

Gingerbread and Peppermint

Gingerbread men and candy canes bring to mind the festivities and delights of the holiday season. Use these craft, writing, and game ideas to add some sugar and spice to your holiday lessons.

Did You Know?

- The gingerbread man story originates from a tale about Johnny Boys, which are human-shaped figures made from bread dough. One day while a Johnny Boy was baking in the oven, springy dough caused him to pop out of the oven and “escape.” As gingerbread cookies became more popular, the tale of the Gingerbread Boy emerged.
- Today’s gingerbread houses were inspired by the candy and cake house in the tale *Hansel and Gretel*.
- A choirmaster in Germany bent sugar sticks into the shape of shepherds’ staffs and gave them to children in the congregation. These treats later became known as candy canes.



Literature Selections

Listed below are several versions of the Gingerbread Man story.

The Gingerbread Man by Eric A. Kimmel: Holiday House, 1993. (Picture book, 32 pg.)

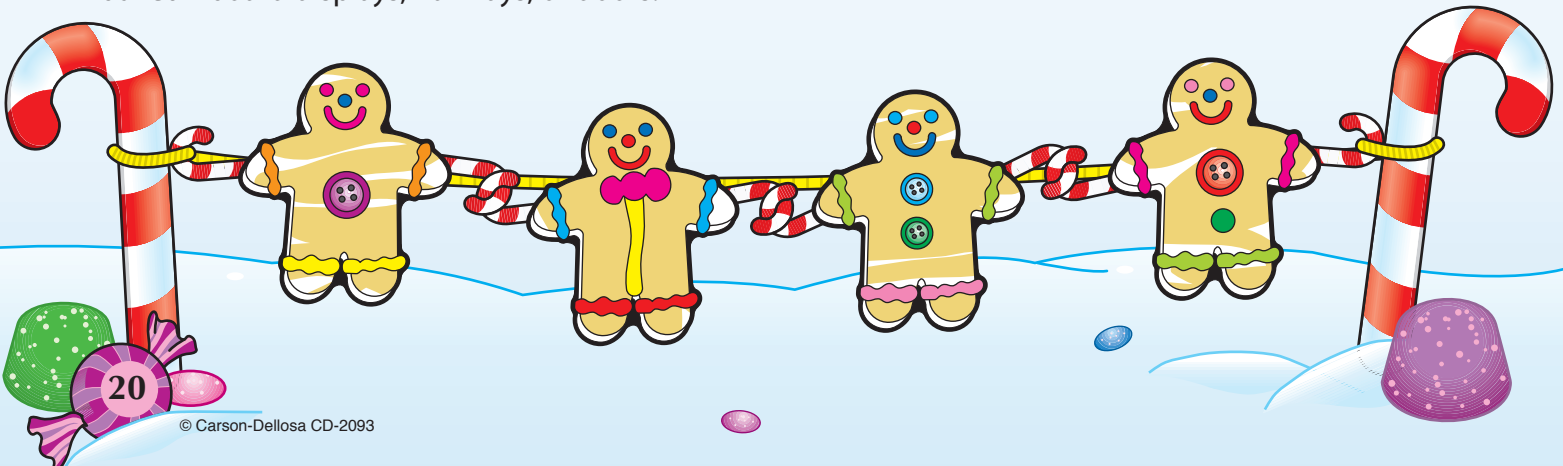
The Gingerbread Boy by Paul Galdone: Clarion Books, 1975. (Picture book, 32 pg.)

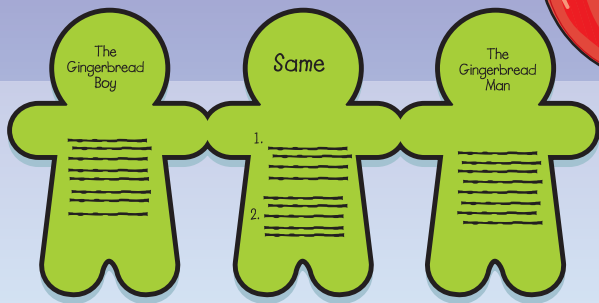
The Legend of the Candy Cane by Lori Walburg: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997. (Picture book, 32 pg.) When a candy-maker moves to a small town, he shares the story of the candy cane with its children.



