

## How Are You, Jack-o-lantern?

**Level:** Upper Beginner

**Time required:** 90 minutes

**Goals:** To introduce students to a Halloween tradition; to build vocabulary related to emotions; to improve students' ability to have a conversation based on emotions

**Materials:** tape; paper; pens, pencils, markers, or crayons; scissors (optional)

### Procedures:

1. Write *Halloween* on the board and ask students what they know about this holiday. Halloween is a holiday celebrated on October 31. Traditions in the United States include children dressing up in costumes and walking from house to house asking for candy (called trick-or-treating). Families often decorate their houses by putting pumpkins and jack-o-lanterns outside.

2. Read "What Is a Jack-o-lantern?" to the class (several times if necessary). Clarify any unknown vocabulary.

### What Is a Jack-o-lantern?

A jack-o-lantern is a Halloween decoration that is made from a pumpkin. People cut a hole in the top of the pumpkin and take out everything from inside it. Then they cut one side of the pumpkin to make it look like it has a face, with eyes, a nose, and a mouth. People put a candle inside the jack-o-lantern and leave it outside at night.

3. Show students a picture of a jack-o-lantern (see page 50). Or you can draw a jack-o-lantern on

the board or on paper. Tell students that jack-o-lantern faces must have big eyes and a large nose and mouth in order for the candlelight to shine through the holes. If you draw a jack-o-lantern face on paper, cut out the eyes, nose, and mouth to help students understand this concept.

Note: If your students have trouble understanding what jack-o-lanterns are, you can do this activity by having students draw people's faces.

4. Brainstorm a list of emotions with the class, and write the emotions on the board as students list them. Here are some examples:

*happy sad frightened excited*

*calm surprised confused angry*

5. Introduce the following structure to the class:

    Name     is     emotion     because  
he/she     past tense verb.    

Example: Jenny is happy because she received  
an A on her English test.

6. To make sure students understand all the emotions in your list, read each emotion to the class and have the students make facial expressions at each other to match the emotion. Then ask a volunteer to share one reason someone feels happy/sad/etc. by using the structure you've just taught.

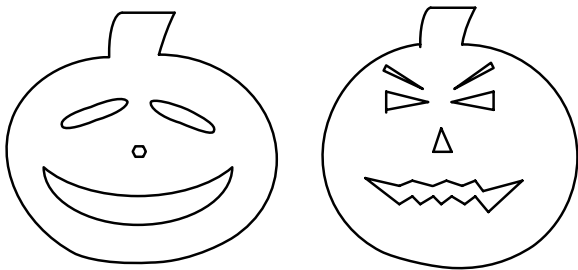
7. Assign each student one emotion (you could write the emotions on pieces of paper and distribute them or whisper in the students' ears). Students should not tell anyone which emotion they have. If you have more students than emotions on your list, you may give the same emotion to more than one student.

## Classroom Activities

8. Instruct students to draw a jack-o-lantern (or a person) that has the facial expression of the emotion they have been assigned. Let students know that some emotions may be more difficult to draw than others. Tell students that they must also write one sentence describing why the jack-o-lantern represents this emotion. In the sentence, students should not write the emotion; instead, they should leave a blank. Here are two examples:

- Jack is \_\_\_\_\_ because he got an A on his English test.
- Jack is \_\_\_\_\_ because he lost his favorite shirt.

Optional: Have students cut the jack-o-lantern face out of the paper. The jack-o-lantern faces might look something like this:



9. Assign each student a number and ask students to write their number on their jack-o-lantern paper. Ask students to post their jack-o-lantern on the wall. If that is not convenient, you could also ask students to put their jack-o-lantern papers face-up on their desks.

10. Each student should have a piece of paper and number the paper with the number of jack-o-lanterns there are. (For example, if there are 20 students and 20 jack-o-lanterns, students should number their papers from 1 to 20.) Students circulate the room with their paper and a pen or pencil, looking at each jack-o-lantern. They read the sentence, look at the jack-o-lantern's face, and write the emotion they think the jack-o-lantern is showing. They should write one emotion for each jack-o-lantern.

11. When the students are finished, ask the class which emotion they wrote for each jack-o-lantern picture. Keep a tally on the board. Discuss why more than one emotion could be correct. Ask students why they chose the other emotions.

For example, a student might say, "Jack is surprised because he got an A on his English test. Jack is surprised because he forgot to study but he still got an A." For the same jack-o-lantern, another student might say, "Jack is excited because he got an A on his English test. *Excited* is similar to *happy*."

