

Education Resource Pack

A Squash and a Squeeze

Little Angel Theatre's Production

This old lady lives in a small, crammed house. She struggles to find space to relax, and wishes she were in a different situation. But, when a mysterious old mad offers to help her out, she reluctantly learns that what she had wasn't so bad after all.

Join our production of *A Squash and a Squeeze*, as we play through puppetry and learn through song. Will the old lady get the big house of her dreams? Let's find out together!



Adapted by Barb Jungr and Samantha Lane
Directed by Samantha Lane
Music & Lyrics composed by Barb Jungr
Set & costumes designed by Kate Bunce
Puppets designed by Maia Kirkman-Richards
Lighting Designed by Sherry Coenen

The play is based on the original book *A Squash and A Squeeze* -
Written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler. Text ©
Julia Donaldson 1993 Illustrations © Axel Scheffler
1993 Published by Macmillan Children's Books © 1993

Little Angel Theatre



John Wright, the founder of Little Angel Theatre, was born in South Africa in 1906. He travelled to England in 1935 and worked as an assistant stage manager for the Ballet Rambert while studying at the Central School of Art and Design. During this time he saw a puppet performance by Podrecca's Piccoli and became hooked. John made his very first puppet in 1938.

In 1961 John and his troupe found a derelict temperance hall in Islington and transformed it into a theatre, designed for the presentation of marionette shows. It opened on Saturday 24th November 1961. This was to be the first purpose built puppet theatre the country had seen for many years and the only one with a permanent long string marionette bridge constructed backstage. The bridge was designed for puppeteers to stand on while they manipulate long stringed puppets who perform on the stage below leaving the audience unable to see the puppeteers. The original bridge is used to this day. The theatre has a traditional 'proscenium arch' and seats 100 audience members.

John Wright died in 1991 but the work of the theatre continued apace with family, friends and supporters working tirelessly to continue in his footsteps to make sure John's legacy would delight generations to come.

“Over the next 30 years, the Little Angel team created and performed over 30 full-scale shows”

Julia Donaldson

Author Study

Julia Donaldson is one of the most popular children's authors writing today and has won many awards for her much loved books including ***The Gruffalo***, ***Room on the Broom*** and ***The Snail and the Whale***. Her books have been made into films and plays, including Little Angel Theatre's productions of ***The Singing Mermaid*** and ***The Smartest Giant in Town***.



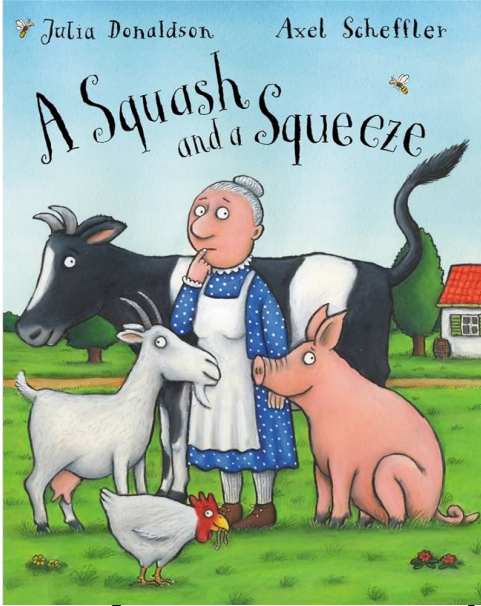
- Julia was born in London in 1948 and grew up in Hampstead.
- Julia loved poetry as a child and this went on to feature in most of her books later in life which often include rhymes.
- Julia studied Drama and French at Bristol University. During her time there she acted in shows and learnt the guitar.
- She met her husband, Malcolm at University and they wrote and performed songs together.
- Julia sent a tape of some of her songs to the BBC and between 1974 and 1978 she wrote regularly for the children's programme *Play Away*, her songs being performed by actors and musicians on the programme. She also wrote occasional songs for other TV shows including *Play School*.
- In 1983 her family moved to Bristol. Julia became a volunteer in her sons primary school, hearing the children read aloud. She devised short plays with groups of children which would then be performed to the class. She noticed that this seemed to build confidence in reading aloud as well as being enjoyable.
- In 1991 Donaldson was contacted by Methuen Publishing to ask if the words of her song "A Squash and a Squeeze" could be made into a picture book for children. The book was published in 1993, with illustrations by a German artist Axel Scheffler, who was living in London.
- In 1995 Julia came across a version of a Chinese story about a little girl who escapes being eaten by a tiger by claiming to be the fearsome Queen of the Jungle and inviting him to walk behind her. She then hit upon the idea of the tiger becoming a monster whose name would end in O (to rhyme with "doesn't he know"). "Gr" sounded suitably fierce as the start to the monster's name, and filling in the middle with "uffal" the name Gruffalo was born. Julia sent *The Gruffalo* to Axel Scheffler and asked him to create some illustrations. It was first published in 1999.
- Since then Julia has published many more books, won awards, been Children's Laureate (2011), and has created performances and plays of some of her books to encourage children to act out stories and improve their reading.