Gingerbread and Peppermint Garland

Add a sweet touch to your classroom with gingerbread and peppermint garlands. Let students trace gingerbread man patterns (page 24) onto oaktag or poster board and cut them out. Decorate the cut-outs using paints, markers, buttons, yarn, and small candies. Tape the end of a candy cane behind each gingerbread man’s hand and connect the gingerbread men by interlocking the candy cane hooks. Reinforce the garland by taping the gingerbread men to a length of yarn. Use the garland to accent bulletin board displays, hallways, or doors.



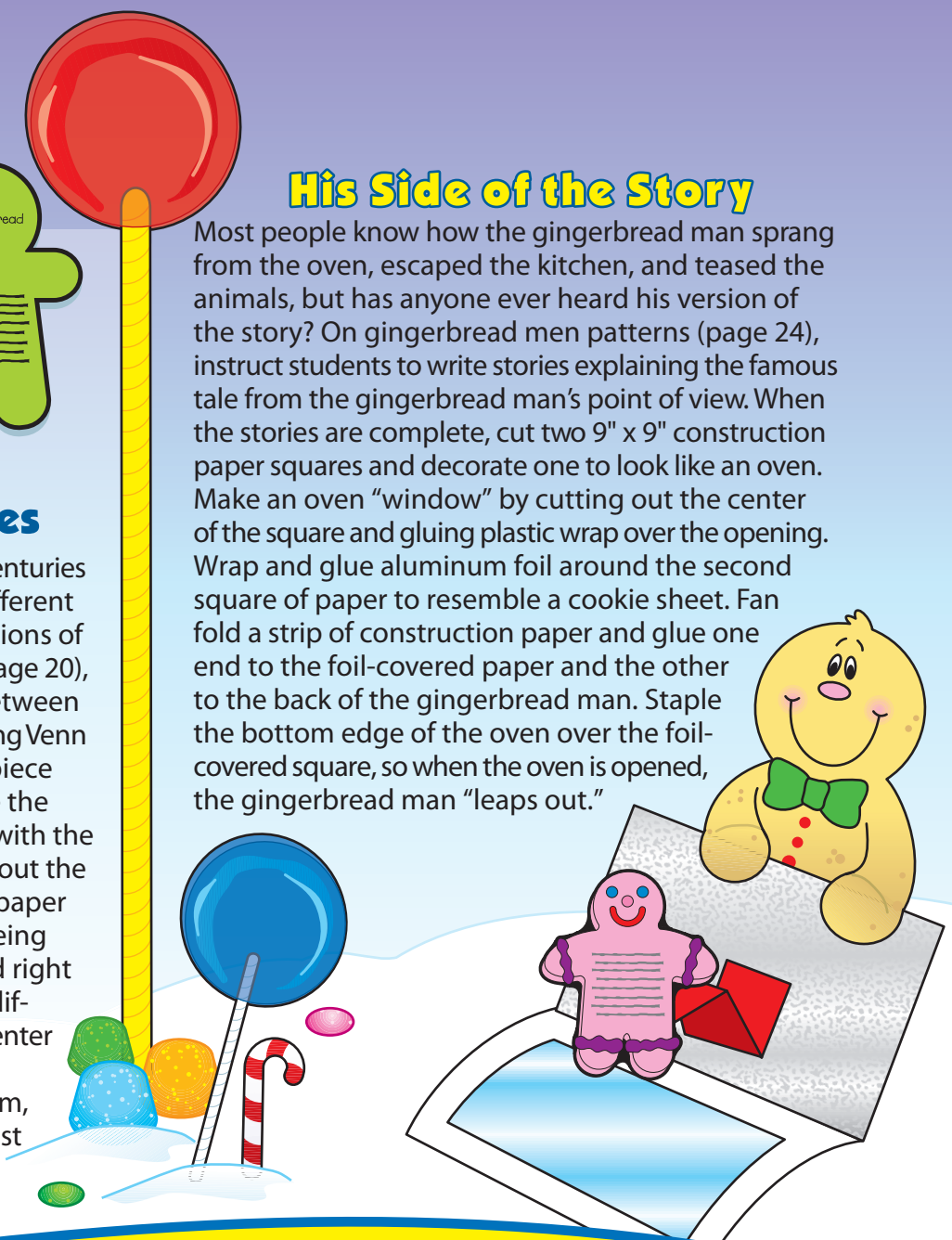


A Batch of Gingerbread Stories

The story of the gingerbread man is centuries old, which may explain why many different versions exist. After reading two versions of the story (see *Literature Selections*, page 20), have students make comparisons between the characters, settings, and plots using Venn diagrams. Accordion fold a 9" x 12" piece of construction paper in thirds. Trace the gingerbread man pattern (page 24) with the hands and feet on the folds, and cut out the patterns so that they are joined like paper dolls. Write the titles of the stories being compared on the tops of the left and right patterns. Below the titles, write the differences between the stories. In the center pattern, write the similarities. When everyone has made their Venn diagram, use the information to make a class list of comparisons.

His Side of the Story

Most people know how the gingerbread man sprang from the oven, escaped the kitchen, and teased the animals, but has anyone ever heard his version of the story? On gingerbread men patterns (page 24), instruct students to write stories explaining the famous tale from the gingerbread man's point of view. When the stories are complete, cut two 9" x 9" construction paper squares and decorate one to look like an oven. Make an oven "window" by cutting out the center of the square and gluing plastic wrap over the opening. Wrap and glue aluminum foil around the second square of paper to resemble a cookie sheet. Fan fold a strip of construction paper and glue one end to the foil-covered paper and the other to the back of the gingerbread man. Staple the bottom edge of the oven over the foil-covered square, so when the oven is opened, the gingerbread man "leaps out."



Gingerbread Picture Frames

Frame your students' pictures with specially made gingerbread houses. Copy one gingerbread house frame and roof pattern (page 25) for each student. Instruct students to trace two gingerbread house patterns onto brown craft foam or poster board and one roof pattern onto white craft foam or poster board. Cut out all of the pieces. Assist students in cutting a circle for a small photograph in the center of one house pattern. Glue the photograph between the house patterns, centering it in the opening. Glue the edges of the patterns closed. Glue the roof to the top of the house. Using sequins, pieces of pipe cleaner, and construction paper, decorate the gingerbread house. Attach magnetic tape to the back of the frame for display on a refrigerator. Let students take the frames home to give as holiday gifts.



