraph which was presented to the classes as a flipchart on the interactive whiteboard. (This was later given out on paper for easy reference).

A second page of the flipchart supplied all that was required to translate the paragraph into German. Some of the phrases in German were not exact translations from the English because of the need to retain the rhyme structure, but this was pointed out and explained.



Using the heading “Ein Gruffelo? Was ist ein Gruffelo?” the classes were invited to use the material on the second screen on the interactive whiteboard to write their own version of the paragraph in German.

Care had to be taken with the capital letters at each German noun, especially as many of them were unfamiliar to the classes, but apart from needing to repeat this several times, it was completed effectively.

### **Making use of known sentence structure**

In the earlier part of the course we had looked at food vocabulary and the classes had learned how to say what they liked, and didn't like, to eat.

e.g.

Ich esse gern Schokolade.

Ich esse nicht gern Tomaten.



We now related this structure to the story by identifying the various things that first the mouse said was the gruffalo's favourite food, then its own favourite food. This was treated as a straightforward sentence pattern exercise albeit with rather unusual vocabulary.

e.g.

Ich esse gern eine Maus auf Brot. (a mouse on bread)  
Ich esse gern Euleneis. (owl ice cream)

We also used this as a vocabulary identification task, by matching the sentences to the picture of the appropriate animal.

### The booklet task

Once the classes had completed the language tasks, they were given the task of reproducing the work in the form of a booklet, with each exercise being a page on its own. The sentences and paragraphs had to be re-written attractively, word processed or reproduced as comic strips (either hand-drawn or using the Comic Life software which is installed on some of the computers). The pupils were encouraged to use whatever format they preferred or a mixture of formats.




To encourage active use of the ICT equipment the class was also given the web address of the official German website [www.grueffelo.de](http://www.grueffelo.de) and required to find the download section, from which they would be able to print out an illustrated wordsearch with the German vocabulary for the various parts of the gruffalo they had already used in their description. This wordsearch was to be found, printed, completed and included in the booklet.

Many of the pupils were also happy to investigate the contents of the [www.grueffelo.de](http://www.grueffelo.de) website and try some of the other tasks.

Screenshots from the interactive whiteboard (1)  
Description of the “imaginary” creature

Promethean Activstudio Grueffelo, Flipchart 3, Page 1

## Ein Gruffelo? Was ist ein Gruffelo?



"He has terrible tusks and terrible claws and terrible teeth in his terrible jaws.  
He has knobby knees and turned-out toes and a poisonous wart at the end of his nose.  
His eyes are orange, his tongue is black.  
He has purple prickles all over his back."

P.T.O.

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Promethean Activstudio Grueffelo, Flipchart 1, Page 2

er hat	- he has	schreckliche	- terrible
ist	- is	Hauer	- tusks
sind	- are	Klauen	- claws
und	- and	Zähne	- teeth
seine	- his	Augen	- eyes
schwarz-	black	Zunge	- tongue
orange	- orange	Stacheln	- prickles
lila	- purple		



knotige Knie - nobbly knees  
eine grässliche Tatze - turned out toes  
eine giftige Warze - a poisonous wart  
am Ende der Nase - at the end of his nose  
am Rücken - all over his back  
..., um Tiere zu kauen - (in his terrible jaws)

## Screenshots from the interactive whiteboard (2)

Promethean Activstudio Grüffelo&Gern(A), Flipchart 3, Page 1

# Der Grüffelo hat Hunger...

Ich esse gern ...



Fuchsspieß  
Euleneis  
eine Maus auf Brot  
Schlangenpuree







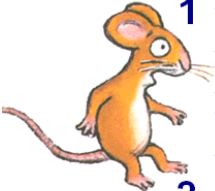
Grüffelogrütze.  
eine Nuss



... die Maus auch!

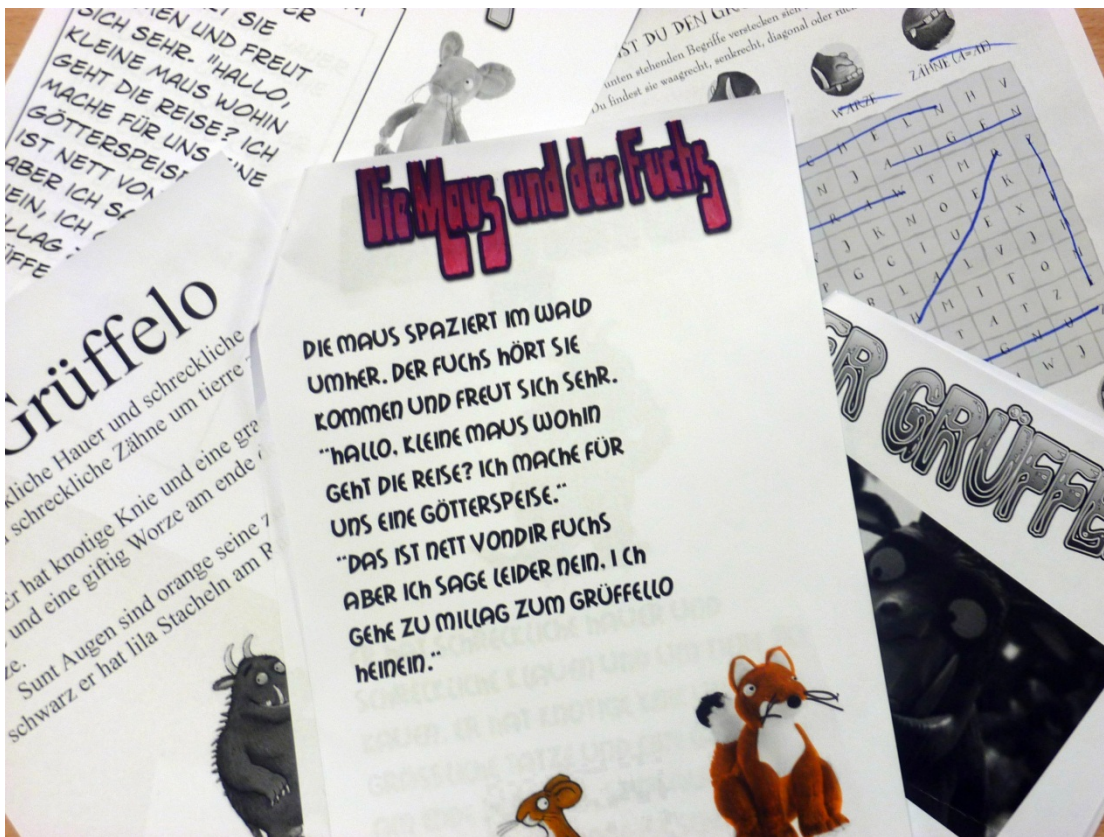
### Task: Make up a Grüffelo booklet

- 1 Make a page (could be in the form of a comic strip) of "Die Maus und der Fuchs"
- 2 Make a page of your "Grüffelo" description
- 3 Make a page of your "Ich esse gern..." from the Grüffelo story.
- 4 Go to [www.grueffelo.de](http://www.grueffelo.de). From the Downloads section (at the bottom of the page) print out a copy of the wordsearch, complete it, and add it into your booklet.





Pupils' Work (1)



Pupils' Work (2)