Curriculum Links

Art and design
Opportunities for pupils to design and make inspired by the show (suggestions in this pack)

Spoken language
Opportunities for pupils to use spoken language using techniques such as explaining and convincing language to show and tell



Encouraging composition
Practice writing in different styles

Encouraging complex thinking

Exploring word play and rhyme schemes



Literacy Ideas

Predictive Drawing Activity

Objective: Build prediction and imagination skills

Materials: Paper, colourful writing utensils

Activity: Ask the children to predict what might happen if the old lady invited *even more* animals in her house. What other animals could fit in the house? Have them draw their own “squash and squeeze” scenario. This encourages creative thinking and literacy through prediction and visual storytelling.



Rhyming Activity

Objective: promote phonemic awareness and rhyming skills

Materials: A list of rhyming words/picture cards

Activity: Julia Donaldson’s books often include rhyme and rhythm, and *A Squash and a Squeeze* is no exception. Have the children identify the rhyming words from the story (e.g., “mouse/house”, “squeeze/please”). Afterward, challenge them to come up with their own rhyming words for new animals or objects. You can make this into a matching activity with picture cards or a rhyming word game.

Sequencing Activity

Objective: Improve understanding of story structure and sequence of events

Materials: Pictures from story (to be photocopied from the book or visual story of the show by teachers) depicting key moments from the story.

Activity: Give the children picture cards from the play/book and ask them to arrange them in the correct order. For older students, you could ask them to write one sentence to describe what happens in each picture, thus improving both their sequencing and writing skills



Below are some suggestions of ways to get students to form social and emotional connections to the lessons from the book!

PSHE suggestions:

1. **Empathy Development:** Discuss how the old lady feels overwhelmed by the animals coming into her house. Ask children about times they've felt overwhelmed and how they can help one another when feeling crowded or stressed.
2. **Problem Solving:** Discuss the resolution at the end of the story (when the old lady asks for the animals to leave and then feels relieved). Teachers can guide students through problem-solving techniques: when to ask for help, when to take a break, and how to approach a situation that feels too crowded.
3. **Self Regulation:** Encourage students to share strategies they use when they feel like they need personal space or need to manage their emotions when they're feeling "squashed"



Teaching Tips

1. **Interactive Reading:** We encourage teachers to read the book aloud with students, using different voices for the various animals. This helps bring the story to life and keeps children engaged.
2. **Question Prompts:** Include a list of open-ended discussion questions that can be asked before, during, or after reading. For example: "How do you think the old lady feels when the animals keep coming in?", "What do you think could happen if even more animals joined the house?", "Why do you think the animals each had their own personality?"
3. **Story Mapping:** Teachers can work with the class to create a story map that tracks the sequence of events, from the old lady's house being spacious to the chaos that unfolds.
4. **Vocal Engagement:** Engage students by asking them to predict what will happen next at different points in the story.

Encouraging Reading Through Play

Here are some ideas for exploring books in a more playful and interactive way. These are focused on *A Squash and a Squeeze* but all of these can be adapted to any book you are reading.

Act it out storytelling

Read out a section of *A Squash and a Squeeze*, have the children play the roles of the characters in the book and have them act out the story as its being read.

In smaller groups allocate sections of the story and act out themselves in front of the class. They could portray what's in the book but also improvise and add to it to extend the action and explore the characters more deeply.

This could also be done with masks (more in this pack on mask making).

Embody feelings through action

Look at characters from the book such as the old lady or one of the animals, have the students make actions and facial expressions only (no words) to show how those characters feel at different points in the story. When a student is doing an action as a class try to guess the feelings they are conveying. Then the student can reveal if the class was correct or not.

One word at a time story game

Re-tell or make up your own stories, using one word at a time.

For example:

Child 1: Once

Child 2: There

Child 3: Was

Child 4: A

Child 5: Sandstorm!!!

And so on until the story is complete

You can set challenges, such as only allowing 20 words in the story, making them say words in alphabet order etc.



Drawing a story

In pairs each child draws their own picture (inspired by a book they've read), they then swap drawings.

Each child must tell a short story inspired by the other persons drawing. It's not a guessing game, it doesn't matter if the story told doesn't match the inspiration story. This is about using stimulus to encourage storytelling and create new stories.

Here are some fun craft ideas for your classroom! Variations can be made to better reflect various age groups, and crafting abilities. We encourage further discussion of the story as children work on these projects to further deepen their understanding and connection of the content.

