



Pumpkin in a Jar

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

AUTHORS: Elaine Lindy & Erin Fleming, COUNTRY: Philippines, GENRE: Riddles



CHARACTERS

NARRATOR or NARRATORS (one person or more than one person)

KING ADOVIS

HUNTING COMPANION #1

HUNTING COMPANION #2

MAIDEN

SOLDIER

**If there are performance notes, they can be found on the pages following the script*

Scene 1 – Wood’s by the Maiden’s Cottage

[Stage set: The stage has a primary set and a secondary set. The primary set is a woodsy scene. If you have a backdrop it can show rolling fields of grass with a cottage in the distance, surrounded by large pumpkin patches. There are a few cardboard trees onstage (See **Performance Notes** for ideas on making the trees). The secondary scene is the door to a king’s castle. More on the door in Scene 2.]

NARRATOR:

Hello, everyone. This is a riddle story from the Philippines. Later, YOU will get a chance to try and solve the riddle. This play is called “Pumpkin in a Jar” and it is brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*. Let’s get started.

[NARRATOR steps forward.]

NARRATOR:

One day, King Adovis was out hunting in the woods.

[KING, HUNTING COMPANION #1 and HUNTING COMPANION #2 enter. KING wears a crown.]

KING:

What a wonderful day to be out for a hunt.

HUNTING COMPANION #1:

It is a nice day. I just wish we were seeing some deer.

KING:

Other than THAT, it’s a pretty nice day. Look at these rolling hills.

[KING wanders toward the back of the stage, facing the back wall, with his back to the audience.]

HUNTING COMPANION #2:

Look! (*points offstage*) A deer over there!

HUNTING COMPANION #1:

Where?

HUNTING COMPANION #2:

Shhh, just follow me.

[HUNTING COMPANION #1 and HUNTING COMPANION #2 creep silently offstage.]

KING:

(turns around to face audience) Where—? I can't believe they took off and left me. A king just can't get good help anymore. Hmm, I wonder where I am.

[MAIDEN enters carrying a basket of flowers. She wears a cape.]

KING:

Greetings, Miss.

MAIDEN:

King Adovis! *(bows)* It is an honor to meet you, sire.

KING:

Indeed.

[MAIDEN runs a hand through her hair and fixes her skirt.]

KING:

(clears throat) I'm not saying my royal companions abandoned me, but let's just say I have been out here for a while, and I'm rather thirsty.

MAIDEN:

Oh, Your Highness. The well by my cottage has plenty of water. But I'm afraid I don't have a jar or goblet that's noble or fine enough to serve you.

KING:

No matter with that. Your common jar will do, for this occasion.

MAIDEN:

If that's what you'd like, I'll be right back. If you'll excuse me. *(lightly bows again)*

[MAIDEN exits and returns with a clear plastic bottle that has some water. She hands it to KING, who drinks heartily.]

KING:

Ahh! I feel so much better. Thank you. *(hands jug back to Maiden)*

MAIDEN:

You're more than welcome *(drops the jar behind a prop or the curtain)*

[Offstage, play a pre-recorded smashing noise. Or a stagehand could (carefully!) smash some ceramics or pottery. (See **Performance Notes** on how to safely accomplish this.)]

KING:

(surprised) What? Why did you break the jar? *(to audience)* This is a strange maiden!

MAIDEN:

Since you have put your lips to the jar, my King, no one else should be able to drink out of it after you.

KING:

(to audience) Hmmm. I misjudged her. The maiden is virtuous. *(to Maiden, pointing to cottage in the distance)* Tell me, do you live in this cottage on your own?

MAIDEN:

Yes, I do.

KING:

(to audience) And she is independent. Let's see how clever she is. *(to Maiden)* I have a riddle for you.

MAIDEN:

Oh?

KING:

Bring me another jar. A bigger one.

MAIDEN:

Very well.

[MAIDEN exits and returns with a gallon-sized, clear plastic bottle.]

KING:

Your challenge is to fit a full-grown pumpkin into this jar.

MAIDEN:

A full-sized pumpkin?! But the hole is so small!

KING:

Ah, but that's what makes it a riddle. Can you meet this challenge?

MAIDEN:

Well, I don't know. A full-sized pumpkin!

KING:

Just send a message to the palace when it's done.

[SOLDIER enters.]

SOLDIER:

Oh, there you are, King Adovis. We've been looking everywhere for you.

KING:

Well, I certainly wasn't LOST. This maiden was most gracious and kind when you were away. *(to Maiden)* I will expect to hear from you.

MAIDEN:

Very well. But it may take a bit of time.

KING:

Take all the time you need. Just make sure it's a full-sized pumpkin. In THIS jar.

