

Classroom Consideration: *The Runaway Pumpkin*

By: Kevin Lewis

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The Runaway Pumpkin is such a great book that appeals to many ages of children. Because of the large age span, there are so many activities that could be done in multiple classrooms. As mentioned in my response and review of this book, I believe there is value to Lewis' book beyond being a good seasonal story. Prior to this activity, my class may have been learning about story setting, or addressing laws of motion in science, learning about energy and/or physics. The project of reconstructing the path the pumpkin in the story took covers many disciplines. I believe this activity is appropriate for 3rd grade as it will require the students to reflect and analyze the story's setting via the illustrations, use their creativity to develop similar obstacles, participate in group discussion/sharing and to record information.

Objectives: The student will:

- Work in a group, analyze the setting, and select materials to recreate their portion of the hillside path using materials observed on the Baxter's hillside farm. Each group will need to sequence their events in relation to other groups; the ultimate goal is for 1 rain gutter run away pumpkin path.
- Define and understand the terms **terrain** and **obstacle**
- Observe how the pumpkin's speed is related to the terrain, the slope of the hillside, and obstacles
- Compare/Contrast how the class' runaway pumpkin behaved with Kevin Lewis' pumpkin
- Experiment with different ways to stop their runaway pumpkin

Procedures: I will:

- Reread *The Runaway Pumpkin*, this time encouraging students to focus on the setting and illustrations
- Divide the class into 4 groups. Each group will be assigned a few pages in the book, from which they'll discuss the environment around the pumpkin, the hillside, the pumpkin itself etc. Each group will designate a class recorder. Notes can be made on the photocopied pages from the book. Each group will then be responsible for constructing their portion of the runaway pumpkin's path.
- Circulate the classroom and facilitate brainstorming where needed, and assist in the hillside construction.

Materials:

- Grass, dirt, rocks/pebbles, sticks, leaves, seeds, hay, small plastic farm animals, feathers, rain gutter, large basin filled with dirt/sand, small sandbox sized rake, several mini pumpkins.
- 4 sets of copied pages from the story(for each group)
- Stop watch, paper, pencil

Culminating Activities/Assessment:

I would lead discussion of the following questions while we snack on pumpkin bread or pumpkin cookies.

- Was the re-creation in order relative to the story?
- Describe the setting from the pumpkin's point of view.
- Did the pumpkin roll faster at the top, middle, or bottom?
- How did the terrain affect the pumpkin's journey?
- What were the obstacles in the pumpkin's path? What happened to them? Did they affect the pumpkin's speed?
- What alternative ways are there to stop a runaway pumpkin? Was Poppa Baxter's method the best?
- Does the pumpkin play a role in this? (e.g., shape, size etc.)
- Is there a relationship between the class pumpkin and Kevin Lewis' pumpkin?

Lewis, Kevin. (2003). *The Runaway Pumpkin*. New York: Orchard Books. [Illustrator: S. D. Schindler]