Scratch and Sniff Gingerbread Men

These sweet-smelling gingerbread men will make delightful classroom displays. Have each child trace the gingerbread man pattern (page 24) on the back of medium-grade sandpaper. Cut out the patterns. Add a holiday scent by rubbing a cinnamon stick or peppermint oil across the sandpaper. Use white puffy paint to add faces and details. When dry, punch a hole in the top of the decoration, thread ribbon through the hole, and tie the ends together to create a hanger.



Peppermint Swirl Ornaments

Peppermint candies add a festive touch to gingerbread houses and holiday decorations alike. Let each child cut a 6" circle from poster board and color red or green swirls on both sides so it resembles a peppermint candy. Wrap a piece of clear cellophane around the candy, twist the ends, and secure with clear tape. Add several drops of peppermint extract for a "scent" sational touch.

Candy Cane Stripes

Let students be "candy strippers" for a day! Trace the candy cane pattern (page 24) onto white poster board or heavy construction paper. Provide pinking shears for students to cut out the shapes. Create stripes on the candy cane pattern by taping one end of a length of red yarn to the back of the design and wrapping the yarn around the candy cane. Secure the end of the yarn with tape. Punch a hole in the top of the decoration, thread ribbon through the hole, and tie the ends together to create a hanger.

Gingerbread Houses for All

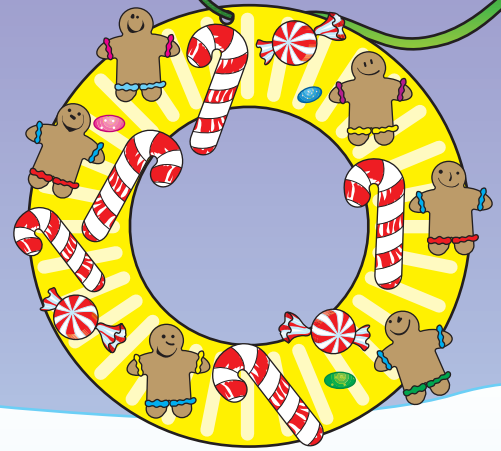
Celebrate the fun of making gingerbread by hosting a gingerbread decorating party and inviting student family members to join in the fun. Make individual houses using clean pint-sized milk cartons, icing, and candies. Staple the top of each carton closed and secure it to a heavy duty paper plate with a dab of icing. Provide bowls of white icing and cover the outsides of the cartons. Attach graham cracker sections into the icing to resemble miniature gingerbread houses. Use a variety of candies, such as gum drops and candy dots, for decoration. To add decorations, place icing on each candy piece and attach it to the house. When the houses are finished, copy a gingerbread man pattern (page 24) on brown paper for each student. Photograph students with their handmade houses and place their photos on the gingerbread patterns as keepsakes of the special day.