ACTIVITY 1: “A Squash and a Squeeze” Animal Collage

Materials:

- * Old magazines or printed pictures of animals
- * Glue sticks
- * Large sheets of paper
- * Markers or crayons

Instructions:

After watching the puppet show, provide the children with magazines or printed images of the animals featured in the book (goat, pig, chicken, dog, and cow). Have them cut out the animals and create a collage of the animals all squeezed into the house. Encourage them to draw the house around the animals to help visualize the crowded scene.

Learning Outcome:

This craft encourages sorting and cutting skills, and it also helps children understand the themes of space and the consequences of having too many people (or animals) in a small area.



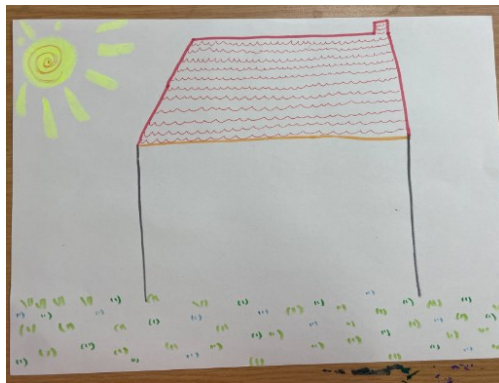
Puppet Collage



Gather all of your supplies



Cut out all of the animals



Draw your house on a piece of paper



Play around with the placement of the animals on the page, and glue down as necessary

Here are some fun craft ideas for your classroom! Variations can be made to better reflect various age groups, and crafting abilities. We encourage further discussion of the story as children work on these projects to further deepen their understanding and connection of the content.

ACTIVITY 2: Animal Mask Making

Materials:

- * Paper plates
- * Scissors
- * Coloured pens
- * Crayons
- * Glue
- * Elastic/string
- * Fabric
- * Feathers
- * string



Instructions:

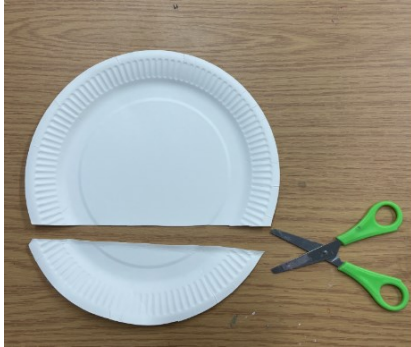
Have children create animal masks representing characters from the book (cow, pig, hen, goat). These masks can be used in a performance to tell the story of *A Squash and a Squeeze*. Attach a piece of elastic or string to allow them to wear the mask or hold it on a stick. After the children create their masks, they can use them for a theatre performance where they act out the story, making the animals “speak” their lines.



Mask Making



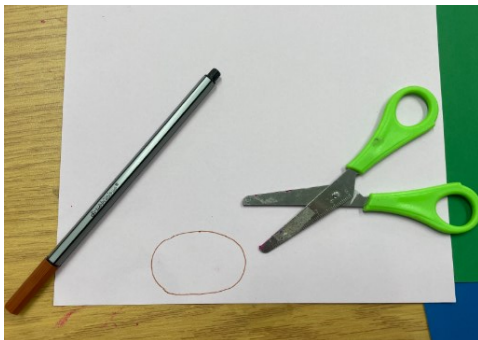
1. Gather your supplies



2. Cut the paper plate 3/4 of the way down



3. Cut out ears and eye holes, and glue ears on. Then, colour the plate.



4. Draw and cut out a nose, then glue it to the paper



5. Glue on the stick/string, and done!

Links and Resources

Little Angel Website:
<https://littleangeltheatre.com>

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/charlie-cooks-favourite-book-literacy-learning-sequence/>

National Literacy Trust—Classroom resources created with Little Angel Theatre inspired by Charlie Cook's Favourite book by Julia Donaldson

<http://www.juliadonaldson.co.uk/>

Julia Donaldson's official website

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqC-3uywep4>

Interview with Julia Donaldson

<https://www.panmacmillan.com/authors/julia-donaldson>

Information about Julia Donaldson and ideas for activities linked to some of her books.

[**Play-Based Activities That Build Preschool Students' Reading Readiness | Edutopia**](#)

Ideas for exploring books and reading through play.

[Join our National Schools Partnership Programme](#)

To broaden the reach of our schools engagement around and outside of London we are excited to introduce our **National Schools Partnership Programme**. This is an opportunity for all schools, no matter where they are located, to engage in and enjoy our performances and educational material.

Visit our Website to find out more;

<https://www.littleangeltheatre.com/for-schools/schools-partnership-programme/>



Education resource pack written by Isabel Skerlec, for Little Angel Theatre .
Production Photographs by Ellie Kurtz.