

MATERIAL 1 • READING • GRADES 3-5

# The Pumpkin That Would Not Glow

A Halloween story about teamwork — fun, not scary. Read together or on your own, then answer the questions.

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On the morning of the Fall Festival, Maya found the problem.

The big pumpkin lantern for the school entrance sat on a table in the hallway, smiling with triangle eyes — but it would not glow. Mr. Alvarez, the custodian, tapped the little battery light inside. Click. Nothing. Click, click. Still nothing.

“The festival starts at six,” said Maya’s friend Leo, who was wearing cat ears. “Everyone walks past this pumpkin first. It has to glow.”

Their classmate Sam, in a cardboard astronaut helmet, lifted the pumpkin lid carefully. “The light is fine,” Sam said. “Look — the batteries rolled out. And one wire is loose.”

Maya had an idea, but she did not rush. She made a quick plan out loud: “First, we find batteries that fit. Second, we fix the wire. Third, we test it in the dark closet so we know it really works.”

Leo ran (walked fast, because hallway rules are hallway rules) to ask Ms. Chen for batteries. Sam held the pumpkin steady. Maya fitted the batteries in, one by one, until she heard a soft *click*.

Nothing happened.

“Wait,” said Sam. “One battery is backwards. The flat side goes the other way.” Maya flipped it. This time, a warm golden light filled the pumpkin’s smile and spilled across the hallway floor.

They carried it together — slowly, with two hands each — to the dark supply closet and closed the door. The pumpkin glowed brighter than ever, friendly and proud.

That evening, families lined up for the festival. Little kids pointed. Grown-ups took photos. Nobody knew about the loose wire or the backwards battery. But Maya, Leo, and Sam knew the best part: they had not guessed, and they had not given up. They had made a plan, each done a job, and checked their work.

Mr. Alvarez gave them each a sticker that said **Problem Solver**. “Best lantern crew this school has ever had,” he said.

Maya grinned. “Next year,” she said, “we are checking the batteries *first*.”

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### Word Bank — say it, use it

#### festival

A celebration with activities for many people.  
*The Fall Festival starts at six.*

#### custodian

A person who takes care of a building. *Mr. Alvarez is our custodian.*

#### steady

Still and not wobbling. *Sam held the pumpkin steady.*

#### spilled

Spread out beyond where it started. *Light spilled across the floor.*

**Your turn:** Write one sentence using *steady* or *festival*.

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CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

## Answer in full sentences

1. What is the problem at the start of the story?

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2. What two things were wrong inside the pumpkin?

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3. What was Maya's three-step plan? List the steps in order.

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4. How did the team know their fix really worked before the festival?

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5. What lesson does Maya learn for next year? Use a detail from the story.

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### Writing Prompt — The Night the Lights Went Out (Kindly!)

Imagine your class is setting up for a school celebration and one important thing stops working. Who helps? What is the plan? Write 6–10 sentences. Give your team a happy, friendly ending — no scary parts needed.

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**Exit ticket (cut off and hand in):** One problem my team could solve with a plan is: \_\_\_\_\_ My first step would be: \_\_\_\_\_