



The Truth About Pumpkins

OBJECTIVE: Read to learn some interesting scientific facts about pumpkins.

STANDARDS: Science: Characteristics of organisms; Properties of objects and materials

“In pumpkin boat races, people carve out giant pumpkins, climb in, and paddle away!”

BEFORE READING

Use Word Webs

Make a pumpkin word web.

Draw a pumpkin on the board, and draw several spokes coming out from the pumpkin. Ask, “What do you know about pumpkins? What words would you use to describe them?” Write children’s responses on the spokes; for example, *orange, round, many seeds, can be carved*, and so on. Then tell children that in this issue, they will learn some amazing facts about pumpkins that may surprise them!

DURING READING

Understand Text Structures

Introduce children to true-or-false text organization.

Tell children, “In this issue, the author will make a statement, and the readers—that is, you—will tell if it’s true or not.” Read the first question and answer out loud, making sure they understand the different parts of the text. Then have children turn their magazines over so that they can’t see the questions and answers, and read the rest of the questions aloud. Ask children to predict the answers. Then they can turn their issues over and read it as a class to check the answers.

AFTER READING

Fluency/Perform Dialogue

Ask children to perform dialogue as Magic School Bus characters.

Return to the dialogue on page 1 and model reading it aloud for children, emphasizing vocal expression. Then pair children up for some dramatic fun. Let children choose roles and perform the dialogue, using any special voices and gestures they like. If you have time, children can perform their scenes for the class.

READ-ALoud BACKGROUND

Pumpkins: The Inside Scoop

- You know pumpkins come in different colors and sizes. But did you know they have different names? For example, the Cotton Candy pumpkin is round and white. The Jack Be Little is orange and tiny. Funny Face pumpkins are medium-sized and good for carving jack-o’-lanterns. There is even a reddish Cinderella pumpkin—can you guess how it got its name? (It looks like the pumpkin from the fairy tale!)
- You also learned that pumpkins can grow to be very big. In fact, people enter contests to see who can grow the biggest one.
- Seeds of prize-winning giant pumpkins can be very valuable. The seeds for one world-record-holding giant pumpkin sold for \$600 a seed! (Most pumpkin seeds cost about \$2 a packet.)
- Other pumpkin contests give awards to see who can carve a face in a pumpkin the fastest. The current record is about 24 seconds!
- Believe it or not, there are also contests to see how fast pumpkins can go in the water—with people riding inside them! In pumpkin **regattas**, or boat races, people carve out giant pumpkins, climb in, and paddle away!

How Pumpkins Grow

- Even the biggest pumpkins start out as little **seeds**. First, the seed gets planted in the soil. With air, water, and light, the seed **sprouts**, or grows, into a plant.
- Pumpkins grow on a **vine**. As the vine gets bigger, flowers, or **blossoms**, bloom on it. (These are the flowers some people like to eat.)
- After the blossom dies, a small pumpkin grows on the plant. Most baby pumpkins are green.
- As the pumpkin grows, it also changes color. When it’s big and orange, it’s **ripe**. That means it’s fully grown and ready to pick!