



**Smoky and the Feast of Mabon** Written by Catherynne M. Valente and Illustrated by W. Lyon Martin

Fall has arrived and Smoky is sad that the garden she planted with her mother is dying. Smoky goes for a walk in the woods only to meet the Lady Equinox, who along with a host of woodland animals, teaches the lesson of the seasons. Written by Catherynne M. Valente and illustrated by W. Lyon Martin.

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for book clubs, literature circles, library, home and classroom study. It is intended to encourage discussion and provoke thought and insight into the subject and themes of *Smoky and the Feast of Mabon* including understanding the changing seasons.

### ***About the author and illustrator***

Born in the Pacific Northwest in 1979, Catherynne M. Valente is the author of a dozen works of fiction and poetry, including *Palimpsest*, the *Orphan's Tales* series, *The Labyrinth*, plus a crowdfunded phenomenon *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Own Making*, which won the **Andre Norton Nebula** award in 2010. She is the winner of the **Tiptree Award**, the **Mythopoeic Award**, the **Rhysling Award**, and the **Million Writers Award** She has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, the Spectrum Awards, and was a finalist for the **World Fantasy Award** in 2007 and 2009. She lives on an island off the coast of Maine with her partner and two dogs.

W. Lyon Martin is both author and illustrator. An Eclectic witch living in Eastern Missouri, she has written articles for Craft publications both on-line and in print including *PanGaia*, *IF...*, *Broomstix*, *The Seeker Journal*, *NewWitch*, *Acorns Journal*, *Elements Magazine*, *Crescent Magazine*, *The Witch's Voice* and *The Pagan-Wiccan Times*.

### ***Pre-reading Activity***

Fall. Autumn. Give each child a blank piece of paper or have the children open to a clean page if they are using a writing journal. Have them write and/or draw what reminds them of the Fall or Autumn—tastes, touch, smells, sights and sounds. Discuss, and compare.

### ***Questions for Discussion***

- What's in a name? Smoky got her name for the wonderful smell of wood burning present in the season of Autumn. Where does your name come from?
- More and more people are trying to live in the rhythm of the seasons—everything from working with the earth to grow food (gardens) to eating foods that are in season, to shopping locally. Does Smoky's story illustrate this? Why or why not? **CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY: Have students brainstorm ideas for living in synch with the seasons. Have students write editorial letters or create posters to promote these ideals (Resource:**

[www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)).

- When Smoky first goes into the woods, she is wary of meeting certain animals—particularly Stag and Jackrabbit. Are you afraid of animals like this (utilize illustrations/photographs) Does Smoky feel the same way after the Mabon Feast? What happens in the story that would cause Smoky to change her opinion?
- Fall is the time for Harvest celebrations—discuss why this is so. Why are certain foods (corn, pumpkins, etc) associated with Harvests? *ACTIVITY*: Have students plan a class Harvest luncheon or dinner (make the event for charity—collecting or preparing food for a soup kitchen or food bank).
- The animals tell Smoky that they are on the brink of the New Year. Traditionally, New Year's is January 1—discuss the differences between Smoky's New Year and the New Year's Day (January 1) in the common calendar. Have students discuss which date makes more sense—why?
- Stag tells Smoky that gods and goddesses can appear in all forms—including animals, to people who are willing to look. Have students discuss if they agree with Stag—why or why not?

## PROJECTS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### *Language Arts*

*Vocabulary*. Have students define the following words and use each in a sentence that shows that she knows the meaning of the words. Review the words as they come up in Feast of Mabon: autumn, sprouts, wilt, tangy, kettle, fierce, cradle, stag, Mabon, equinox, Samhain, vixen, beckoned, complicated, harvest.

*Metaphor and Simile*. Define METAPHOR and SIMILE. Review examples of metaphor and simile in Feast of Mabon, and how and why they are used in the story. Have students make up their own examples of metaphor and simile.

*Seasonal Tales*. Smoky is a story centered around the season of Autumn. Working in groups or individually, assign each student/group one of the remaining seasons, and have them write and illustrate their own original seasonal tale, using Smoky as a guide. Utilize simile and metaphor. Utilize perspective (see *Art*) in illustrations.

### *Music/Social Studies*

*Harvest Dances*. Dance is a part of the Harvest Feast in which Smoky takes part. Dances are often part of Harvest festivals all over the world.

- Play examples of different harvest dance music.
- Have students try to guess the country of origin of the music (have students give the reasons for their choices--traditional instruments used by different cultures, and in different time periods and geographical areas).
- Discuss the similarities and differences between each song.
- Watch videos of different dances.
- Physical Education—have students learn and perform harvest dances.

Resources for music

Korean Harvest Dance: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KtlkLpjY88>

Navajo Harvest Dance: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eIDXXK-cmyE>

Hungarian Harvest Dance: <http://www.magys.org/harvest%20dance/Harvest-dance.html>

American Harvest Dance: <http://www.homespun.biz/harvest.htm>

Indian Harvest/Folk Dances: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Indian\\_folk\\_dances](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indian_folk_dances)

African Harvest Dance: <http://www.alokli.com/site/video/video.html>

Pandora.com and Youtube.com are good resource for discovering harvest and folks music (it filters music through style and instrumentation to find similar melodies)

### **Art**

*Angle and Perspective.* The illustrations for Feast of Mabon are done from various PERSPECTIVES; scenery is viewed head on, from below, from above etc.

- Review the illustrations for Feast of Mabon and compare the different perspectives from which the scenes are viewed. Does the perspective effect the story—why or why not?
- Have students illustrate scenes from the story at a different perspective that that of the artist.
- Give students an object and have them draw it from several perspectives—compare and contrast.

Resources for perspective

<http://www.mangatutorials.net/tut/headmv.php>

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4463876\\_draw-face-different-angles.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4463876_draw-face-different-angles.html)

<http://www.olejarz.com/arted/perspective/>

[http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources\\_ftp/client\\_ftp/ks1/art/perspective/index.htm](http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/ks1/art/perspective/index.htm)

### **Math**

*Patterns and series.* Utilize the garden scenes in Feast of Mabon to discuss patterns and planning (rows of different plants used to create a pattern). Have students “plan a garden” using graph paper; use multiplication tables to determine patterns and series. (Resource—finding Fibonacci numbers in nature: <http://britton.disted.camosun.bc.ca/fibslide/jbfibslide.htm>)

### **Science**

*Seasonal Changes.* Utilize Feast of Mabon to introduce the concept of the changing seasons. Discuss the seasonal changes that take place in your specific geographic locations—compare and contrast to other areas in the country/world).

Define EQUINOX. What is the significance of each Equinox in the calendar year, and in the seasons (also Solstices); discuss daylight savings time.

**Cross Curriculum Project: (*Art, Science, Math*)** Have students plan and create individual or group gardens to be maintained over a several month or 1 year period. This can be done on a small scale (one plant to multiple beds—see resources). Keep garden journals to plan and observe. Points to cover:

- Determine which plants to incorporate based on climate, geographic area and soil.
- Determine which plants to include (purpose, nutritional value, aesthetic value)

- What to plant and where (planting guidelines, and patterns (see Math)
- Discuss/plan natural pest control
- Discuss/plan garden maintenance and care
- Keeping a garden going during the winter/fall—what work has to be done during these seasons
- Harvesting—what to do/make with your plants

Resources for gardening

<http://www.gardenguides.com/plants/>

[http://garden.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Which\\_Vegetables\\_Grow\\_Well\\_Together](http://garden.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Which_Vegetables_Grow_Well_Together)

<http://www.kidsgardening.org/>

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/firstgarden/>

<http://www.homeandgardensite.com/ChildrensSite/index.htm>

<http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/garden-activities-for-kids.htm>

<http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/explore/garden.htm>

*Woodland habitat.* Discuss the woodland habitat as portrayed in Feast of Mabon. What kind of animals and plants can be seen in the illustrations?

- Discuss and illustrate woodland for your geographic area—plant and animal life, etc.
- Discuss woodland changes throughout the course of the year.
- *ACTIVITY*—field trip to forest. Look for animal and plant life. Discuss forest exploration safety and etiquette. If possible, visit the same site once each season—discuss changes observed.

Resources for woodland habitat

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/habitats.html>

<http://www.schoolsliaison.org.uk/woodgate/woodland/woodland01.html>

[http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_animals\\_live\\_in\\_a\\_woodland\\_habitat](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_animals_live_in_a_woodland_habitat)

<http://www.naturegrid.org.uk/woodland/woodexplore.html>

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