[MAIDEN bows.]

[KING and SOLDIER exit.]

MAIDEN:

(to audience) How am I going to do this?

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

Okay, everyone. This is where you think to yourself – Can the riddle be solved?

MAIDEN:

You know what? There is a way that just might work.

[MAIDEN rushes offstage.]

NARRATOR:

She has an idea, apparently. Do you?

Scene 2 – Castle Door

[Stage set: The door of the King's castle. (See **Performance Notes** for how to replicate a door.)]

[SOLDIER #1 and SOLDIER #2 enter and stand on either side of castle door.]

[MAIDEN enter. She holds something (the jar) inside her cape. If door is the sort of prop that can be opened, SOLDIER stands with door ajar. If not, SOLDIER stands beside a painted door.]

SOLDIER #1:

Good morning, miss. What bring you to the castle door?

MAIDEN:

I am here to see the King, to show him that I have solved his riddle.

SOLDIER #2:

Of course- the young Maiden from the cottage in the woods! He got your letter and is expecting you. I will go and get him.

MAIDEN:

Thank you.

[SOLDIER exits.]

MAIDEN:

(to audience) I have something inside my cape to show him. You probably can guess what it is.

SOLDIER #1:

What's that?

MAIDEN:

Nothing.

[SOLDIER #2 returns with KING.]

KING:

I was so excited to get your letter! So, you have solved the riddle?

MAIDEN:

Indeed I did, Your Highness. Here. *(removes from under her cape the gallon-size clear plastic bottle with a large pumpkin shown inside (see **Performance Notes** on how to accomplish this effect)*

KING:

You have done it! This is surely a full-sized pumpkin. (*peers closely at bottle*) And this is definitely the jar. You must tell me your secret.

MAIDEN:

Certainly, Your Highness. (*bows*) I moved the jar next to my pumpkin patch, where one of my pumpkins was sending out a sprout with a bud. I moved the bud to inside the jar. Over time, the bud grew into a full-sized pumpkin! That's all it was.

KING:

You are as clever as you are virtuous. A remarkable maiden indeed! Would you consider being my wife?

MAIDEN:

What an honor! How lucky I am!

KING:

I'm the lucky one. (*takes Maiden's hand inside his arm and they start to exit*) By the way, I have a model ship at home that would look great inside a bottle.

MAIDEN:

(*turns to audience and claps her face with her hands*) Oh, my goodness!

KING:

(*laughs*) Just messing with you!

MAIDEN:

Actually, I have an idea how that could be done.

KING:

Why am I not surprised?

[If you have a curtain, close it now. If you do not, fade the lights. If you have no stage lights, all actors come on stage and bow to the audience.]



Performance Notes for Pumpkin in a Jar

THREE WAYS THAT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS CAN UTILIZE THIS PLAY:

1. *Students can read the play aloud while sitting in the classroom.* Ask the readers to skip all bracketed stage directions. You may prefer to rotate your actors to give all students a chance to read the speaking parts.
2. *Students can perform the play in the classroom.* Clear an area that can be used as the stage. Have the audience sit on the floor in front of the stage. Students in the play can make simple costumes and/or sets as described below. When the scene change, the characters "on stage" simply walk to the back of the room where they wait until their next appearance "on stage."
3. *Students can perform the play on stage.* Refer to the production notes that follow. Ask the actors to enter from the back of the room and move through the audience as they approach the stage.



COSTUMES

- NARRATOR or NARRATORS – Nice, simple clothes.
- KING ADOVIS— Black pants, a nice long-sleeved button-up shirt, and a vest or nice jacket. He wears a crown, which can be made from yellow construction paper with glitter and/or rhinestones glued on.
- HUNTING COMPANION #1 and HUNTING COMPANION #2— Camouflaged pants and shirts or black, brown, green, or tan plain pants and shirts.
- MAIDEN— A plain dress or plain shirt and skirt, and a cape.



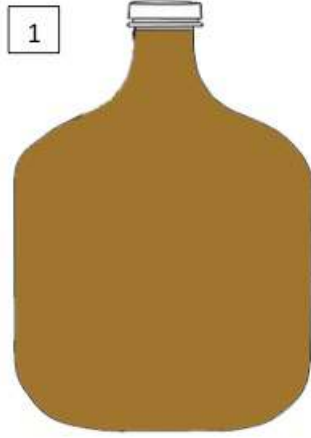
- SOLDIER—Black pants and a plain black shirt.