Gingerbread and Peppermint

Sugar and Spice Wreath

These gingerbread and candy cane wreaths will look good enough to eat! Let each student cut out the center of a paper plate. Trace reduced copies of the gingerbread man pattern (page 24) on brown grocery bags and cut out. Trace reduced copies of the candy cane patterns (page 24) on white construction paper. Decorate the gingerbread men and candy canes. Glue the patterns, along with peppermint swirl candies, randomly on the plate rim. Finish by punching a hole at the top and thread with yarn to create a hanger.



Trail of Sweets

Take a trip through a land of gingerbread and peppermint with this game. Bring in a new cookie sheet and several large magnets. Color and cut out copies of the gingerbread man, candy cane, and gingerbread house game pieces (page 25). To make game markers, glue the gingerbread men to the magnets. On the left side of the cookie sheet, glue a candy cane pattern labeled *Start*. On the right side, glue a gingerbread house pattern labeled *Finish*. Create a path from the candy cane to the gingerbread house by attaching self-adhesive colored dots. Decorate the gameboard (cookie sheet) by gluing on gumdrops. Two children at a time may play, each using a gingerbread man marker. Allow students to take turns rolling a die and moving the appropriate number of spaces. For older students, write phrases like *Move ahead one* or *Lose a turn* on some dots. For younger students, use a multicolored die and have them move to the color shown. The first person to reach the gingerbread house is the winner. Reward game winners with gumdrops and peppermint swirls.



Make Your Own Gingerbread

After learning about gingerbread, make and decorate gingerbread cookies using the recipe at right. You can make the recipe with the class or make it ahead of time.

