



**A teacher's guide**  
created by **Marcie Colleen**  
based upon the picture book  
written by **Nancy Churnin** and  
illustrated by **Anneli Bray**

This classroom guide is designed for students in first through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Lila and the Jack-o'-Lantern* into the curricula.

All activities were created in conjunction with the Common Core and other relevant content standards.

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To learn more about Nancy Churnin, visit her at [www.nancychurnin.com](http://www.nancychurnin.com). To learn more about Anneli Bray, visit her on Instagram at @annelibray.

## Before You Read...

Before reading *Lila and the Jack-o'-Lantern*...

Look closely at the Front Cover ~

- Read the title aloud.
- Describe what you see.
- Who do you think the girl is? What is she doing?
- Imagine you are the girl in the illustration. How does this pose make you feel?
- When do you think this story takes place? Today or a long time ago? What clues on the cover tell you this?
- Can you guess what the story might be about?

The Back Cover~

- Describe what you see.
- Read the text on the back cover.
- Does this text make you want to read the book? Why or why not?

## English Language Arts

### Reading Comprehension

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book is about.

- Lila and her siblings are on a dark ship when the story opens. Where are they going and where are they coming from?
- Lila's father says he cannot find turnips anywhere in America. What did Lila and her siblings do with turnips at Halloween?
- How did Lila and her family celebrate Halloween in Ireland?
- How did Lila's new home in America differ from where they lived in Ireland?
- What does Lila decide to use instead of turnips for her jack-'o-lantern?
- What does Julia suggest they do with the pumpkin seeds? What does she suggest they do with the pulp?
- Mama hides something in the colcannon. What is it and why?
- Mama hides something in the barmbrack. What is it and why?
- Lila's Halloween in America is different from back home, but what are some things that still made it special?

Let's talk about the people who made *Lila and the Jack-o'-Lantern*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let's look closely at the illustrations.

- Look closely at how people are dressed in *Lila and the Jack-o'-Lantern*.
- Print out photos from the Internet of clothing styles in the mid 1800s America.
- Draw your own character wearing clothing from this time period.
- Display the finished drawings in the classroom.

### **New Vocabulary: Immigrant**

Lead students in a class discussion on *immigrants*.

- Define the word *immigrant*.
  - A person who comes to live permanently in another country.

Lila's family and the others in her neighborhood came from other countries for a better life in America.

- Do you know someone who has immigrated or have you immigrated?
- Where did they immigrate from?

All of us who are not indigenous to North America are immigrants or descended from immigrants. Ask someone in your family to help you answer the following questions.

- Who in your family tree is the most recent immigrant? Who arrived in the United States first? What do you know about them and about others who immigrated?
- How did your family come to live here? Where do your grandparents live?
- What language did your immigrant family members speak?
- What world events were happening when your family members came to the United States? How might they have impacted your family's migration story?
- How were immigrants from your family members' country of origin perceived and treated when they arrived?
- Are there any special heirlooms, photos, or other memorabilia that have been passed down in your family?
- What do you know about your family surname?
- What stories have come down to you about your parents? Grandparents? More distant ancestors?

Design a poster celebrating your family's past and country of origin. Hang the poster in your classroom, or get permission to hang it in the school library, the office, main hall, etc.

# History

## The Truth About Lila's Story

While Lila is not a real girl and her story is one of fiction, the world she lives in is very much based on historical facts. As is the story of Halloween and its Irish origins.

While reading *Lila and the Jack-'o-Lantern* aloud to the class, have students take notes in two columns:

- *Things We Learned*
- *Questions We Have*

Pause before each page turn to add notes to the columns. These columns can either be individual or hung on the board and worked on as a class.

Things We Learned (Facts)	Questions We Have	Answers We Found

- Once the story is read, discuss the *Questions We Have* column.
  - Were any of these questions answered as the story went along?
  - If so, ask students to find the answer within the text.
  - Record the answer next to the question in a third column labelled *Answers We Found*.
- Read the author's note at the back of the book.
  - Create an additional column to document what information in this section was included in the story and what information was not included.
  - Choose three facts from the back matter that were not included in the story and explain why you think each was excluded.
- For all remaining questions in the *Questions We Have* column, that have yet to be answered, students will need to take the steps to find answers, either through Internet or book research.
  - Discuss how to find answers to questions through research.
  - Assign students to specific questions to help them focus.
  - Record all answers in the *Answers We Found* column.
- After the answers have been shared with the class, engage in a discussion on research practices.
  - What was the most difficult about finding answers?
  - Was it easier to find answers on the Internet or in a book?
  - Which source is more reliable, the Internet or a printed book? Why?
  - How can you determine whether to trust a source?

