



## The Gruffalo

By Julia Donaldson

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A mouse is taking a stroll through the deep, dark wood when along comes a hungry fox, then an owl, and then a snake. The mouse is good enough to eat but smart enough to know this, so he invents . . . the gruffalo! As Mouse explains, the gruffalo is a creature with terrible claws, and terrible tusks in its terrible jaws, and knobbly knees and turned-out toes, and a poisonous wart at the end of its nose. But Mouse has no worry to show. After all, there's no such thing as a gruffalo. . . .

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## The Gruffalo By Julia Donaldson Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

The eponymous character introduced by this British team owes a large debt to Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. When Mouse meets Fox in the "deep dark wood," he invents a story about the gruffalo, described very much like Sendak's fearsome quartet of wild things—"He has terrible tusks, and terrible claws, and terrible teeth in his terrible jaws." The gullible fox runs away when Mouse tells him that the gruffalo's favorite food is roasted fox. "Silly old Fox!" says Mouse, "Doesn't he know?/ There's no such thing as a gruffalo!" Owl and Snake follow suit until, with a turn of the page, Mouse runs into the creature he has imagined. Quick-thinking Mouse then tells the monster, "I'm the scariest creature in this deep dark wood./ Just walk behind me and soon you'll see,/ Everyone for miles is afraid of me." Fox, Owl and Snake appear to be terrified of the tiny mouse, but readers can plainly see the real object of their fears. By story's end, the gruffalo flees, and Mouse enjoys his nut lunch in peace. Despite the derivative plot line, debut author Donaldson manipulates the repetitive language and rhymes to good advantage, supplying her story with plenty of scary-but-not-too-scary moments. Scheffler's gruffalo may seem a goofy hybrid of Max's wild things, but his cartoonlike illustrations build suspense via spot-art previews of the monster's orange eyes, black tongue and purple prickles until the monster's appearance in full. Ages 4-8.

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#### From School Library Journal

PreSchool-Grade 3-To save himself from being eaten by a fox, an owl, and a snake, an enterprising mouse declares that he is having lunch with a monster whose favorite food just happens to be the animal who is at that moment threatening him. With each telling, the gruffalo becomes more menacing until all of the rodent's tormentors leave him unharmed. The mouse scoffs at them, for everyone knows "There's no such thing as a gruffal...." But a turn of the page reveals—you guessed it—a gruffalo, that thinks the mouse will "...taste good on a slice of bread." Undaunted, the rodent devises a plan to frighten the monster off. Young readers will love the humor in this preposterous story of a trick that backfires and the way the protagonist talks himself out of his difficulties. Best of all, they will relish being in on the joke as they join in the reading of the delightfully repetitious rhyming text. Scheffler's cartoonlike illustrations, rendered in watercolor, colored pencils, and ink, are large and well paced. Facial expressions contrast the animals' alarm with the jaunty nonchalance of the mouse. The double-page spread that reveals the gruffalo—terrible claws, black tongue, poisonous wart, purple prickles, and all—is just scary enough to tickle but not frighten youngsters. Serve this one for a rollicking good time.

*Marianne Saccardi, Norwalk Community-Technical College, CT*

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#### From Kirkus Reviews

The action of this rhymed and humorous tale centers upon a mouse who "took a stroll/through the deep dark wood./A fox saw the mouse/and the mouse looked good." The mouse escapes being eaten by telling the fox that he is on his way to meet his friend the gruffalo (a monster of his imagination), whose favorite food is roasted fox. The fox beats a hasty retreat. Similar escapes are in store for an owl and a snake; both hightail it when they learn the particulars: tusks, claws, terrible jaws, eyes orange, tongue black, purple prickles on its back. When the gruffalo suddenly materializes out of the mouse's head and into the forest, the mouse has to think quick, declaring himself inedible as the "scariest creature in the deep dark wood," and inviting the gruffalo to follow him to witness the effect he has on the other creatures. When the gruffalo hears that the mouse's favorite food is gruffalo crumble, he runs away. It's a fairly innocuous tale, with twists that aren't sharp enough and treachery that has no punch. Scheffler's funny scenes prevent the suspense from

culminating; all his creatures, predator and prey, are downright lovable. (Picture book. 4-8) -- *Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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