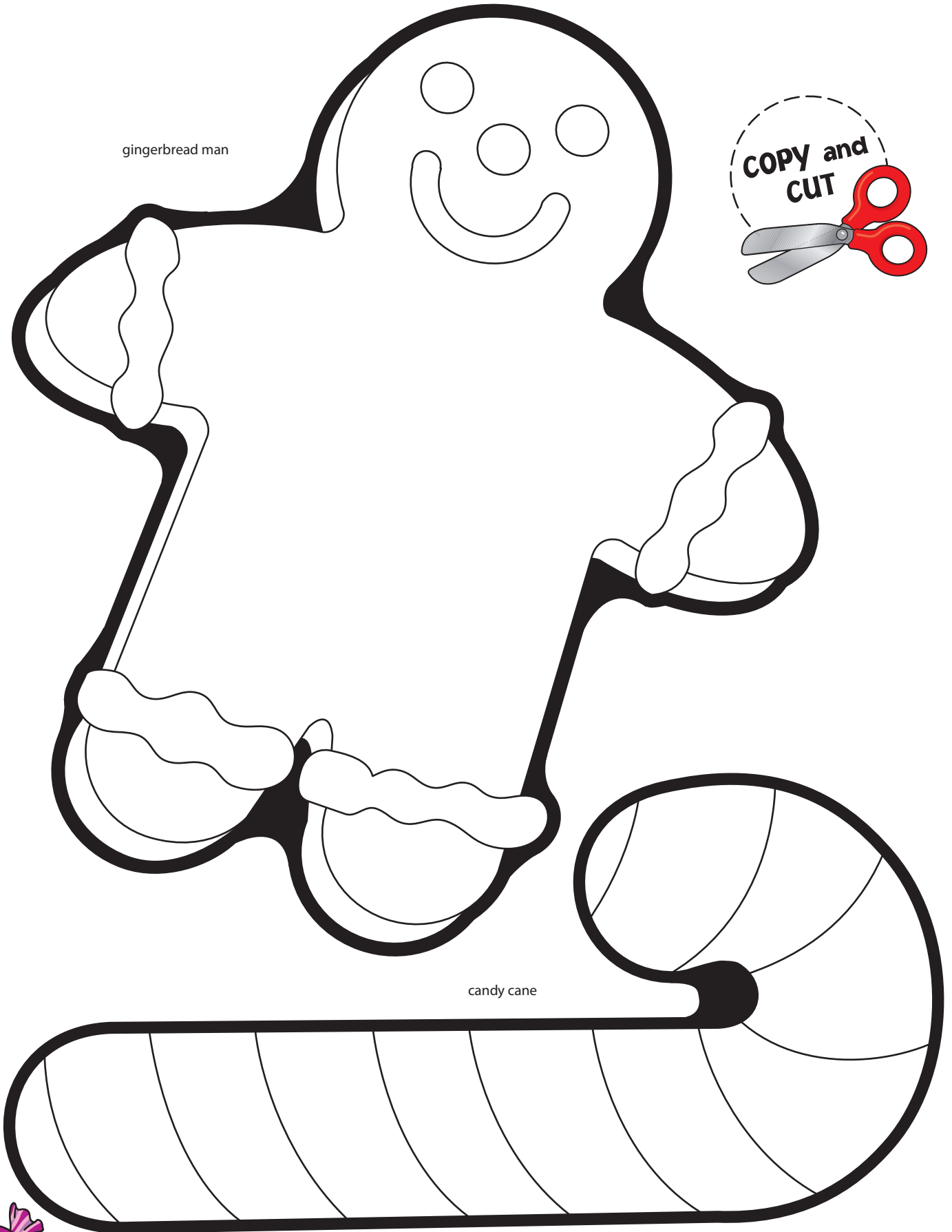
Sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, and spices. Cut the butter into the flour in a large bowl until mixture resembles bread crumbs. Add the sugar, syrup, and egg yolk. Mix until dough is formed. Knead lightly. Wrap and chill dough for 30 minutes before shaping. Roll dough to 1/4" thickness and cut using cookie cutters. Bake at 350°F for 12 minutes or until cookies begin to color around the edges. Provide tubes of colored icing and small candies for students to use to decorate the cookies. Place the cookies in plastic bags and attach gingerbread man tags with ribbon. Let students give their cookies as holiday gifts.

Gingerbread Cookies

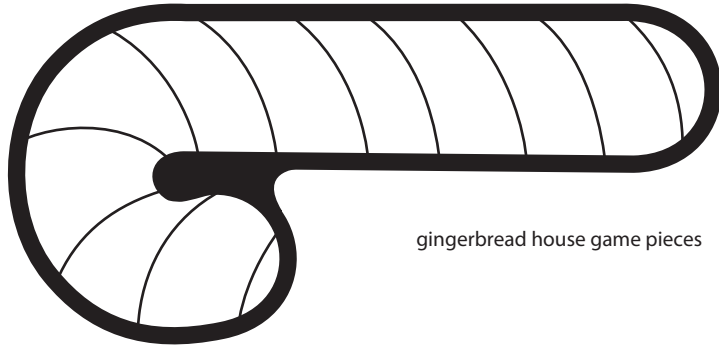
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
5 tablespoons sweet butter
cut into pieces
1/2 cup superfine sugar
2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 egg yolk, beaten



