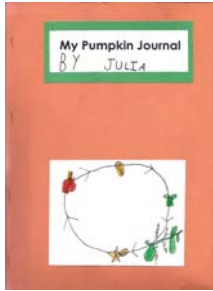


## Lesson Plan: *Exploring Our Pumpkins*



**Grade Level:** K to 2



**Developed by** Penny Block & Janice Henderson, Smith College Campus School, Northampton, MA, and used in Kindergarten

**Community Partner:** [Fletcher Farm](#), Southampton, MA

**Science Strand: Topics:** Life Science: Characteristics of Living Things; Living Things & Their Environment

**English/Language Strand: Topics:** Composition: Writing; Language: Vocabulary & Concept Development

**Arts Strand: Topics:** Visual Arts: Elements & Principles of Design; Observation, Abstraction, Invention, & Expression

### **Overview/Rationale for Lesson:**

Children explore pumpkins with eyes closed and eyes open, using descriptive words and observational drawings to share their sensory discoveries.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Children will learn to observe a pumpkin with their senses and use words to describe shape, texture and physical features they notice.
- Children will learn to make a drawing from observation.
- Children will write a descriptive word about their pumpkin (on their own with invented spelling or with support).
- Children will begin to learn how to work like scientists by looking closely at an object and making careful observations.

### **Lesson Plan Procedure**

#### **Preparatory Activity:**

Step 1. Children have individual pumpkins with their names written in black marker at the top of the pumpkin.

- Gathering pumpkins may be part of a field trip to a pumpkin patch, or teacher and students may bring pumpkins to school. *This class picks pumpkins at Fletcher Farm (see Resources).*
- Pumpkins should be small (no taller than 10”).
- Teacher discusses guidelines for handling pumpkins with children (pick up from the bottom, not the stem; handle gently; no rolling).

#### **Main Activity:**

Time: 30-45 minutes

Step 2. During circle time, teacher models how to explore a pumpkin with eyes closed and uses words to describe what she feels. 2-5 minutes.

- Teacher incorporates vocabulary words like, “curvy, bumpy, round.”
- Teacher may model a “mistake” to demonstrate the difference between touch and sight: “It feels blue. Wait! Can you FEEL color?”
- Teacher may model the same process with a different pumpkin, dramatizing the contrasts, “This one feels so tall...”
- Teacher may prompt children to wonder what their own pumpkin will feel like: “I wonder if your pumpkin will feel bumpy?”

Step 3. Teacher models the next step of the activity by opening her eyes and using words to describe what she sees. 2-5 minutes.

- Teacher focuses on variations in color, may introduce vocabulary words like “stem” or “ribs.”

Step 4. Children bring their own pumpkin to the circle and explore it with their eyes closed. 2 minutes.

- Teacher may prompt children to start at the top and feel around the outside. S/he reminds them about how s/he modeled careful touching.

Sample “Pumpkin Words” can be downloaded from Resources .

Step 5. Children tell words to describe what they noticed with their eyes closed and teacher writes words on chart paper. 5 minutes.

Step 6. Children explore pumpkins with their eyes open and teacher writes their describing words on chart paper. 5 minutes.

Step 7. Teacher models how to make an observational drawing of the pumpkin using the drawing form “My Pumpkin” ( see Resources). 2-5 minutes.

- Teacher’s narrative: “I want you to draw just what you see when you look at your pumpkin.”
- Teacher models drawing with the cap on the marker as a way to get started. With the cap still on a fine line marker, teacher draws around the real pumpkin to get a sense of the shape. Then s/he uses the marker (cap on) to draw the shape of the pumpkin on the handout. Finally s/he removes the cap from the marker and draws the pumpkin.
- Teacher models using crayons to color the pumpkin. S/he explains that they will be using “science colors” of pumpkins and mixing to match the oranges, browns and greens that they observe. (Only these colors are made available to children).

Step 8. Teacher models how to write one describing word on the handout. 2-5 minutes.

- Teacher thinks aloud: “I want to write the word ‘round’ to describe my pumpkin.” S/he sounds out the beginning, ‘rrrrr’ and writes an ‘r’ on the blank line of the handout. S/he may also sound out the ending and write that letter. S/he tells children to, “write what you hear.”

Step 9. Children go back to their tables with their pumpkins to make a drawing, first with fine line black marker then with crayons. 5-10 minutes.

Step 10. Children write a word to describe their pumpkin. Teacher circulates to support children's writing and writes out full word underneath the line with child's handwriting. 5 minutes. (See Student Sample in Appendix 1.)

### Conclusion/Follow-Up to Activity:

Teacher makes a bulletin board to display children's pumpkin drawings, class lists of pumpkin words, pumpkin photographs and other pumpkin work).

### Additional Notes on Lesson Plan:

"Exploring Our Pumpkins" is part of a Pumpkin Study Curriculum (see Resources).

### Materials Checklist:

- 1 pumpkin per student (under 10" tall)
  - Handout "My Pumpkin" (see Resources)
  - Fine line black markers and crayons for drawing (pumpkin colors)
  - Pencils for writing
- Chart paper for teacher to record pumpkin word lists

### Extensions:

- Pumpkin Journal. Children make observational drawings of a pumpkin in a glass tank over the course of the school year. They write group observations and do individual drawings of the life cycle as the pumpkin decomposes and eventually sprouts. If possible, they plant the seeds in a garden in June.
- Pumpkin Math:
  - Measuring pumpkins with snapping cubes
  - Balancing Pumpkins
  - Balancing Children with Big Pumpkin
- Making Clay Pumpkins.  
Children make miniature pumpkins with clay, fire them in a kiln and paint them based on the colors in their observational drawings.

View Student Journal & Math pages in Resources.



### Developer's Comments on Lesson:

"We choose things to study that further understanding of life cycles in nature and encourage children to look closely and distinguish scientific drawing from fanciful drawing. We are teaching children how to see in a different way."

--Penny Block and Janice Henderson

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**Connections to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:**

**Framework: Science and Technology/Engineering**

Strand: Life Science (preK-8)

Topic: Characteristics of Living Things

Grade: PreK, K, 1, 2

*3: Recognize that plants and animals have life cycles, and that life cycles vary for different living things.*

Topic: Living Things and Their Environment

Grade: PreK, K, 1, 2

*7: Recognize changes in appearance that animals and plants go through as the seasons change.*

**Framework: English Language Arts**

Strand: Composition

Topic: Writing

Grade: PreK, K

*19.3: For informational/expository writing: Draw pictures and/or use letters or phonetically spelled words to give others information.*

Strand: Language

Topic: Vocabulary and Concept Development

Grade: PreK, K

*4.1: Identify and sort common words into various classifications (colors, shapes, textures).*

*4.2: Describe common objects and events in general and specific language.*

### Useful Links

[Smith College Campus School Pumpkin Study Curriculum](#)

*Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden*, by George Levenson. Picture book and video available in English and Spanish. For more information see [The Pumpkin Circle Project](#).

[A Day at the Pumpkin Patch](#), by Megan Faulkner and Adam Kraweksy:

The Great Pumpkin Patch: [Fletcher Farm](#), 22 Gunn Rd, Southampton, MA. Phone: (413) 527-6888.

### Lesson Downloads

- [Pumpkin Words](#)
- [Student Observational Drawing](#)
- Pumpkin Journal
  - [Cover](#)
  - [March Observation](#)
  - [May Observation](#)
- [Pumpkin Math Pages](#)
- Handout: [“My Pumpkin”](#)