PROPS

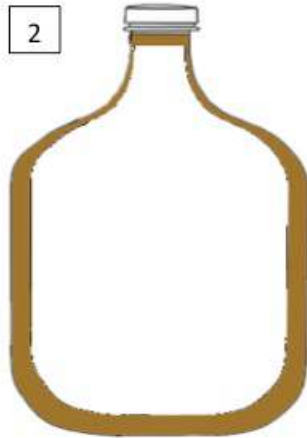
Scene 1

- Hunting materials for KING and HUNTING COMPANIONS. They can carry FAKE hunting rifles made out of paper towel rolls with black construction paper handles glued or taped to the rolls.
Another option would be to carry bows and arrows. Bows can be made with sticks and string, and arrows can be cut from cardboard.
- A basket of flowers for MAIDEN to carry. The basket can be a real woven basket, or you can make a basket out of construction paper.
Flowers can be real, plastic store-bought, or they can be made of construction paper.
- A jar or jug for MAIDEN to give to the KING to drink from. This should be plastic, to avoid breakage.
Note: When MAIDEN throws the jar/jug offstage, someone offstage can play a sound effect of glass breaking, or they can simulate a breaking noise- put a few coins into a glass jar, and when the MAIDEN throws the plastic jar/jug offstage, someone can shake the jar of coins once, up and down.
- A second jar for MAIDEN to give to KING. The jar should be oversized. It can be made from cardboard and a clear material, such as cellophane.
To make the jar: Cut two large jar shapes out of cardboard. (The base of the jar is wide and the mouth of the jar is small- too small for a pumpkin to fit through.)
Using a box cutter, cut out the inside of each jar, leaving a thin cardboard frame in the shape of the jar. Paint the cardboard a light gray.
Stretch the cellophane across one side of each jar- these will be the “middle” of the jar. Tape or glue the cellophane to the cardboard frames.
Cut the excess cellophane from around each frame, so nothing sticks out.
Glue the two frames together, with the cellophane in the middle.
This keeps the cellophane in place, and gives the jar the look of having an “inside”.
See below for images:



1

Cut 2 jar shapes of equal size out of cardboard.



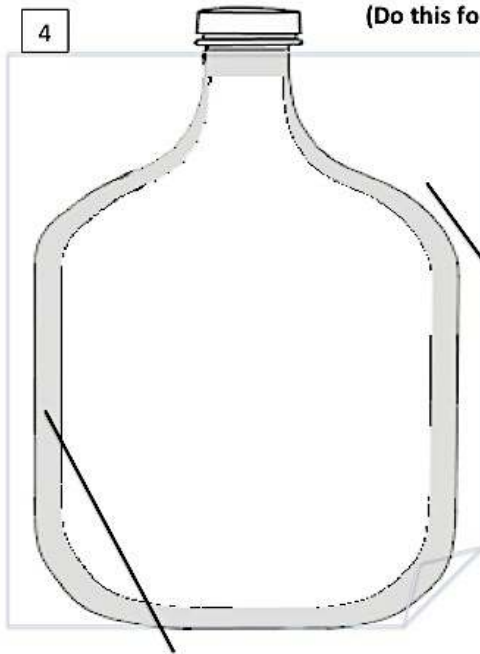
2

Cut the inside of the shapes out, so that there are two a jar-shaped frames, of equal size.



3

Paint the jar frames light gray.



4

(Do this for each jar frame)

2) Cut excess cellophane around edges

1) Glue cellophane to cardboard, all the way around. Do this on BOTH sides.



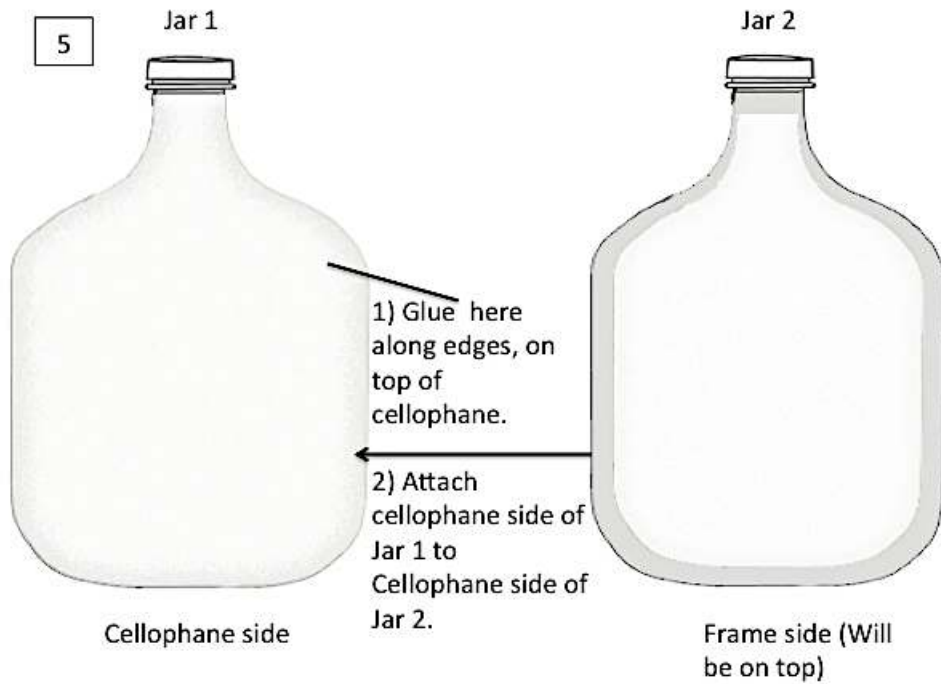
(When finished cutting)



