DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Monstrous Adventures: Building ELA, Math, and Creativity Skills

Dear Educator,

Invite your students on a monstrously exciting adventure with Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) that will help them flex their storytelling, critical-thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

This free, standards-based program for grades 6-8 from Wizards of the Coast and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired supports student learning in ELA, math, and art, and includes activities to enhance your students' social and emotional skills.

We hope that you will share this program with other teachers at your school. Please let us know your opinion of these learning materials by visiting **ymiclassroom.com/feedback-monsters**. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired

TARGET AUDIENCE
Grades 6-8

COMPONENTS
Available at **ymiclassroom.com/monsters**:
· This teacher's guide
· Four reproducible student activities
· Standards alignment chart
· An online feedback form

CONCEPTS & SKILLS

Storytelling	Analytical thinking
Probability	Problem solving
Number sense	Creativity
Character development	Collaboration

ABOUT DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
D&D is a collaborative storytelling game in which players create their own adventures with characters they customize and the help of a lead storyteller, called the Dungeon Master, who directs the gameplay. Dice are used to determine if actions are successful, which adds chance and unpredictability. No adventure is complete without challenges, and monsters are often used to present obstacles the players must overcome. Monsters have their own strengths and weaknesses, which are pre-assigned numbers, so an understanding of logic, statistics, and probability are important factors of the game.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM
This program can be used with or without prior knowledge of D&D. Make photocopies of the activity sheets and distribute them to students. In the spirit of D&D, have students work in small groups to complete the activities. Visit the program site at **ymiclassroom.com/monsters** for additional information and resources.

ACTIVITY 1:
THE TOURNAMENT OF MONSTERS
Ask students to imagine a monster — any kind of monster (it could be one from mythology, folklore, a fairy tale, or the movies). What abilities would it have? For example, would it be strong? Intelligent? Have students share their answers and discuss their ideas. Ask: *If you could choose just two abilities for a monster, which would you choose and why?*

Tell students that they are about to meet three iconic D&D monsters and predict how well they will complete three tasks or challenges by looking at their stats. Then they will roll a 20-sided die called a d20 and use the stats provided to see if the monsters succeed. (A digital d20 is available at **rolladie.net/roll-a-d20-die**.)

Pass out the activity sheet and review the introduction. (For images of the monsters, share Activity 2 with students.) Before students start Part 1, use the ability stats to engage them in discussion.

Artist: Andrea Piparo

For example, ask:
- *Which monster do you think would be the easiest to outsmart?*
- *Which monster do you think might be a trickster?*
- *Which monster would you want to defend you?*

For more information on ability scores, check out **dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/free-rules**.

Have the groups complete Parts 1 and 2 and share their answers when done. As a follow-up, ask: *How do you think knowing a creature's abilities and doing an ability check can help direct a story?*

Answers: Answers will vary, but mind flayer or owlbear should be the choice for Part 1, as each will win one challenge and could tie for the tightrope walk based on ability numbers. For Part 2, answers will vary.

NOTE: Students will need the stats from Activity 1 for subsequent activities.

ACTIVITY 2: A MONSTROUS CHALLENGE

Ask students to recall and share what they learned about three iconic D&D monsters in Activity 1. Explain that along with abilities, monsters have unique traits, motives, and actions that can inspire awesome stories. Understanding a monster's traits and motives can help D&D players anticipate its actions and hopefully avoid any negative consequences during their adventures.

Pass out the activity sheet and go over the instructions. Have each group of students select a monster in Part 1 and then collaborate on developing a story based on the scenario for Part 2. Once done, have the groups share their stories.

ACTIVITY 3: DEFY THE ODDS

If available, hold up a d20 or use a virtual 20-sided die, and ask the students to guess which number you will roll. Ask them for the odds that you will roll a given number. Choose one student and offer them a deal: If they are correct, they will get a small prize, such as a pencil or even a free homework pass. But if they lose, they have to do a chore for you, like sweep the classroom floor. Will they accept those odds? Why or why not? Ask students what the odds are for rolling the same or a different number for each subsequent roll. (It's always 1 in 20.)

