

## **THE PUMPKIN RUNNER Activities for Educators, Students, and Parents**

**THE PUMPKIN RUNNER provides an opportunity to discuss honorable actions with students:**

### **\*Sharing:**

When Joshua Summerhayes wins the race, he shares his winnings with all the other runners. He includes Damien Dodgerelle, the runner who cheated, trying to beat Joshua. In the end, Joshua forgives him and shares his winnings with Damien as well as the other runners. It is relevant to remind students that Cliff Young, the man who inspired this story, did, in reality, share his winnings with the other runners in the race.

### **\*Cheating:**

Damien Dodgerelle was afraid Joshua Summerhayes might win the race. What an embarrassment that would have been for him! He'd been training so hard and Joshua was just running for fun. So Damien paid a balloonist to fly him along a short cut. He cheated.

Discuss why Damien cheated and what effect cheating has on the person who cheats? On the victim?

Discuss integrity and honor.

Discuss losing gracefully.

### **\*Perseverance:**

What did Joshua do when his pumpkin energy food didn't arrive (a result of Damien's cheating and crashing into Aunt Millie and the jeep)? How does Joshua handle this situation? He's disappointed, but decides to keep running. Why?

### **\*Bragging:**

Bragging is being overly proud of what you've done and telling others about it in a manner that makes them feel inadequate.

Discuss Damien's bragging.

How does Joshua react? With humility.

### **\*The Tortoise and the Hare:**

Some have been reminded of this famous fable when reading THE PUMPKIN RUNNER. Bring this classic fable to students' attention and discuss the themes and similarities.

## **OTHER FUN PUMPKIN RUNNER ACTIVITIES:**

### **\*Creative Writing: For the Fun of It:**

Joshua Summerhayes entered the Koala-K Race because he liked to run. He didn't care about winning the prize or becoming famous.

Discussion Question: What do you do, just for the fun of it?

**\*Exercise, food, attitude and health:**

Discussion Questions: Why do you think Joshua Summerhayes could run so far at his age? Was it the nutritious pumpkins? Was it because he had been running, exercising, and using his body since he was young? Was it because he loved his life and loved to run? Or was it all three?

**\*Differences:**

Discussion Questions:

- 1) People laughed at Joshua Summerhayes because of the way he dressed. Has anyone ever laughed at you because of how you looked or dressed or where you lived?
- 2) People also laughed because they thought Joshua was too old to run an ultra-marathon. Discuss or do a study about people who did something for the first time (the first girl to play on a softball team, the first man to become a flight attendant).

**\* Study of Australia**

*The Pumpkin Runner* can be a jumping off point to a study of Australia. Find Australia on a map.

- 1) What are the climate, geography, cities, and culture like?
- 2) Who are the aborigines?
- 3) What is their history and what is their life like today?
- 4) What would it have been like to be part of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney?

**\*Ultra - marathon races**

- 1) What is a marathon? What is an ultra-marathon?
- 2) How do runners prepare for these races?
- 3) Do you know anyone who has run a marathon?
- 4) Does running a marathon sound like fun to you?

**\*Using *The Pumpkin Runner* to show Alliteration**

Challenge your students to find alliterative names in *The Pumpkin Runner*:

Damien Dodgerelle

Mr. Manning

Cockatoo Canyon

Platypus Pond

**A fun link that involves ideas for *The Pumpkin Runner*:**

<http://www.amothersjournal.com/category/five-in-a-row/the-pumpkin-runner/>

Joshua Summerhayes, in *The Pumpkin Runner*, knew his pumpkins. Do you?

1. Pumpkins range in size from less than a pound to over 1,000 pounds.
2. Pumpkins originated in Australia.
3. Pumpkins were once recommended for removing freckles and curing snakebites.
4. In colonial days, pumpkins were used as an ingredient for the crust of pie, rather than the filling.
5. Pumpkins are 50% water.
6. Native Americans flattened strips of pumpkins, dried them, and used them to make mats.

**How many did you get right? Look at the answers to check!**

**Answers to Pumpkins: Fact or Fiction**

1. *Pumpkins range in size from less than a pound to over 1,000 pounds.* (Fact)
2. *Pumpkins originated in Australia.* (Fiction. They originated in Central America.)
3. *Pumpkins were once recommended for removing freckles and curing snakebites.* (Fact)
4. *In colonial days, pumpkins were used as an ingredient for the crust of pie, rather than the filling.* (Fact)
5. *Pumpkins are 50% water.* (Fiction. They are 90% water.)
6. *Native Americans flattened strips of pumpkins, dried them, and used them to make mats.* (Fact)