12. Ask the student artist which emotion is correct and circle it. The tally on the board might look something like this:

Jack-o-lantern 1	happy IIII	excited IIII	surprised I
Jack-o-lantern 2	angry I	sad IIII I	

### Extension: Speaking

1. Each student should write one situation on a strip of paper that could make someone feel one of the emotions the class has discussed. (Or you could create the situations before class.) Circulate to help students and correct any errors.

#### Situation Examples

lost his/her favorite shirt  
 won his/her soccer game  
 finished a sad book  
 ate ice cream  
 bought a bicycle  
 got a job

2. Collect situations from students. Use one of the situations that was written by a student to demonstrate the following conversation with a student volunteer.

Student A: How are you today?

Student B: (*Look at the situation.*) I am \_\_\_\_\_ (*choose an emotion based on the situation on the card.*)

Student A: That's good./I'm sorry to hear that./ Oh, really?

How come?/Why?

Student B: I \_\_\_\_\_ (*read the situation.*)

3. Have students stand in two lines (A and B) facing each other. Give each student in Line B a situation.

4. Have students conduct a conversation using the model you demonstrated, based on their situation.

5. Once they conduct the conversation, have students in Line B pass their situations to the left. After they have gone through all of the situations, repeat with Line A holding the situations.

### **Extension: Writing**

Have students write an extended story about their jack-o-lanterns. Students can describe what happened before and after the event that caused the emotion.

## **The Incredible Shrinking Dialogue**

**Level:** Upper Intermediate and above

**Time required:** 60 minutes, depending on class size

**Goals:** To encourage students to analyze a text to find the most important ideas; to give students practice in paraphrasing, speaking, and performing

**Materials:** short dialogues with 4 or 5 lines for speakers A and B or cartoon strips with 6–10 panels

**Background:** This activity is based on the concept of *improv comedy*, which is dialogue and action that actors create spontaneously to make an audience laugh. The students do not need to know this, but they do need to know that this activity depends on a template—a set of steps the students perform—and that through these steps, they can make the audience laugh.

### **Procedures:**

1. Put students into pairs. As each pair performs the activity, a student from another pair can act as timekeeper.

2. Tell the students what they will do in each round of this activity so that they can prepare for the full activity before performing in front of the class:

Round 1: Read the dialogue while acting it out with gestures.

Round 2: Shorten the dialogue and act it out in half the time. Paraphrase well to keep the main ideas, and use gestures to enhance the audience's understanding.

Round 3: Shorten the dialogue again and act it out in 5 seconds. Be sure to keep the main idea and use gestures.

Round 4: Act out the dialogue in 1 second. You should use gestures, but you have time for each speaker to say only one word.

3. Hand out dialogues to each pair. Each pair must have a different dialogue. Student A will have several lines to speak, and Student B will have several lines to speak. The best dialogues to use include

some action (gestures, facial expressions, and body movement) and some kind of conflict.

If you don't have dialogues, or if you want to give students practice writing creatively, have them work in pairs to write their own dialogues or create their own cartoon strips. Students can then exchange those dialogues. The pair that receives the dialogue acts it out. You can promote the creation of new dialogues by asking students to use vocabulary they are currently studying. For example, if students are learning about holidays, have them write dialogues focused on those holidays. In this way, the activity provides vocabulary practice and review.

4. Each pair practices the dialogue together to prepare to present it in front of the class. Students should practice the dialogue enough times so that they feel comfortable reading it. Tell students to use action with their hands or body whenever possible and also to use facial expressions to show meaning. Students do not have to memorize the dialogue when they act it out and in fact should read the script exactly for Round 1.

Then the pairs should plan for Round 2. The students must shorten the dialogue so that they can read it and act it out in half the time. Depending on students' abilities, they should probably write out the shortened dialogue and practice it, making sure it takes exactly half the time. Next, the pair should plan for Round 3 by shortening the dialogue again, making sure they can perform it in 5 seconds. Finally, the pair should decide on the one word each student will say in Round 4.

5. Have the students perform their dialogues in front of the class. Before each pair performs, assign someone from another pair to act as timekeeper.

**Round 1:** It should take the students about 30 seconds to 1 minute to act out the dialogue. When the students finish, the timekeeper should note how long Round 1 has taken.

**Round 2:** The two students perform a shortened dialogue in half the time. If Round 1 took 1 minute, Round 2 should take 30 seconds; if Round 1

took 30 seconds, Round 2 should take 15 seconds. The students should shorten the dialogue but keep as much of the original meaning as possible. Because the pair planned out and practiced each round before performing, they should need only a few seconds at the end of Round 1 to prepare to perform Round 2. The timekeeper should yell out and stop the action when the time is up.