Explain that D&D is not only a game of statistics and storytelling, but it's also a game of chance, which makes it unpredictable. Actions and consequences often depend on the roll of a die, as seen in Activity 1. Being able to understand your odds of completing a task or the probability of getting a high score in a multi-dice roll is key to becoming a master player.

Students will use probability and statistics to help them make decisions with D&D-inspired situations involving the monsters introduced in Activities 1 and 2.

Pass out the activity sheet and go over the instructions. Once done, discuss as a whole group. Did anyone defy the odds?

Answers: 1. 20-5 is 15; 5/15 or 1:3 odds; 2. 11/20 = 0.55, or 55%; 3. Answers will vary. 4. STR: 11/20 = 55%; INT: 16/20 = 80%

ACTIVITY 4: WHAT'S THE LOGIC?

Ask your students to raise their hands if they like adventure stories. All good stories have problems or challenges that characters must overcome. Ask students to share how characters in the adventure stories they like overcome their obstacles or solve problems. Do they use logic or work as a team?

Using logic to assess a situation and solve a puzzle or problem are inherent elements of D&D adventures and collaborative roleplay and are valuable in real-life situations as well.

Tell the students that they will practice critical-thinking skills to evaluate clues to solve a puzzle involving D&D characters. Pass out the activity sheet and go over the instructions. Review the answers as a class.

For Part 2, review each group's puzzle before students share them with other groups.

Answers: Wizard: magical amulet on old delicate chain; ranger: coin; mind flayer: thin paper map; owlbear: dried meat; gelatinous cube: large heavy dagger

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
- Have students spin a tale featuring a unique D&D monster of their own creation. Students can work in groups to design a monster and assign it abilities, and then weave their monster into an adventurous story.
- Have the students bring their monsters to life using pencil and paper, paint, modeling clay, a 3D printer, or other resources available to them. Consider collaborating with the art and/or tech department on this endeavor.

RESOURCES
dnd.wizards.com/resources/educators
ymiclassroom.com/monsters

Artist: Taras Susak

THE TOURNAMENT OF MONSTERS

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a game in which players create adventures with the help of a lead storyteller, called the Dungeon Master, who directs the gameplay. Dice determine if actions are successful, which adds chance and unpredictability.

No adventure is complete without challenges, and in D&D, monsters often present obstacles that players must overcome. Each monster has strengths and weaknesses, which are identified as pre-assigned ability scores from 1 to 20. The numbers give you an idea about how strong the monster is in that ability or trait. Each ability also has a numerical modifier (Mod). The modifiers range from negative numbers, which weaken the ability, to positive numbers, which strengthen it. Like the statistics or stats found in sports, a monster's ability scores and modifiers can help you figure out how well it will succeed at a task, so an understanding of logic, statistics, and probability factor into the game.

How are the numbers used? One way is to test innate talent and training. The Dungeon Master calls for an ability check when a character or monster attempts an action (not an attack) that has a chance of success or failure. Dice determine the results.

Read the descriptions and stats of three iconic D&D monsters. Use the list of abilities and abbreviations to identify each score.

ABILITIES

STR (strength): Physical strength, athletics
DEX (dexterity): Overall ability to control the body, acrobatics
CON (constitution): General overall health, physical capability

INT (intelligence): Academic knowledge, "book smarts"
WIS (wisdom): Practical knowledge, "street smarts"
CHA (charisma): Force of personality

Owlbear: An enormous creature with an owl-like face and covered with dark, thick feathers. It is vicious in nature, unpredictable, and has a sharp beak and deadly, steel-clawed paws.

STR 20 (Mod +5)	DEX 12 (Mod +1)	CON 17 (Mod +3)	INT 3 (Mod -4)	WIS 12 (Mod +1)	CHA 7 (Mod -2)

Mind flayer: An alien-like species with four tentacles around its mouth that channel psychic powers and enable them to communicate telepathically with the creatures they try to control.

