



Who IS that Pumpkin Child?

A song game for primary children to the tune: The Muffin Man
By Gloria Nelson

The ease with which children are enticed into solo singing and the gentle nature of this game have made it an “Adventure” my primary students enjoy throughout the school year. I have a furry, stuffed pumpkin that I use as a puppet-type prop.

Introductory Story:

Has anyone ever had someone come to your house to make a surprise visit? Well, let me tell you about a visitor who dropped in at our school just the other day. Candis (our secretary) was working at her desk when she heard a quiet, “Excuse me,” from behind the counter where she helps people when they come to our school. She walked over to the counter, but could not see anyone. As she walked around the end of the counter she discovered the cutest little pumpkin. She said, “Hello there, how can I help you?” The little pumpkin took in a sip of air and sang, “Oh, do you know the pumpkin child.....”

Candis replied, “Let me look at our list of Harding students. Oh dear, I do not see Pumpkin Child on our list. I will let you talk to Mrs. Willis, our principal.”

As they approached Mrs. Willis, the pumpkin sang, “Oh, do you know the pumpkin child...” (With a hand gesture, I encourage the students to sing with the pumpkin.)

After Mrs. Willis told the pumpkin that she, too, could not find Pumpkin Child on the school list, the pumpkin sadly replied, “Oh dear, I was so sure that my friend lived here.” Mrs. Willis has a very soft heart and said, “I have an idea! I will give you permission to go down each wing in our school to see if you can find the Pumpkin Child.” “Oh, thank you so much,” said the little pumpkin.

As the pumpkin walked down the first hall it sang, “Oh, do you know the pumpkin child...” (I continue to encourage the class to sing along.)

In each classroom the children politely sang, “Oh, we don’t know the pumpkin child...”

After visiting several rooms, the little pumpkin was almost ready to give up when it heard someone singing this answer, "Oh, yes I know the pumpkin child..." The little pumpkin was so excited! Once again it sang, "Oh, do you know the pumpkin child..." and then stopped to listen very carefully.

The Game of Learning the Song:

- Who knows what the little pumpkin heard?
- Show us with your voice. (I cue the pitch and then listen as all the children sing, "Oh yes, I know the pumpkin child...")
- I wonder who the pumpkin child is. To find out, this is what you need to do:
 1. Without my help, show you can sing the question, "Oh do you know the pumpkin child...." I will sing the answer. "Oh yes, I know the pumpkin child...."
 2. Now, I get a turn to sing the question. What will you do? (Sing the answer)
- This time as we sing the melody on "loo" we will gently pass the pumpkin around the circle. The pumpkin will stop when our voices finish the song.
- When the pumpkin stops, I usually ham it up and act surprised by saying, "my goodness, I did not know that you were the pumpkin child," etc. Lots of laughs and giggles accompany my silliness.
- We practice passing the pumpkin and singing the question and response until the song becomes very familiar.
- On another day, after reviewing the song and letting some volunteers sing the solo answer, we are ready to move on to the guessing game.

Guessing Game:

- The formation is a seated circle. Please close your eyes and keep them closed until I say to open them. Some primary children are unable to keep their eyes closed. I do not make this an issue.
- Put your hands out in front of you, and sing "The Pumpkin Child" on "loo." As you sing, I will come around and place the pumpkin in someone's hands. This person will be our first pumpkin child. Remember, it will be more fun if you keep your eyes closed. I give a cue pitch, Ready sing and as the children sing, I proceed around the circle

- This time, while the pumpkin child and I hide someplace in the room, please sing the question. As the class sings, the child and I go to a place where the other children cannot see us.
- Listen carefully as the pumpkin child sings to you. The pumpkin child sings, "Oh, yes I am the pumpkin child..."

Open your eyes and raise your hand if you would like to guess the child's name. I will select three of you and then we will check to see if our guessers recognized the pumpkin child's voice.

- After three guesses the pumpkin child (Anna) is revealed and as she hands the stuffed pumpkin to one of the three guessers, the class sings, "Oh Anna is the pumpkin child..." As eyes are closed, Anna gets to carry and place the pumpkin in a new person's hands. The new person hides and sings the response, and then Anna chooses the next three guessers. And so the game continues.
- Substituting such things as "winter child," "valentine," or "leprechaun," we continue to use this game as the seasons change.

Classroom Connections:

To connect this experience with the development of language skills, I plan to create a class book using student ideas in place of "pumpkin child." Possibilities could be "jumping jack," "big green dog," "singing child," "running child," "ice cream cone," or "wobbling ghost." Each child will illustrate his or her page. Then we will present it as a gift to the classroom teacher.