It is important that the pair keep the dialogue to the correct amount of time. It is not okay for students to do the dialogue in much less time or much more time than the round allows. Controlling the time in this way helps the class appreciate the humor of the activity.

**Round 3:** The students perform the shortened dialogue in 5 seconds. The students must keep the meaning of the original dialogue while also making sure not to go over 5 seconds. The timekeeper should make sure that the dialogue does not go over 5 seconds.

**Round 4:** The students perform the dialogue one final time, but this time in 1 second. There is usually enough time for Speaker A to say one word and Speaker B to say one word. What words correctly capture the meaning of the whole dialogue? The students must decide. The timekeeper usually doesn't do anything for this step because the performers are in a hurry.

It's best to allow one pair of students to perform all the rounds before another pair begins so that the audience can follow the progression of the dialogue. The comedy comes in Rounds 2–4 as students refine the meaning of the original dialogue and perform it in less and less time.

One more note about the timing. Timing is very important in comedy and very important in these steps. If a pair of students cannot act out the dialogue in the required time, the humor in the activity may be lost. When the timekeeper calls "Time!" the students should be just finished with their dialogue. Therefore, the planning and practice at the beginning of class is an essential element of the activity.

## Classroom Activities

### Example Dialogue: Raking Leaves

The following example dialogue shows how the activity will work in your classroom.

**Round 1:** Two students act out the dialogue with facial expressions and hand gestures. The timekeeper notes that it takes 50 seconds. (Suggested gestures are added, though students can create their own.)

Parent: Wake up! Today is Saturday, and we're going to rake the leaves!

Child: (*child is lying down*) Oh, no! (*gestures running hands through hair as if just waking up*) We do this every year! Why do we have so many trees in our yard? (*yawns*)

Parent: In the summer, you complain that we don't have enough trees to shade our yard, and in the fall you complain that we have too many! Do you want more trees or fewer trees? (*gestures with shrugging shoulders*)

Child: I want more trees in the summer and fewer trees in the fall.

Parent: I'll tell you what: help me rake the leaves this morning, and this afternoon you can invite your friends over to jump in our leaf pile.

Child: You've got a deal! Now I wish we had more trees to make a bigger leaf pile! (*jumps out of bed*)

**Round 2:** The two students act out the shortened dialogue in half the time: 25 seconds. They keep gestures that relate to the new dialogue. Because they planned out the entire activity before performing Round 1, they have this dialogue written out. The timekeeper yells "Stop!" after 25 seconds. If the pair has not completed the dialogue within 25 seconds, you can ask the pair to do it again until they complete the dialogue before the timekeeper yells "Stop!" Students should add gestures and movement to the following dialogue:

Parent: We're going to rake the leaves!

Child: Oh, no! Why do we have so many trees in our yard?

Parent: Do you want more trees or fewer trees?

Child: I want more trees and fewer trees.

Parent: Help me this morning, and this afternoon you and your friends can jump in our leaf pile.

Child: I wish we had more trees to make a bigger leaf pile!

**Round 3:** The two students now act out the dialogue in 5 seconds. They can read the dialogue, or they may have it memorized. The timekeeper yells "Stop!" after 5 seconds. Again, since the completion of the dialogue in only 5 seconds is very important, help the pair shorten their dialogue until they can do it in 5 seconds.

Parent: Rake the leaves!

Child: Oh, no!

Parent: Help me, and then jump in our leaf pile.

Child: More trees!

**Round 4:** The two students now act out the dialogue in 1 second. The timekeeper doesn't have to keep time as long as the two students know that they each get to say one word.

Parent: Rake!

Child: Jump!

Notice that in Round 4, the child says "Jump!" for the very first time. However, it is what the child is thinking in the earlier rounds when saying, "I wish we had more trees." The humor comes when the audience hears the child put this thought into a new word and sees the accompanying action.

### Variations

1. If you find dialogues that are longer or have advanced students, you can change the time in the rounds and perhaps add another round. For example, if Round 1 takes 4 minutes to act out, then Round 2 will be 2 minutes, Round 3 will be 1 minute, Round 4 will be 20 seconds, and Round 5 will be 1 second.

## Classroom Activities

2. Find or create dialogues or strips with three or four characters speaking, so that groups of more than two students will act them out. The rounds and the time remain the same; however, some characters won't speak in Round 4. (Or each character can say only one word.)

3. If you have students who are talented in improv comedy, have them go through the whole activity without practicing before Rounds 2–4. This approach creates more humor and spontaneity, and it is truly improv comedy because each speaker must listen to the other one in order to know how to respond.

4. You can repeat this activity throughout the year in order to promote fluency and paraphrasing skills; the students have new dialogues each time.

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