

# 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

## 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 & 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.*
- Pumpkins should be small (no taller than 10”).
- Teacher discusses guidelines for handling pumpkins with children (pick up from the bottom, not 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 may ask a child or another adult to bring her the pumpkin while her eyes are closed, modeling surprise and suspense at what she feels.
- Teacher’s narrative: “Oh let’s see, this feels round, not tall. It feels smooth. I feel some kind of lines.”
- 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 pumpkin will feel like: “I wonder if your pumpkin will feel bumpy?”

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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.

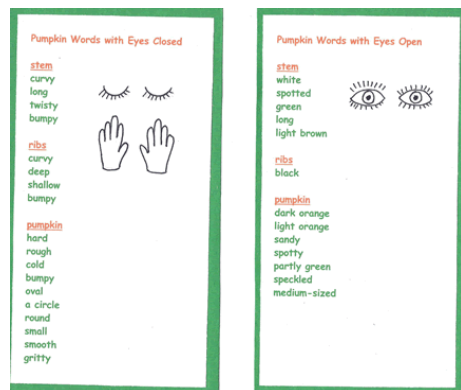
- Teacher focuses on variations in color, may introduce vocabulary words like “stem” or “ribs.”

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.

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” (available in 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.

- Note: colored pencils also work for this purpose, but not colored markers since they cover the black lines and do not blend.

Step 10. Children write a word to describe their pumpkin. Teacher circulates to support children’s writing and writes out full word underneath the child’s handwriting. 5 minutes.

(Sample in Resources)



**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 for link).

**Materials Checklist:**

- 1 pumpkin per student (under 10” tall)
- Handout “My Pumpkin” (see Resources)
- Fine line black markers and crayons (pumpkin colors) for drawing
- 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

View Sample Student Journal and Sample Math pages in Resources.



Children make miniature pumpkins with clay, fire them in a kiln and paint them based on the colors in their observational drawings.

**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

## Useful Links

Smith College Campus School Pumpkin Study Curriculum  
<http://www.smith.edu/sccs/SCCSCurriculum/kindergarten.php>

*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:  
<http://www.informeddemocracy.com/pumpkin/>

*A Day at the Pumpkin Patch*, by Megan Faulkner and Adam Kraweksy:  
<http://www.scholastic.ca/titles/adayatthepumpkinpatch/>

The Great Pumpkin Patch: Fletcher Farm, 22 Gunn Rd, Southampton, MA (413) 527-6888:  
<http://massfarmstands.com/fletcherfarm.html>

## Sample Student Work

1. Pumpkin Words (<http://massbook.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/fig-1-pumpkin-words1.pdf>)
2. Student Drawing (<http://massbook.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/fig-2-pumpkin-drawing.pdf>)
3. Pumpkin Journal
  - Cover (<http://massbook.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/fig-4-pumpkin-journal-1.pdf>)
  - March Observation (<http://massbook.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/fig-5-pumpkin-journal-3.pdf>)
  - May Observation (<http://massbook.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/fig-6-pumpkin-journal-5.pdf>)

## Handouts for Download

1. Handout: "My Pumpkin" (<http://massbook.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/fig.-9-Handout-1.pdf>)
2. Pumpkin Math Pages (<http://massbook.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/fig-7-3-math-pages.pdf>)

**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.***Connection to the Common Core Standards (<http://www.corestandards.org/>):****English/Language Arts Standards****Writing » Kindergarten**

Text Types and Purposes

*W.K.2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.*

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

*W.K.8. With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.***Speaking & Listening » Kindergarten**

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

*SL.K.4. Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.**SL.K.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.***Language » Kindergarten**

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

*L.K.5. With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.*