

The Pumpkin's Peculiar Problem

K-2 with adult support | 15-25 minutes | Prep: 3 minutes

What children practice

Children retell a simple problem and solution, use a described detail to explain a choice, and invent a sensible or playfully impossible solution.

Gather and set up

The three activity cards, plain paper and pencils or crayons. No costumes, food, special decorations or real pumpkin are needed. Choose one activity for a short session, or all three for a longer one. Read the pumpkin story aloud: 'Pip the pumpkin wanted warm toes. Pip bought socks. Pip looked down. No toes! A friend made the socks into a scarf. Warm at last.' For a fall-only version, replace Pip with a round pebble named Pip throughout.

0-3 min • Hear the problem

Read the five-sentence story with a pause before 'No toes!' Invite a puzzled face or a quiet gesture, with listening-only participation welcome.

3-8 min • Activity 1: Help Pip

Children invent another use for the socks. Let them draw, dictate or demonstrate with their hands. Ask 'How does your idea help Pip?'

8-13 min • Activity 2: Clue costume

Give three spoken clues: 'It sits on a head. It keeps a head warm. It can have a pom-pom.' Children suggest a hat and explain a clue. They invent a new three-clue object for a partner.

13-20 min • Activity 3: Tiny theater

Partners retell Pip's problem, attempted solution and ending with three pictures or three still poses. Children can narrate while a partner points to pictures.

20-25 min • Share a solution

Invite two different solutions. Ask what stayed the same in the story and what the storytellers changed. A five-minute extension is optional.

Free 30-minute introductory workshop

Live on Zoom: the whole book + voices + a turn directing C. J.

Adults: cjmcguirebooks.com/visit

Subject to availability. School/library groups; a teacher or librarian hosts.

(C) 2026 C. J. McGuire. Free classroom, library and home copying.



Keep the thinking going

‘Pip has purchased socks. Pip has forgotten to purchase feet. What now?’

What a response might sound like

The story problem is wanting warmth without toes; the original solution is a scarf made from socks. A sock hat or blanket also addresses warmth. A rocket ride is a fun new story; ask how the child wants it to solve Pip’s problem rather than marking imagination wrong.

Make the first step smaller

Use the pebble version for a season-neutral activity. Offer a scarf and hat as spoken choices. An adult can describe pictures and record children’s ideas. Movement, costumes and monster voices are never required.

Add a challenge when ready

Children explain how their ending follows from the problem. Add a new complication, such as wind, then revise one scene rather than starting the entire story again.

A quick check for understanding

Ask for the problem and the solution in any communication mode. Can the child put the three events in order? For the clue game, listen for a relevant detail in their explanation.

No printer? No problem.

Read the story and cards from this page. Retell with fingers, three spoken sentences, shared board drawings or three quiet poses.

Print only what you need

Pages 1-2: adult reference. Page 3: one set of cards per group, or read aloud without cutting. Page 4: optional child response. US Letter: actual size. A4: Fit. Student pages use black lines and white backgrounds.

Developed for C. J. McGuire Books with AI assistance. Suggested activities for educator review, not an independently evaluated curriculum. Feedback: hello@cjm McGuire Books.

Three little adventures



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

HELP PIP

A pumpkin wants warm toes. There are no toes. Invent a way to help!

CLUE COSTUME

It sits on a head. It keeps a head warm. It can have a pom-pom. What could it be? Give a reason.

TINY THEATER

Show the problem, the try and the ending. Draw it, tell it or make three still poses.

Pip needs a brilliant idea



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw Pip and your invention.

Pip wants...

My idea helps because...