

LEVELED BOOK • P

# Landon's Pumpkins



Written by Vera Ogden Bakker  
Illustrated by David Cockcroft

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## Planning

Landon was carrying the papers, cans, and plastic to the **recycle** bins after dinner. A bright newspaper ad caught his attention.



*Get Your Seeds Now for Fall **Harvest***

Bright orange pumpkins, yellow corn, and green beans smiled from the ad.

Landon remembered last Halloween. He and Chad, his five-year-old brother, had spent their **allowances** on two pumpkins. Chad had drawn a scary face on his with markers. Landon had wanted to try **carving** his own for the first time. Dad had showed him how to hold the knife and cut safely. Landon had worked on his pumpkin for a long time, but he had really messed it up. It hadn't looked at all like a jack-o'-lantern. He wanted to start over, but he had no other pumpkin to carve.



Landon put the plastics, cans, and papers in the proper recycling bins and hurried to find his father.

“Dad, do you remember that sick-looking jack-o’-lantern I carved last year?”

“Um, I remember.” Dad set his book down as Landon sat on the couch beside him.

“Well, I was thinking, I could use my allowance to buy pumpkin seeds. Then I could grow pumpkins. I’d have enough of them for Chad and me to practice carving.”

“That sounds like a good plan,” Dad said.

“I would need a space in the garden to plant them,” Landon said.

“Oh, I think we can manage that,” Dad said.

## Planting

The next day, Dad **tilled** a small patch of ground in the garden. “Get some **compost**, and we’ll mix it in the soil.”

Landon knew that they would need compost to make the plants healthy. All year long, he had put grass clippings, fallen leaves, and fruit and vegetable peels into the compost drum, and then covered each layer with dirt. Dad had told him that this **reduced** the garbage they sent to the **landfill**.





After raking the tilled ground, Landon followed the directions on the seed packet. He planted the pumpkin seeds he bought at the store in three little mounds. He planted four or five seeds in each mound. He left an arm's-length space between each mound for the vines to grow. Then he stamped the dirt down with his feet. Finally he got the watering can, filled it with water, and gently sprinkled each mound until the soil was wet.







## Growing

In a few days, Landon saw little green **shoots** making cracks in the ground. In another few days, the shoots grew leaves.

“It looks like **frost** tonight,” said the weather reporter on television. “You’d better make sure your tender garden plants are covered.”

Landon thought and thought. *How can I protect my pumpkins? A blanket or newspapers might smash the little plants.*

After dinner, Landon spotted three empty, plastic two-liter juice bottles on the counter. It was his job to take them out to the recycle bin. *They might work*, he thought. He cut off the bottoms of the bottles and tossed the bottoms into the plastics bin. Then he took the top parts out to his pumpkin patch and set one over each tiny plant like a miniature greenhouse.

Dad smiled.  
“I’m glad to see  
you reusing  
things.”

Landon took the  
bottles off in the  
morning so the  
plants wouldn’t  
bake in the sun.  
He saved the  
bottles to use the  
following night.





Soon the nights turned warmer, and the plants were too large for the bottles. Landon pulled **stubborn** weeds and watered his thirsty plants.

As the **temperature** crept higher, pumpkin vines stretched over the ground like a carpet of ivy.

Landon happily wiped the sweat from his face when he realized that no room remained for more weeds to grow. Soon bright yellow flowers appeared, and then small green balls grew in their place. The vines sprawled onto the lawn and into Dad's part of the garden.



## Harvesting

The green balls grew bigger and bigger. By Halloween, Landon had a dozen bright orange pumpkins. He sold six to the neighbors, gave Chad three, and saved three for himself.

Landon cut the tops off his three pumpkins and scooped out the insides. *Yuck, he thought, this looks like good stuff for the compost drum for next year's garden.*

Then he noticed that the seeds looked just like the ones he had planted in the spring. *I can recycle these to grow pumpkins next year, he thought, and I won't have to buy new ones.* Landon spread the seeds on paper to dry. But there were many more seeds than he wanted to plant.





“Dad, do you know of anything I can do with a hundred pumpkin seeds?” Landon asked.

“Well, when I was a boy, we used to roast them in the oven and eat them,” Dad said. “They tasted pretty good.”

“Hey, Dad, good idea. I can reuse them as a snack.”

“Who would have thought I could use the three R’s—*reduce*, *reuse*, and *recycle*—to grow pumpkins?” he said.





Landon drew faces on his pumpkins. Then he followed the lines with his carving knife. Each pumpkin looked better than the one before!

On Halloween night, Landon was proud of the six scary jack-o'-lanterns that glowed on the front porch!

### Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

#### Ingredients:

1½ to 2 cups pumpkin seeds  
2 teaspoons melted butter  
salt (about a teaspoon)\*

#### To Make:

1. Get an adult to help you
2. Preheat oven to 300° F
3. Clean strings and pulp off your seeds, Lay them out on newspaper to dry for about 2-3 hours.
4. Mix seeds in a bowl with melted butter and salt.
5. Spread seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet.
6. Bake for about 30 minutes, or until golden brown. Stir occasionally.

\*Instead of salt, try using cayenne pepper, garlic salt, Cajun seasoning, cinnamon or curry powder.



## Glossary

<b>allowances</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	sums of money given out (p. 5)
<b>carving</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	cutting with care (p. 5)
<b>compost</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a mixture of decaying organic material, such as vegetables, plant clippings, or newspapers (p. 7)
<b>frost</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	tiny pieces of ice that form on things when the temperature falls below freezing (p. 9)
<b>harvest</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	time when crops are gathered (p. 4)
<b>landfill</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a place where garbage is emptied and covered with dirt (p. 7)
<b>recycle</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to break down something to its basic parts to be used again (p. 4)
<b>reduced</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	made smaller (p. 7)
<b>shoots</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	beginning parts of plants that grow above ground (p. 9)
<b>stubborn</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	difficult to handle (p. 11)
<b>temperature</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the measure of how hot or cold something is (p. 11)
<b>tilled</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	broke and turned soil for planting (p. 7)

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## Correlation

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