- What tips would you give someone who is about to do research?

*Extension:* Design and illustrate posters representing each Fact, Question, and researched Answer based on *Lila and the Jack-'o-Lantern* and display them within the classroom.

## Social Studies

### My Favorite Holiday Traditions

Halloween was a holiday that was very important to Lila and her family. But, not every family celebrates the same holidays. And even if they do, they don't always celebrate in the same ways.

Ask students to tell about their favorite holidays/holiday celebrations.

Have students recite the months of the year and create a holiday calendar bulletin board

Have students describe a holiday celebration in a paragraph and draw a picture to go along with it, if they choose.

### Make Your Own Jack-'o-Lantern

Carve a jack-'o-lantern at home with the family, or in a classroom with a small group of children.

If you do the activity with a small group, you can either have one large pumpkin that accommodates several sets of hands, or one small pumpkin for each participant.

Encourage kids to explore the inside of the pumpkin. Talk about the colors and textures of the seeds and pulp. Discuss the features the pumpkin needs to become a jack-o-lantern.

- Place a pumpkin on newspaper to protect the table surface.
- Remove the stem.
- Scoop out seeds with a spoon. Invite kids to use their hands to dig out some of the pulp and seeds. This will encourage some gooey sensory play.
- Cut out facial features. This is a job for grownups. Kids can help draw the eyes, nose, and mouth on the pumpkin with a marker.
- Place an LED tea light or a battery operated candle inside the pumpkin.
- Dim the lights and see how your jack-o-lantern looks!

Can you think of other things that could be carved to make a jack-'o-lantern? Get creative!

### Finding Commonalities/Uniqueness

Lila and Julia are very different. But they also have lots of things in common and introduce each other to new things such as Halloween and pumpkin pie. Julia even calls Lila her friend.

Finding what you have in common with other people is a good way to start a meaningful relationship.

Here is a way to learn what you have in common with your classmates, while also celebrating what makes each of you unique.

Materials: A pen and two pieces of paper.

- This activity can be done as a whole class or in pairs.
- On one sheet of paper, you will have twenty minutes to come up with a list of things in common. Completely obvious answers such as "we both have hair" or "we are both in \_\_\_\_\_ class" are not allowed!

- After twenty minutes, switch to the other paper. You now have twenty minutes to come up with a list of things that are unique to only one person.
- Share both lists with the class when finished.

### **Bake a Pumpkin Pie or Roast Some Pumpkin Seeds**

Award-winning children’s book author, illustrator and friend Teresa Robeson grows her own pumpkins in southern Indiana. Learn more about Teresa and her books here: <https://www.teresarobeson.com/> And check out her recipes for pumpkin pie and roasted pumpkin seeds.

#### Teresa’s Pumpkin Pie

*1 single pie crust  
 15 oz pumpkin pulp  
 1/2 C sugar  
 1 tsp ground cinnamon  
 1/2 tsp ground ginger  
 Pinch of nutmeg  
 2 eggs, slightly beaten  
 3/4 C evaporated milk*

*Preheat oven to 375F.  
 Prepare pie crust dough in pan.  
 For filling: in a bowl, combine pumpkin, sugar, and spices.  
 Add eggs, lightly beating with fork until combined.  
 Gradually add milk/whatever liquid and stir until just combined.  
 Pour into crust.  
 Bake for 50 minutes total or until center is firm.  
 Cool for 2 hours and then refrigerate.*

#### Teresa’s Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

Rinse pumpkin seeds to get rid of the stringy pulp. After patting them dry, toss with some oil and lightly salt or get creative with your favorite seasoning. Spread seeds on a pan or cookie tray. Bake at 275-300 degrees for 15 minutes, toss to make sure both sides are getting cooked, and bake until they brown.

### **Jumpin’ Jack-o’-Lanterns!**

We would love to see photos or drawings of your jack-o’-lantern creations. Whatever you’re carving -- pumpkins, turnips, watermelons, or wherever your imagination takes you – please send an image to [www.nancychurnin.com](http://www.nancychurnin.com) and we’ll share on our Jumpin’ Jack-o’-Lanterns page.