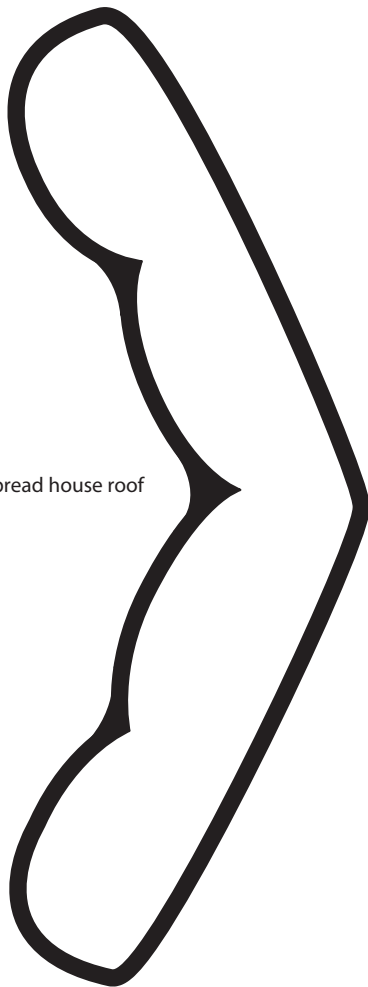
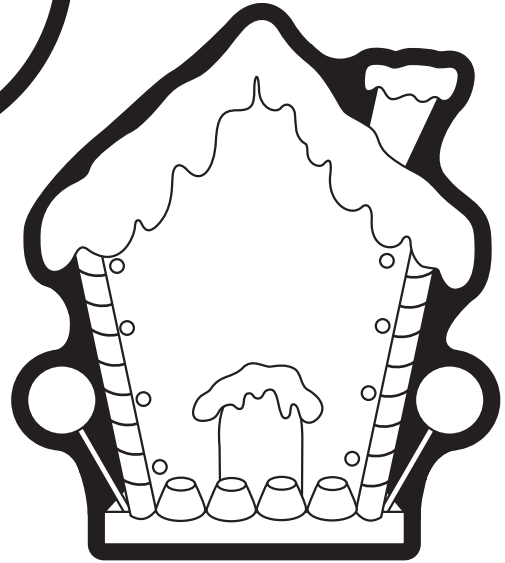
gingerbread man



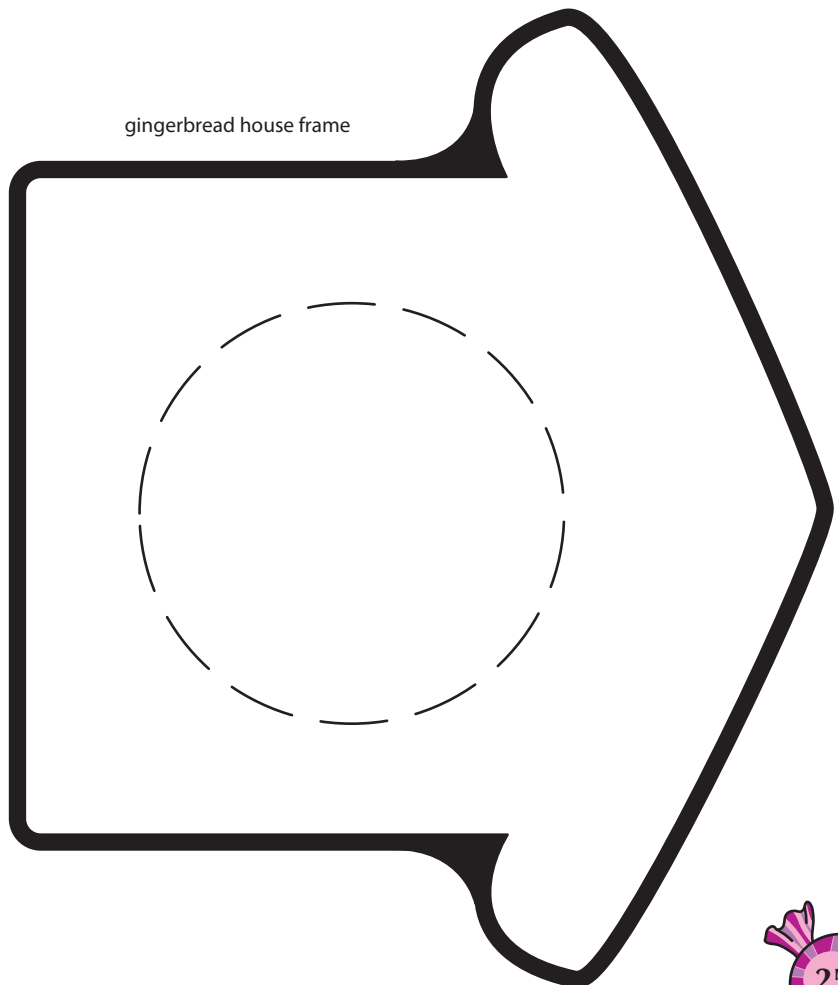
candy cane



gingerbread house game pieces



gingerbread house roof



gingerbread house frame