STR 11 (Mod +0)	DEX 12 (Mod +1)	CON 12 (Mod +1)	INT 19 (Mod +4)	WIS 17 (Mod +3)	CHA 17 (Mod +3)

Gelatinous cube: A ten-foot-tall transparent cube of mindless ooze that absorbs and dissolves everything in its path. It can change shape to flow through small spaces and can trap and engulf creatures who have no escape route.

STR 14 (Mod +2)	DEX 3 (Mod -4)	CON 20 (Mod +5)	INT 1 (Mod -5)	WIS 6 (Mod -2)	CHA 1 (Mod -5)

PART 1: A wizard is hosting a Tournament of Monsters! Adventurers such as yourself can choose to sponsor a monster. The monsters must complete three challenges as quickly as possible: First, they must push a giant boulder up a steep slope. Second, they must solve a tricky riddle to locate a hidden object. Third, they must tread lightly across a tightrope. Which monster would you choose to win the tournament based on their ability scores above? On the back of this sheet, explain your choice.

My predicted winner: _____

PART 2: Now, let's see which monster wins each task! Time for an ability check. Each task has been assigned a difficulty score. Roll a 20-sided die (d20) for each monster and add or subtract the modifier for the listed ability. Write your answers on the back of the sheet.

1. **Push a giant boulder up a steep slope:** This is difficult, so the difficulty score is 15. Roll the d20 and add or subtract the STR/Strength modifier. If you reach 15 or higher, that monster wins!

   Winner: _____

2. **Solve a tricky riddle to locate a hidden object:** This is a medium-difficulty task, so the difficulty score is 10. Roll the d20 and add or subtract the INT/Intelligence modifier. 10 or higher and the monster succeeds.

   Winner: _____

3. **Walk a tightrope:** This is a short walk, so the difficulty score is 5. Roll the d20 and add or subtract the DEX/Dexterity modifier. 5 or higher wins!

   Winner: _____

Which monster won each task? Did one monster win the tournament, or was it a tie? If it was a tie, then the monster who won the most difficult task won the tournament. The wizard is pleased with his champion and hires the monster to accompany you and your companions on your adventure. The other two monsters come along as well, because the more, the merrier!

Artist: Julie Dillon

A MONSTROUS CHALLENGE

You've met some monsters. Now it's time to tell their story!

PART 1: Read the scenario below.

You, your companions, and the three monsters are traveling through a forest during a strong storm. You enter a large, dark cave for shelter and are deep into the cave when suddenly you see something odd — as if part of the cave wall is moving. As you watch, you notice a foul smell and realize that it's a troglodyte! The large, lizard-like creature is on the hunt for food and can see up to 60 feet in the dark. The monster is strong and can climb well.

You must choose one of the monsters below to help you navigate your way around the troglodyte to continue your journey. Read the descriptions below and the stats for each monster from Activity 1. Then make your choice. Which monster will you choose?

OWLBEAR

Artist: Zuzanna Wużyk

MIND FLAYER

Artist: Michael Broussard

GELATINOUS CUBE

Artist: Olivier Bernard

Owlbears are nocturnal, with sharp eyes. In fact, they can see up to 60 feet in the dark! Owlbears will attack without provocation and will track their prey relentlessly across great distances.

Mind flayers lurk in the Underdark, a vast underground network of caves and tunnels. They seek to dominate other creatures and are feared for their telepathic powers with which they can stun and control their prey. They move slowly, however, and must get close to their prey to stun them. They use "darkvision" to see up to 120 feet in the dark.

Gelatinous cubes slowly ooze along the dank passages of the Underdark, absorbing everything in their path. Their bodies are made of acidic goo that digests anything they absorb — if it is digestible. Nearly transparent when immobile, they have "blindsight," which means they can sense things in the dark up to 60 feet away.

