Unit 5 Lesson 3: To Catch a Leprechaun

Focus Areas: Pest Control - Mechanical; Science, Language Arts
Focus Skills: critical and creative thinking, problem solving, cooperative interacting, listening to learn information, oral speaking

Objective

To investigate the criteria for a successful trap

Essential Question

What is needed to make a good (leprechaun) trap?

Essential Understanding

Before you build a trap, you have to learn about the creature you are trapping! A successful trap:

- must be the right size
- must use the right bait
- must provide no way to escape
- must be placed in the right location
- may need to hold, but not harm the creature

Background

Traps are mechanical pest control devices. Whether capturing mice or leprechauns, the criterion for a successful trap is the same. The trap must be large enough to attract the prey, hold it captive, and finally prevent escape. The correct location is also important.

The principals and purpose of traps can be discussed within the context of “Let’s pretend.” Designing a trap for a fanciful creature will delight the children while providing opportunities for both critical and creative thinking. While it is an obvious choice as a project for March, this lesson may be done at any time. Leprechauns are always nearby, if you believe!
Unit 5 Lesson 3: To Catch a Leprechaun

Vocabulary

bait a color, smell, or thing that will attract the desired prey

leprechaun according to the Irish, a magical wee person who likes to play tricks on people, but if captured will either grant three wishes or give you his gold!

mechanical control a device (thing) and/or physical action used to control someone or something

prey the creature being hunted

trap a mechanical device (thing) used to capture prey

Logistics

Time: two 30 minutes sessions
Group Size: 5 to 30
Space: an area for comfortable seating and a work area for teams of two or three

Materials

Izzy puppet *
book Tim O’Toole and the Wee Folk *
drawing materials
chart paper or comparable surface for large print display
gold glitter

* single copy provided

Preparation

Read Tim O’Toole and the Wee Folk.
Read Background.
Gather art supplies.
Activity

Introduction (Day 1)

1. Using Izzy, introduce the term leprechaun with the following riddle:
   
   Dressed in green and just my size  
   If you catch him, you win the prize  
   Don’t look away, or he’ll be gone  
   It’s hard to capture a __________!  (leprechaun)

2. Read *Tim O’Toole and the Wee Folk.*

3. Discuss why someone might want to capture a leprechaun. (gold, three wishes)

4. Speculate on how one would go about catching a leprechaun.
   a. Would we spray him with chemicals? (No, chemicals could make him sick.)
   b. Would we send the dog or cat to get him? (No, they might hurt him.)
   c. Izzy interjects, “I know, I know! We could capture him in a trap!”

5. Using the Izzy puppet to talk with the children, discuss the vocabulary word TRAP.
   a. What is a trap?
   b. For what are traps used?
   c. Brainstorm about what makes a “good” trap. (size, what’s used as bait, escape-proof, location. If children are developmentally ready, discuss hold vs. harm)
   d. As each criterion is mentioned, print it on display board.

Involvement (Day 2)

PREPARATION

Place leprechaun evidence (gold glitter) in several obvious areas of the room.

1. Call the children’s attention to this evidence.
Activity

Involvement (Day 2)

PREPARATION (continued)

2. Display the criteria from yesterday’s discussion.

3. Tell the children they are going to design (draw) a leprechaun trap.

4. Brainstorm about possible baits, correct size, how to make sure the leprechaun can’t escape, and where to place the trap.
   **Note:** Izzy may be used to lead this discussion.

5. Assign teams of two or three to design a leprechaun trap.
   **Note:** This activity may make use of older children working with the younger ones.

6. Provide drawing materials, and allow children to formulate a plan for their trap.

7. Share designs and discuss.

Follow Up

1. At home, any children who wish to may actually create the trap according to their plan.

2. Allow those who create a prototype to place it where they wish in the room.

3. Reward participants with gold foil wrapped chocolate coins placed in their traps.