



arts connect

The Pumpkin Tree: Learning Resources

Before watching the video:

- Check that everyone knows what a widow is: a woman whose husband has died. Ask why it might be significant that she's a widow in the story: how does this affect what she has to manage as a parent of 6 children?
- Check that everyone knows what a pumpkin is; show them the image below. (You may like to remind them / ask them about any other stories that have vegetables in them: a pumpkin in Cinderella, a turnip in The Enormous Turnip.)

Watching the video:

- Stop the video at 6 minutes 1 second, just after the storyteller (Sue) has said, "Whenever you need any pumpkins, just ask for as many as you like." Ask the children for 3 suggestions about what might happen to the widow next: will she find the tree? Will it really have pumpkins on it? (Pumpkins don't really go on trees, you might like to point out!) Will this coin really work? What surprises might befall her?
- Stop the video at 11 minutes 11 seconds, just after the storyteller (Sue) has said, "All the children hid behind their mother's skirts as the brawny fellow snorted in annoyance and stormed off out of the house and towards the river." Ask the children for 3 suggestions as to what might happen next. How this story might end?

After watching the video:

Here's a quiz about the story that you might like to try!

- 1) How many children does the widow have at the beginning of the story?
- 2) Who does the widow meet at the river?
- 3) How would you describe this new character – in three words?
- 4) What favour does he ask?
- 5) Why do you think the writer chooses such an unusual favour for him to ask?
- 6) Why doesn't the widow take the coin at first?
- 7) How many pumpkins does the widow ask for the first time?
- 8) Why do you think the pumpkins fall so gently around the widow?
- 9) How does the widow cook the pumpkin: fry, grill, boil, or bake?
- 10) What arrives on the widow's doorstep one day?
- 11) Why do you think the widow takes the baby in to look after it?
- 12) Do you think the widow should or should not take the baby in? Give reasons for your answer.
- 13) What does the baby do each day with the boiled pumpkin?
- 14) How does the widow find out that the baby is eating all the pumpkin?
- 15) Choose 5 words to describe the widow throughout this story?

- 16) Why do you think the writer makes the baby suddenly grow into a man?
- 17) What is the effect the writer achieves by using the verbs stormed, demanded, shouted to describe the young man's actions.
- 18) Why do you think the young man asks for 10 pumpkins?
- 19) Think of 3 words to describe the end of the story: for example – unexpected, bizarre, extreme.
- 20) What is the effect of the ending on the reader, where the young man is crushed to death? Why do you think the writer chose such an ending?

Further ideas and activities:

Choose from the following:

- Retell The Pumpkin Tree from the point of view of the very old man.
- Write a story about 2 characters. One of the characters does a kind thing to help someone and is rewarded in some way; the other character is unkind and is punished in some way.
- Write a story from the point of view of a very old man (or woman) who knows where to find magic things. What are the magic things? How does he (she) know about them? Who does he (she) tell about the magic things? What advice would he (she) give to other human beings in general about how to behave towards others?
- Write a story about a magic vegetable: what magic power does it have and how does it use it?
- Write a story that takes place in a forest.

This story takes place in a forest: how many other stories have you read that take the reader to a forest? Here are some suggestions for further reading:

- For younger readers – Hansel and Gretel; Where the Wild Things Are; The Gruffalo; Red Riding Hood; Enid Blyton's The Enchanted Forest; Into the Forest by Anthony Browne; a Walk through the Woods by Louise Greig
- For older readers: - the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by CS Lewis; Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by JK Rowling; The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien; The Dark Is Rising by Susan Cooper.

- Think of one thing you could do to help to help each of your friends.
- Think of one thing you could do to help each of your family members or carers.
- Spend a day saying only kind things to everyone you meet!