

Name: _____

Jack of the Lantern

by Kelly Hashway



Did you know that before people began carving pumpkins to make Jack O' Lanterns, they used to carve other things like potatoes, turnips, and beets? It all began with an old Irish folklore about a man called Stingy Jack who played tricks on everyone. Because of his trickery, Jack's soul was doomed to roam in the darkness forever. Jack supposedly carved a turnip and placed a flame inside it to help him see as he wandered through the dark. The Irish called him Jack of the Lantern.

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inside to light them. They called their lanterns Jack O' Lanterns after Stingy Jack. People in England also carved their own versions of Jack O' Lanterns out of beets to keep spirits away on this night. They believed that the lanterns would light the way for the spirits to move out of their town, keeping them safe until next Halloween.

So how did this tradition evolve into carving pumpkins for Halloween? When millions of Irish people immigrated to America after the Irish potato famine, they had trouble finding potatoes and turnips. They began to use pumpkins, which were more abundant and easier to carve. Today, this Irish tradition is a large part of the American celebration of Halloween.

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1. In the Venn diagram below, compare and contrast how early Jack o' Lanterns in Ireland and Scotland looked different from Jack o' Lanterns in America today.

Early Jack o' Lanterns in Ireland and Scotland
(How They Looked)

Modern Jack o' Lanterns in America
(How They Look)

BOTH

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2. What vegetable did Stingy Jack use to carve the first Jack O' Lantern?

3. Why do most Americans choose to carve pumpkins, rather than other fruits or vegetables?

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Read each sentence and choose the best definition for the underlined word.

1. In Irish folklore, a man named Stingy Jack played tricks on everyone.

- a. stories told by people
- b. old cities
- c. books written long ago
- d. black and white movies

2. Stingy Jack carved a face in a turnip.

- a. fruit that grows on trees
- b. vegetable that grows underground
- c. type of pumpkin
- d. colorful rock found in a garden

3. Sorcerer
Hall



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4. Millions of Irish people immigrated to America.

- a. moved to a new country
- b. visited another country
- c. sent a letter to another country
- d. carved pumpkins for another country

5. Many Irish people left Ireland during the potato famine.

- a. time of the year when leaves fall off of trees
- b. time of celebration because there is lots of food
- c. time of starvation because there is no food

6. Stingy Jack carved a face in a turnip and used it for a lantern.

- a. bag
- b. light
- c. tasty treat
- d. came to talk with

ANSWER KEY

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Early Jack o' Lanterns in Ireland and Scotland
(How They Looked)

Modern Jack o' Lanterns in America
(How They Look)

BOTH

Carved from turnips.
bee

Faces carved in them

Carved from

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vered

2. What vegetable did Stingy Jack use to carve the first Jack O' Lantern?

turnip

3. Why do most Americans choose to carve pumpkins, rather than other fruits or vegetables?

Pumpkins are abundant and easy to carve.


ANSWER KEY

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- Son
Hall


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