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# Activity Guide

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## The Pumpkin Book

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### ABOUT THE STORY

Many children are familiar with the sight of pumpkins around Halloween, but do they know any real facts about pumpkins? This book will tell them everything they've always wanted to know about these enormous vegetables, from how they grow to how they are used.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Gail Gibbons is the author and illustrator of a great number of books that clearly show young readers how things work. Among them are *Zoo, Locks and Keys, Trucks*, and *The Post Office Book*. Her books *Sharks* and *Whales* are also available as Live Oak Readalongs.

### INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they have ever carved pumpkins into jack-o-lanterns at Halloween time. Then ask them if they have ever eaten pumpkin. Explain that there is much more to the pumpkin than its ability to be carved, and tell them that they will learn all about pumpkins in the book they are about to read.

### READING ACTIVITIES

#### **Comprehension/Thinking Skills**

- "To what family do pumpkins belong?"
  - "Name two kinds of pumpkin varieties."
  - "What do you call the small circular areas where some pumpkins are planted?"
  - "What color are pumpkin flowers?"
  - "What did people once believe about Halloween?"
  - "Why do you think pumpkins are so popular?"
- (Draw conclusions)

### Vocabulary

Write these words and definitions on the chalkboard. Have children copy them and draw lines to match each word with its definition.

variety	to cut down crops
tendrils	scissors
stigma	type or kind
harvest	begin to grow
shears	small part of a vine
sprout	part of a female flower

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

#### **Science: Grow It Yourself**

Bring in pumpkin seeds for the children to grow themselves. Plant each seed in a paper cup. Have children water the seeds regularly. Encourage them to watch the seeds and note on a chart when they sprout and how quickly they grow. If possible, when the plants are a few inches high, have the children plant them outside.

#### **Social Studies: History of the Jack-O'-Lantern**

Before people began making jack-o'-lanterns from pumpkins, they used other vegetables. Have children work in small groups to find out about the history of jack-o'-lanterns. Have them answer these questions:

Where were jack-o'-lanterns first used?

What was the original purpose of the jack-o'-lantern?

Children can report on what they have learned to the class.

#### **Health: Pumpkin Recipes**

Have children look in cookbooks for pumpkin recipes that sound interesting, or bring in recipes that they have tasted and enjoyed at home. Ask them to copy the recipes and draw illustrations for them. You can collect the recipes in a class book of pumpkin recipes.

#### **Art: Design a Jack-O'-Lantern**

Have children use orange construction paper and markers to design their own jack-o'-lanterns. Encourage them to make their creations as imaginative as possible. Provide them with glitter and paint to add to their art. When they are finished, they can display their jack-o'-lanterns around the classroom.

### INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

#### **Great Pumpkin Designs**

Have children use the keywords "jack-o'-lantern designs" to find designs on the Internet. If possible, have them print out their favorite design. Work with children to choose the best two or three designs, and try to create them together on actual pumpkins.