

# Pumpkin Decorating

## Lesson Ideas

**A**s we approach the festival of Halloween (All Hallow's Eve) on 31 October, we reflect on the origins of this pagan festival and explore the meaning behind some of the customs and practices that we are familiar with at this time of year. For some weeks now, we will have seen the "spooky" displays in supermarkets/stores across the country. Among the traditional produce available are pumpkins – this fabulous fruit that has become a focus for our latest challenge. As teachers, we have memories of carving pumpkins, placing a tea-light inside and displaying them on our windows or doorsteps. This year, the INTO are hoping to inject a twist to the usual pumpkin carving and we are encouraging our talented and innovative members to get their creative juices flowing and "transform" their pumpkins! Get painting, stencilling, adorning, sticking ... there are endless possibilities to produce

pumpkins that will light up your room! Embracing this awesome artistic (and child-friendly) activity pupils can also get involved and help create a masterpiece.

The **#PumpkinChallenge** project is topical within schools at this stage of the year and allows scope for plenty of teaching and learning opportunities within the classroom setting. There is a plethora of resources available for teachers and we have included in this document some ideas that may prove valuable for lessons in the lead up to the Halloween mid-term break. Pupils are always interested to learn that, in yesteryear, Irish people used turnips when creating "Jack O'Lanterns" as our climate was not conducive to cultivating pumpkins. It was only when Irish people emigrated to America that pumpkins were used. This is often a good starting point for an SESE history lesson as

children can reminisce with parents and grandparents in relation to traditions that were widespread when they were growing up. Samhain coincided with the year's final harvest, the wheat, apples and nuts that were so plentiful at this time and feature in our celebrations. As well as allowing for tasty and tantalising treats, there was endless scope for fun and entertainment – games such as 'bobbing' for apples in basins of water and playing 'snap apple', where an apple is hung on a string and the participant tries to bite the apple while keeping their hands behind their back. There is also the old Irish custom of baking a barmbrack (Bairín Breac – meaning 'speckled loaf'). This baked delight contained charms that foretold your future.

According to folklore, if you got the slice with the ring, you would soon marry, a coin foretold wealth and a rag predicted poverty.



## Development Options

### English/Gaeilge

- Procedural writing – how to decorate a pumpkin/*ag máisiú puimcín.*
- Narrative writing – 'The night the pumpkin came alive...'/ 'An puimcín beo...'

### Maths

- Weight – estimating and weighing pumpkin/s.
- 2-D Shapes – what shapes can be put on the pumpkin.

### History

- Origins, continuity and change of pumpkin carving and decorating, Jack-o'-lanterns and Halloween traditions.

### Science

- The life cycle of a pumpkin – 'from seed to fruit'.
- Varieties of pumpkin.
- Foam experiment.



## SPHE

- Nutritional values of pumpkin fruit and seeds.

## Art

- Template of planned decoration of pumpkin.
- Pumpkin painting and decorating competition on class/school basis.

## Drama

- 'The pumpkin that came to life' – dramatisation of the story.

## Music

- Halloween music and dance.

# Useful resources

## Introducing Halloween

- Video – *Samhain to Halloween*  
<http://www.animatedhalloween.com/?idEvent=289&idPlaylist=949>
- 11 interesting facts  
<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/explore/11-spooky-facts-about-halloween/>
- History of Halloween  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGuPss01TXs>

## English/Gaeilge

- Writing templates/*scribhneoireacht*  
<https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/t-t-7111-halloween-shape-poetry-templates> (free to download templates)  
<https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/t-t-13948-halloween-writing-frames> (free to download frames)
- *Teanga ó bhéal - gníomhachtaí ar fhorbairt na teanga*  
<https://www.scoilnet.ie/go-to-primary/theme-pages/irish/oicheshamhna/>

## Science

- Do you know how pumpkins grow? (Infants)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3y2PlffgCpc>
- Various science activities for different class levels  
<https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/pumpkin-science-experiments/>
- Parts of skeleton and related activities  
<https://www.scoilnet.ie/primary/theme-pages/science/skeleton/>



## History

- History of Halloween in Ireland  
<http://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/history-heritage/folklore-of-ireland/folklore-in-ireland/Calendar%20Customs/halloween/>

## SPHE

- Stay tuned for an exclusive Foodoppi recipe available soon on our social media pages.

## Music

- Five little pumpkins (Infants)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trDI36m9pgA>
- The Addams Family song (first-fourth class)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6QzvbH-ZNO>
- Halloween, Halloween (first-fourth class)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsyEX9iIN-I>
- Thriller (fifth-sixth class)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlx\\_HbmRnQY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlx_HbmRnQY)
- Ghostbusters theme  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9We2XsVZfc>

## As Gaeilge

- *Oíche Shamhna*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTFxW092mCc>
- *Taibhsí nó Laochra*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l969H454bTw>

