

HALLOWEEN IN CHRISTMAS HILLS The Legend of Stingy Jack

By Karen Tayleur
Illustrated by Heath McKenzie

Miles Cameron is allowed to go trick-or-treating for the first time. Everyone warns him to stay away from Stingy Jack's house.

If only he had listened.

Genre

Written and visual information

Reading level

Lower to upper primary

Interest level

Lower to upper primary

About the book

The Johnson family lives in Ash Crescent. They love holidays: Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Australia Day and St. Patrick's Day. They celebrate with enthusiasm. This Halloween, Miles, the youngest of the family, is allowed to go trick-or-treating. A lover of scary things, he is the one to confront Stingy Jack: the scariest man on Ash Crescent.

Students will love the humour, the horror and the suspense that run through Halloween in Christmas Hills. The text and illustrations provide great ways to start many units of study. The book explores topics such as multiculturalism and society's treatment of outsiders. Students could read this text before they begin research on a variety of festivals and cultures. It's also a wonderful place to start units on legend, horror/suspense writing, picture books and poetry.

Learning Activities

Learning activities suggested in one KLA (Key Learning Area) may also be applicable to another KLA.

Topics include:

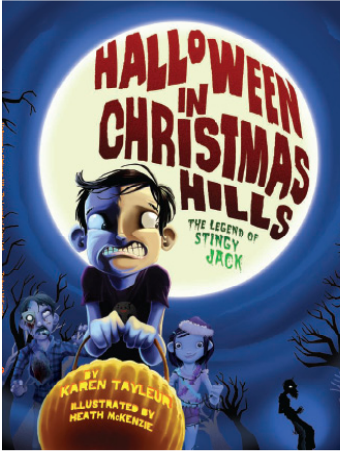
- Festivals and customs
- Multiculturalism
- Legends
- Suspense
- Horror
- Picture book writing
- Poetry

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Visual Literacy

Study the cover (front and back) of *Halloween in Christmas Hills*.

- What techniques has the illustrator used to make the design of the book creepy?
- What do you notice about the names of the author and illustrator?
- What is strange about the title of the book?
- Study the pictures of the Johnson family. What sort of boy is Miles Cameron Johnson?
- What do you learn about each member of the family from looking at the pictures?
- How does the illustrator make Mr Jack seem scary?
- What's your favourite picture? Why is it your favourite?

Book Features and Format

Halloween in Christmas Hills is a fantastically creepy picture book.

- Make a list of things that most picture books have in common.
- Is this picture book different to other ones that you have read? How?
- Make a list of three things that are important about the text in a picture book.
- Make a list of three things that are important about the illustrations in a picture book.

ENGLISH

Reading and writing

What is the definition of a legend? Make a list of some legends that you have read. How many can you list? Write your own legend and present it in picture book form like *The Legend of Stingy Jack*.

Write a journal entry about the holiday that you love the most. Describe how your family celebrates this holiday. Draw pictures to illustrate what you have written.

Miles is desperate to go trick-or-treating but he is too young. Make a list of things that people consider you are too young to do.

Mr Jack's house looks very scary in the pictures. Write a description of the house. Make it as frightening as you can!

Similes

Miles is very scared when he reaches Stingy Jack's door. 'His heart thumped like a drum'. In pairs, make up some other similes to describe how it feels to be afraid.

Alliteration

Find out what this word means. Can you find any examples of alliteration in this book? Write some scary poems. Include some alliteration in them.



Suspense

- How does the writer build the suspense in this story?
- How does the writer surprise the reader?
- Write your own suspenseful story with a surprising end.

Leprechauns

Find out as much as you can about leprechauns. Write a story about a character that meets one of these creatures.

Speaking and listening

In pairs, script an interview between a journalist and a leprechaun. What sort of questions will the journalist ask? Perform your interview for the class.

Find a copy of the song 'Waltzing Matilda'. As a class, read or sing the words. What do you learn about early Australia from this song?

As a class, read some scary poems. Choose your favourite poem and illustrate the best part.

Discussion questions

- Why do people make up stories about Stingy Jack?
- Why are they scared of him?
- What is multiculturalism?
- Make a list of your favourite foods or festivals that come from other cultures.
- What are some of the 'typical' Australian objects shown in this book?
- Do you think there is such a thing as a 'typical' Australian? Why or why not?
- Why do we have such a range of festivals in Australia?

CREATIVE ARTS

Art

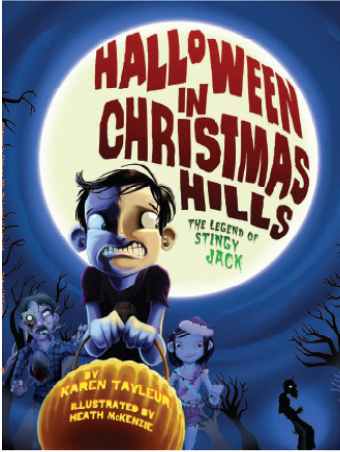
Design and draw a costume that you would like to wear on Halloween. Don't show anyone until it's finished. See who can design the most interesting and scary costume!

Drama

Choose your favourite part of the story and turn it into a play. Use costumes and sound effects to create atmosphere.

SOSE/HSIE

Trace, photocopy or draw a map of the world. Remember to include a border, title, northing, scale and key on your map. Mark in the continents, oceans and seas. Create symbols to represent the festivals and customs that are mentioned in the book and place them on your map. After you have finished, look at your map. Can you make any comments about Australian society?



Research one of the holidays or traditions mentioned in the book. Present your findings as a poster or PowerPoint presentation.

- Halloween
- Christmas
- Australia Day
- Easter
- Easter Bunny
- St Patrick's Day
- Gingerbread
- The Hungry Ghost Festival

Research a traditional Aboriginal festival, custom or landmark. Share your findings with the class.

Family history

Research your family's history. Where do your ancestors come from? What are some of your family traditions? As a class, create a display to represent the range of traditions and cultures in your year. You might like to have a party where you celebrate the different cultures that are present in your class. You might try different foods and listen to traditional music or stories.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Tayleur lives in the hills of the Dandenong Ranges with her husband and two kids who always leave their homework to the last minute. As well as being expert at year seven German and Chinese and holding down a four-day-a-week job, she is a writer.

Her kids have helped her tap back into school-age politics; back to a time when there was always a Rose Thornton ready to rain on everybody's parade. When there was always a school bully, a cranky neighbour and an annoying sibling to contend with.

As a child, Karen was a constant audience for her father's boyhood recollections. His stories have grown larger than life over the years. She's not saying he is a liar. But he has been known to bend the truth.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Heath McKenzie once had a granny — in fact he had two. Whilst neither Granny ever invented robots, powered through triathlons or suffered disastrous road accidents they were, nevertheless, prone to buying him gifts, cooking fabulous food and appearing on TV game shows.