

Pumpkin Circle

By: George Levenson and Shmuel Thaler

Activity Level: Basic

PURPOSE

Students will create a written piece about a cycle that describes components, changes, and stages from beginning, middle, to end by comparing it to a mentor text.

NEBRASKA STATE EDUCATION CONTENT STANDARDS CONNECTION

LA 0.2.1.f, LA 1.2.1.f, LA 2.2.1.f

Provide oral and/or written descriptive feedback to other writers.

LA 0.2.2.a, LA 1.2.2.a, LA 2.2.2.a

Communicate information and ideas effectively in analytic, descriptive, informative, narrative, poetic, persuasive, and reflective modes to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.

LA 0.2.2.e, LA 1.2.2.e, LA 2.2.2.e

Compare various mentor texts and/or exemplars to create a similar piece.

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION TO AGRICULTURE?

The life cycle of a pumpkin shows how seeds are the start of fruits and food products. Just like pumpkins, plants that farmers grow go through the same cycle. Corn, wheat, and soybeans are just a few crops that Nebraska farmers grow and similarly, they start as seeds! These commodities get turned into several products that we eat, wear, and use daily!

MATERIALS

- The book *Pumpkin Circle* by George Levenson and Shmuel Thaler
- Somewhere to write responses for interactive class activity: white board, smart board, or large paper
- Second grade option: paper and writing utensils for small group creative writing

VOCABULARY

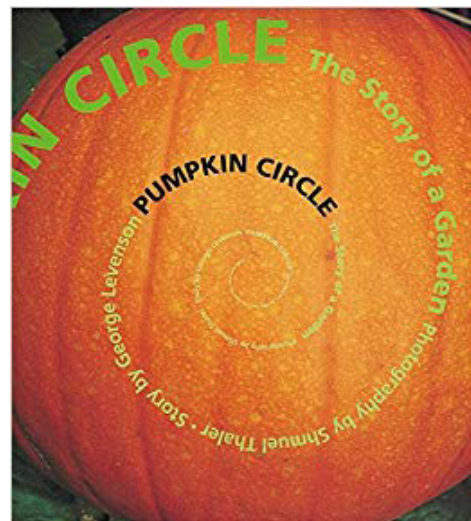
Brilliant – very bright and radiant

Bud – an almost-open flower

Flower – the brightly-colored part of the plant; it is where the seed or fruit grows

Guzzling – eat or drink greedily

Leaf – the flat part of a plant that is attached to the stem



Pumpkin patch – a piece of ground used to grow pumpkins

Ribs – the lines that run up and down on a pumpkin

Rind – the shiny orange skin of a pumpkin

Roots – the part of the plant that attaches it to the ground

Seed – the small part of a plant that grows into a plant

Stem – the connecting or supporting part of a plant

Tendrils – the thin curlicues attached to the stem

Vine – a climbing or trailing stemmed plant

BACKGROUND AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION

A life cycle is a series of stages that an organism passes through during its lifetime. Specifically, this book discusses the life cycle of a plant starting as a seed, growing into a tree, producing a flower, developing a fruit, and the fruit containing seeds, thus starting the cycle over again. Students will see the life cycle for plants being modeled through the illustration of a pumpkin. Plants that farmers grow also have a similar life cycle. Plants that farmers grow in Nebraska are corn, soybeans, wheat, dry edible beans, and sugar beets, to name a few. These plants are essential for use for food, fiber, and fuel!

INTEREST APPROACH

- Read *Pumpkin Circle* by George Levenson and Shmuel Thaler aloud to students.

LISTENING QUESTIONS

- Ask if students have any questions about what we have read.
- Are there any parts of a pumpkin plant that you may not have realized?
 - *Tendrils that reach out their curlicues to grab onto places to stabilize the plant vines, pointy and hairy flower buds.*
- Are there any characteristics of a pumpkin plant that surprise you?
 - *Big, bright yellow velvety flowers open from buds before the pumpkin fruit grows from the flower.*

PROCEDURE

1. Write a class story together describing some of the many components and cycles of the school year.
Optional Second Grade Groups: Split class into small groups to write responses to prompts. Ask them to be prepared to share when returning to the large group to put their responses together with the rest of the class to complete a new story.
2. Ask some questions to encourage students to think of their classroom and school year activities in similar detail and observations that were made in *Pumpkin Circle*.
 - a. What do we do to get ready for learning day by day?
 - b. What parts of our day almost always look the same?

- c. What changes in our classroom over time?
 - d. Describe places in the classroom that nurture different purposes.
 - e. Describe places in the classroom that look and feel different from each other.
3. Refer to the sample text and prompts below to fill in with ideas from the class, making a line of text for each student. Feel free to change or cut according to your classroom's needs and ideas!

*The school year starts like a seed
which makes a school year plant,
and the school year plant in turn
makes learning.*

*When the summer break comes to an end,
plant children and teachers in a classroom.*

*Deep within each classroom,
the room is...
the walls are...*

During each week, out the subjects peek like sprouts...

*Week by week the learning spreads before your eyes
filling every inch of space*

*with lessons like....
with projects like....
with jobs like....
with movement like...
with fuel like....
with groups like....
with specials like....
with visitors like....
with field trips like....
with questions like....*

*A hundred days of learning.
A hundred days of care.
Children following daily routines, learning
everywhere!*

*When winter turns to spring,
the school year circle starts to close.*

*Now comes the wrap-up,
tuck treasures into bags.
Clear away old papers,
hide the broken crayons.*

*Gather up your projects,
finished and shown.
Tidy up the room,
take the new knowledge home.*

*Salute the school year circle!
Make way for school year cheer.
Behold the learning miracle.
We're learning millionaires!*

*The need for the worksheets change,
getting older, looking strange,
all this work is easy-peasy,
to the recycling bin you'll go
turning those learning stepping stones
into new lessons for us to use and grow!*

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

- Do we have any questions about the activity; comparing a mentor text to create a similar piece?
- In what ways did we find our school year to be like the growing season for a pumpkin?
 - *It starts small, then our work and projects grow and change, and in the end we have a new body of knowledge onto which we'll plant new ideas next year.*

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- DIY Pumpkin Composting
 - <https://www.scarce.org/pumpkin-composting-options2017/>
 - Remove candles and any non-biodegradable decorations, and put your pumpkin in an out-of-the-way spot, crush it (the more you do, the faster it'll decompose), and let it be! You can pile leaves or straw on top to hide them if you like. They'll be gone by spring. Side note: This can be a fun project for kids to monitor. Check on the pumpkin every week or so, snap a photo and take observation notes!
- Farming in a Glove – Nebraska AITC
 - <https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities#farm-glove>
- Life of a Tree Enactment – Nebraska AITC
 - <https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities#life-tree>
- Make and Eat Soil Profile – Nebraska AITC
 - <https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities#eat-soil>

COMPANION RESOURCES

- Books:
 - *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, Eric Shabazz Larkin, Will Allen
 - *A Leaf Can Be... and Water Can Be...* by Laura Purdie Salas and Violeta Dabija

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LITERACY OUTCOMES

- **Agriculture and the Environment**
 - **T1.K-2 a.** Describe how farmers and ranchers grow crops and support livestock
- **Plants and Animals for Food, Fiber & Energy**
 - **T 2.K-2 a.** Explain how farmers/ranchers work with the lifecycle of plants to harvest a crop
 - **T 2.K-2 e.** Identify the importance of natural resources (e.g. sun, soil, water, minerals) in farming
- **Food, Health, and Lifestyle**
 - **T 3.K-2 b.** Recognize that agriculture provides our most basic necessities: food, fiber (fabric or clothing), energy, and shelter