(Now, each jar will have a side with a cardboard frame showing and a side with the cellophane cut to the edge.)



5





Finished jar, with two cardboard frames glued together, with two sheets of cellophane in between.



- The SOLDIER can carry a toy sword or a sword made out of gray construction paper or gray foil.

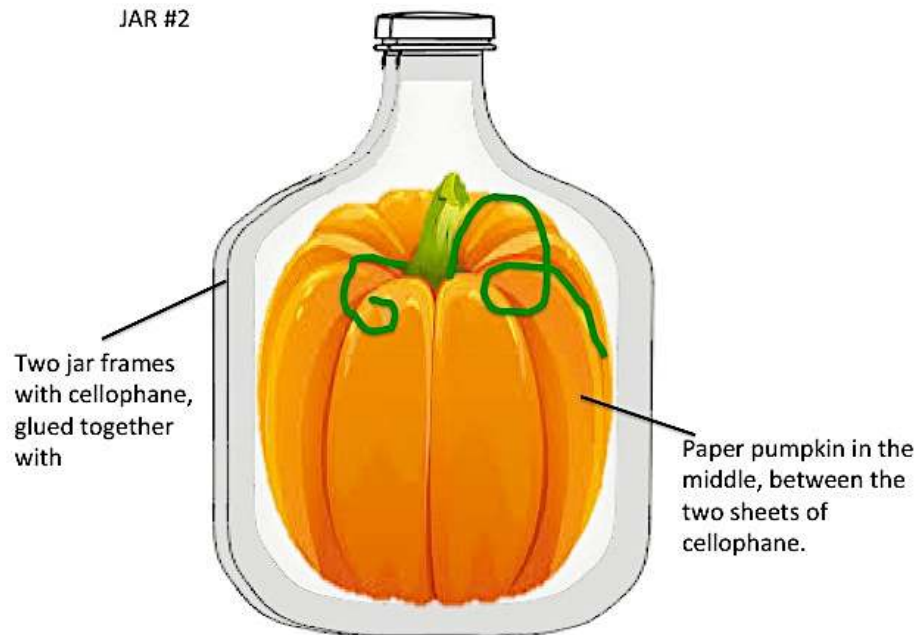
Scene 2

- Another jar, identical to the first oversized cardboard jar. This one needs to have a pumpkin inside of it.

For the pumpkin: You can cut the pumpkin out of orange construction paper, or you can cut it out of white paper and paint it orange. It should be as wide as the jar and as tall as you'd like it to be- it should be big enough to be seen from the audience. You can add a few curly vines coming off of the stem. These can be green ribbon, pipe cleaners, or paper.

For the jar: Make this jar the exact same way as the jar in Scene 1, but put the pumpkin in between the two pieces of cellophane when you glue the frames together

See image for example:



The stage has a primary set and a secondary set. The primary set is a woody scene. If you have a backdrop it can show rolling fields of grass with a cottage in the distance, surrounded by large pumpkin patches. If you don't have a backdrop, you can just rely on the set pieces.

Scene 1 – A few cardboard trees can be scattered around the stage. These can be made by cutting basic tree-shapes out of cardboard and cutting leaves from construction paper. Glue leaves to tree branches. Tie or tape trees to stools, chairs, or milk crates, so that they can be free-standing.

Scene 2 – The door to the King's castle. The door can be made from cardboard. Start with a big rectangular piece. Paint the cardboard a light tan or gray. You can make "stone bricks" by dipping sponges into another shade of tan or gray and stamping the cardboard. Let this dry.



With a marker, draw a door within the large piece.

With a box cutter, trace the marker, leaving one side of the door uncut. This will act as the hinge. Paint the door brown and use a darker brown to paint lines going down and across, to resemble a castle door.

You can make two triangular cardboard braces or use stools, milks crates, or other sturdy objects to make the door free-standing. Tape or tie the bracing to the back of the door.

Another option is to have two STAGE HANDS hold the door in place for the scene.

See images below for example:

