



# Educator Resources for *Jack and the Cornstalk*:

## Discussion Guide and “Magic Corn Kernel” Growing Activity

*This lesson plan has been developed by farmer and educator Debra Kearney. Debra is the owner and operator of [Dan-D Farms](#), a second-generation agritourism farm in Knoxville, IA. Debra is also a regional representative for the Nutrients for Life Foundation, a non-profit educational organization.*

### Discussion Guide for *Jack and the Cornstalk*

- Before reading the story:
  - Ask students if any of them have visited a farm, and give a few students the opportunity to share some of the things they saw at the farm (e.g., cows, chickens, plants, tractors, etc).
  - Ask students if they are familiar with the fairy tale, *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Explain that this story is similar to *Jack and the Beanstalk* but takes place on a farm and helps us learn about corn.
- After the reading the story, you can discuss the following topics with your students:
  - *Plant lifecycle and the importance of patience.* Ask students if they really think they can plant seeds one day and see the plants fully grown by the next day. Explain that farmers need to be patient and wait a long time for their seeds to develop into plants that produce food for us to eat.
  - *Corn as an ingredient in foods.* Ask students how many different foods Jack ate with corn in them. Then, ask students if they can think of other foods they like to eat with corn in them. Create a list and explain that corn is an ingredient in a lot of the food we eat, even when we don't realize it.

### Follow-up Activity: Grow Your Own Magic Corn Kernels!

- Ensure that you have the following supplies:
  - “Magic corn kernels”; (if you want to be consistent with story, “five magic corn kernels” per student); these can be popcorn kernels purchased by the jar, typically used for home popping.
  - Mini Ziploc bags, one per student.
  - Moistening supplies (e.g., cotton balls, paper towels, or Soil Moist, which can be purchased at your local home gardening store). Enough for each Ziploc bag.
  - OPTIONAL: string to make necklaces for the students to wear their Ziploc bags
- Explain to your students that you have something very special to give them – “magic corn kernels” – just like in the story! As you hand out the supplies, remind your students that farmers are very patient and that, like farmers, they need to be very patient and wait their turn 😊.
- Give each student a handful of corn kernels, a Ziploc baggie, and moistening supplies
- Explain to the students that, with a little warmth and moisture, the “magic corn kernel” can germinate (and explain that germinate means that the seed will sprout and the plant will start to grow)
- Instruct each student to place his/her magic corn kernels into the Ziploc bag, insert the moistening supplies (e.g., wet cotton ball, moist paper towel, etc) and lock the Ziploc bag shut.
  - Instruct older students to put the bag in their pockets; younger students, who may not wear pockets, can place the Ziploc on a necklace and wear it under their shirt
- Check in with students over next 3-to-5 days until seeds germinate; wow, it's magic!!!!
- After the kernels have germinated, ask students what else they think the seeds will need to keep growing (e.g., sun, water, etc). If students forget to mention the soil, ask them where Jack planted his magic corn kernels and explain that plants need nutrients from the soil to grow big and strong. Tell students that they can take their sprouted kernels home to plant in the soil with their parents' permission.