Artist: Brian Valeza

PART 2: Now, write about the encounter. What will happen to the monster? How will it engage the troglodyte? What consequences might unfold? Make notes on the back of this sheet and then write your story on separate paper. Keep in mind that you're part of the story too! Your group is the adventuring party. So consider your own skills and how they help or hinder the encounter.

DEFY THE ODDS

PART 1: Let your adventures begin! It's time to put your knowledge about monsters, logic, and skills to work as part of an adventuring party. Read the scenarios below about some unfavorable encounters with monsters. Calculate the odds and probability of each option. Then roll the d20 die and record your results!

1. Your party needs to cross a deep forest, but rumor has it that an owlbear lurks in those woods. Previous adventurers have successfully avoided the owlbear 5 times out of 20 tries. Based on these numbers, what are your party's odds of avoiding the owlbear? To figure it out, calculate the number of failures, and then write the number of successes compared to the number of failures as a simplified ratio.

   [   ] Successes ÷ [   ] Failures = [   ]

2. Rather than try to avoid the owlbear, you could stun it with a bow and arrow. Fortunately, you have a ranger who is excellent at archery in your party, but shooting through the trees will be difficult. Your ranger must roll a 10 or higher to succeed. What is the probability that the ranger will roll a 10 or higher using a d20 die? To calculate the probability, divide the number of favorable outcomes by the number of possible outcomes. The number can be written as a decimal or percentage. What is the probability of success?

   [   ] Successful Outcomes ÷ [   ] Total Outcomes = [   ]

3. Your team decides to take its chances that you will avoid the owlbear.
   You must roll a d20 to see how you fare. You need to roll a 16 or higher. What do you roll? [   ]

   If you roll a 16 or higher, go on to question 4.

   If not, you must rely on your ranger, and roll a 10 or higher with a d20. What do you roll? [   ]

   Does your ranger succeed? If so, move on to question 4.

   If not, how will you get past the owlbear? (Hint: Review its weaknesses to figure out a way past it.)

4. Your party makes it through the forest and arrives at an ancient ruin where there is a mysterious chest guarded by a gelatinous cube. There is only a narrow entrance into the chamber where the chest is kept, so you must decide whether to fight the gelatinous cube or lure it away from the entrance. Calculate the probability of success for each option. According to its stats, the cube has great strength, so the target for a successful battle is 10 or higher. But the monster's stat for Intelligence is low, so you'll be able to lure it away or distract it with a roll of 5 or higher.

   Strength/fight probability: _____

   Intelligence/lure away/distraction probability: _____

   Now, roll the dice! Was your party able to obtain the chest? _____

WHAT'S THE LOGIC?

PART 1: Your party has taken the chest! Inside there are five items: dried meat, a coin, a large heavy dagger, a thin paper map, and a magical amulet on an old delicate chain. You celebrate your victory, make camp, and have a good night's sleep. In the morning, however, you discover that the items are missing!

Can you figure out who took which item? Use the clues below and what you have learned about the three monsters to solve the mystery. Mark a ✓ next to each character's name in the correct column to show what they took from the chest. Put an **X** in the column if you can eliminate an object for a character.

CLUES
- Only someone with a neck can wear and control the amulet.
- The wizard took something out of the chest that is made of metal.
- The owlbear's sharp claws cannot hold anything fragile.
- The most intelligent monster is the only member of the party who can read the map.
- Only humans can spend the coin.
- The item taken by the gelatinous cube is not digestible.
- The ranger is distrustful of magic.

What each member of the party took out of the chest.

Party member/ Object	Dried meat	Coin	Large heavy dagger	Thin paper map	Magical amulet on old delicate chain
Wizard					
Ranger (human)					
Mind flayer					
Owlbear					
Gelatinous cube					

PART 2: With your group, create a logic puzzle to share with your classmates. Select a problem to solve. Create a grid. Select 4 or 5 characters and 4 or 5 objects or locations. Develop your clues. Think about hints that tie the character to the object or location, as well as clues that can help you eliminate the connection between a character and object/location. Test the puzzle. Once done, share it with your classmates to solve.

Artist: Svetlin Velinov