

LEVELED BOOK • K

Jack-o'-Lanterns

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Written by Marcie Aboff

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Jack-o'-Lanterns



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Focus Question

How did the tradition of carving jack-o'-lanterns begin, and how have jack-o'-lanterns changed over time?

Words to Know

carved

design

cursed

display

decorate

stingy

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People carve pumpkins into all sorts of creative designs.

What Is a Jack-o'-Lantern?

Carved pumpkins are called *jack-o'-lanterns*. Jack-o'-lanterns are used to **decorate** for Halloween.

People started carving jack-o'-lanterns more than a hundred years ago. At first, people didn't carve pumpkins. They used other vegetables instead.

An old fable from Ireland may tell how people began carving jack-o'-lanterns.

The fable is about a man named **Stingy Jack**, who liked to play tricks on everyone. When he died, he was **cursed** to walk in darkness forever. He **carved** a turnip and put a light inside. His ghost was known as “Jack of the Lantern,” and then “Jack-o’-lantern.”



Modern Jack-o'-Lanterns

The Stingy Jack fable later became part of a night called All Hallows' Eve. In Europe, people lit fires and dressed up to keep away ghosts.



Today, many children dress up in costumes to celebrate Halloween.



Turnips were used for the first jack-o'-lanterns.

In Ireland and England, people carved scary faces on vegetables and placed a light inside. All Hallows' Eve later became known as Halloween.



Children enjoy searching through rows of pumpkins to pick out their favorite.

When jack-o'-lantern carving was brought to the United States, people started using pumpkins. About 1.5 billion pounds (more than 680 million kg) of pumpkins are grown in the United States each year.

Carving Jack-o'-Lanterns

Carving pumpkins is fun for people of all ages. Smooth pumpkins work well for jack-o'-lanterns. Some people buy carving kits, while others carve without any help.



A standard pumpkin carving kit includes a thin saw, a scoop, and a stencil tracer.

First, with help from a parent, cut a hole in the top of the pumpkin to make a lid.

Next, scoop out the inside flesh and seeds.



Step 1: Cut off the top.



Step 2: Scoop out the insides.



Step 3: Draw a design.



Step 4: Carve!

Draw a **design** on the pumpkin,
and then carve it carefully.

After the pumpkin is carved, place
a candle or other light inside. Finally,
put the pumpkin lid back on top.

Jack-o'-Lantern Events

Many cities have events to show off their carved pumpkins.

In Hudson Valley, New York, jack-o'-lanterns make up a big display with spooky sounds and music. Pumpkins are used to make snakes, dinosaurs, and a dome carved with twinkling stars.



This event in Hudson Valley takes place in Sleepy Hollow, home to the legend of the Headless Horseman.



Artists carve more than five thousand pumpkins each year for an event in Los Angeles.

A huge display in Los Angeles, California, has pumpkin cars and dinosaurs, and pumpkin carvings of famous people. The artists carve their pumpkins at the event while people watch.



Giant Jack-o'-Lantern

An artist carves one of the largest jack-o'-lanterns ever recorded. It weighed more than 1,800 pounds (816 kg)! The pumpkin was as heavy as a cow. The artist beat his own Guinness World Record for largest jack-o'-lantern, which he had earned five years earlier.



Keene's yearly Pumpkin Festival set the world record for most lit jack-o'-lanterns many times.

A town in New Hampshire broke a world record for the most lit jack-o'-lanterns. The town had thirty thousand jack-o'-lanterns lit at once!



Halloween Under the Sea

People even display carved pumpkins underwater. Some aquarium workers put carved pumpkins in large ocean tanks each autumn for visitors to enjoy.

The Tradition Continues

Carving pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns is a fun holiday activity. However they are carved, jack-o'-lanterns are a sure sign that Halloween is around the corner.



Carving a jack-o'-lantern can take time, but the end result is worth the effort.

Glossary

carved (<i>adj.</i>)	decorated or created by cutting or etching (p. 5)
cursed (<i>v.</i>)	called upon a supernatural power to cause trouble or harm to someone or something (p. 5)
decorate (<i>v.</i>)	to make something more attractive by adding color or an ornament to it (p. 4)
design (<i>n.</i>)	a pattern of lines, shapes, images, or colors (p. 11)
display (<i>n.</i>)	a show, event, or demonstration; a collection available for the public to view (p. 12)
stingy (<i>adj.</i>)	not liking or willing to spend, give, or share (p. 5)

Jack-o'-Lanterns

A Reading A-Z Level K Leveled Book

Word Count: 398

Connections

Writing and Art

How would you carve your jack-o'-lantern for Halloween? Draw a picture of your design and write about it.

Social Studies

Research another country's Halloween traditions. Use a Venn diagram to compare your country's Halloween traditions with the traditions of the other country.

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