

The History Of

Halloween



A Video based lesson.
Reading, transcript, listening, quiz.



The History of Halloween



Around what time was Halloween created?

Who created Samhain?

Why did people leave food and wine at their doorstep?

Why did people wear masks?

Who turned Samhain into All Saints Day?

Where does the name Halloween come from?

What would people do when they were "guising"?

Which immigrants brought this tradition to America?

How much money is spent total (costumes and candies) every year in America for Halloween?



History of Halloween

Halloween falls on October 31st each year in North America and other parts of the world. What do you know about Halloween? Do you celebrate it in your country? Here is a little history about it.

Key Words

to evolve (v)- to change little by little

spirit (n)- ghost, some people believe the spirit and body separate when a person dies

holy (adj)- sacred, very good, related to religion. *Hallow* comes from the word holy.

saint (n)- an honored, holy person

evil (adj)- very, very bad

lantern (n)- lamp or enclosed light that can be carried around

turnip (n)- a purple and white vegetable that grows in the ground

Like many other holidays, Halloween has evolved and changed throughout history. Over 2,000 years ago people called the Celts lived in what is now Ireland, the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), and parts of Northern France. November 1st was their New Year's Day. They believed that the night before the New Year (October 31st) was a time when the living and the dead came together.

More than a thousand years ago the Christian church named November 1st *All Saints Day* (also called *All Hallows*). This was a special holy day to honour the saints and other people who died for their religion. The night before *All Hallows* was called *All Hallows Eve*. Later, "Hallows Eve" was joined together to create the name "Halloween".

Like the Celts, the Europeans of that time also believed that the spirits of the dead would visit the earth on Halloween. They worried that evil spirits would cause problems or hurt them, so on that night people wore costumes that looked like ghosts or other evil creatures. They thought if they dressed like that, the spirits would think they were also dead and not harm them.

The tradition of Halloween was carried to North America by the immigrating Europeans. Some of the traditions changed a little, though. For example, on Halloween in Europe, some people would carry lanterns made from turnips. In North America, pumpkins were more common, so people began putting

candles inside them and using them as lanterns. That is why you see Jack 'o lanterns today.

These days Halloween is not usually considered a religious holiday. It is primarily a fun day for children. Children dress up in costumes like people did a thousand years ago. But instead of worrying about evil spirits, they go from house to house. They knock on doors and say "trick or treat." The owner of each house gives candy or something special to each trick or treater.

Happy Halloween!

Check Your Understanding

Circle True or False.

1. The Celts thought the spirits of dead people returned to the earth on October 31st.

True False

2. The Celts created All Hallows.

True False

3. All Hallows is on October 31st.

True False

4. The word *Halloween* comes from the word *Hallows eve*.

True False

5. A thousand years ago Europeans wore costumes to get candy.

True False

6. Americans still carve turnips to use as lanterns.

True False

7. Today Halloween is especially for children.

True False

8. Children get candy by saying "trick or treat."

True False

The History of Halloween



Around what time was Halloween created?

Around 2,000 years ago.

Who created Salim?

The Celts.

Why did people leave food and wine at their doorstep?

To keep roaming spirits a bay / away.

Why did people wear masks?

So they wouldn't be mistaken for ghosts.

Who turned Salim into All Saints Day?

The Christian church.

Where does the name Halloween come from?

The original name, All Hallows Eve. It's a shortform.

What would people do when they were "guising"?

dress up in costume and accept food, wine, money and other offerings in exchange for singing, reciting poetry or telling jokes.

Which immigrants brought this tradition to America?

Irish and Scottish immigrants.

How much money is spent total (costumes and candies) every year in America for Halloween?

6 Billion USD each year.

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The History Of Halloween

When most people think of Halloween they think of trick-or-treating parades, bobbing for apples and other family-friendly activities, but bet you didn't know the true story behind the ancient origins of Halloween.

It all goes back some 2,000 years to the ancient Celtic festival known as Salim, celebrated on November 1st. On the night before Salim, people believed that the Dead returned as ghosts. They would leave food and wine on their doorsteps to keep roaming spirits at bay and wear masks when they left the house so they would not be mistaken for fellow ghosts.

The Christian Church turned Salim into All Saints Day or All Hallows in the 8th century. The night before became All Hallows Eve, later shortened to Halloween.

You've heard of trick-or-treating on Halloween but what about soling or guising. All three of these traditions originated in medieval Britain.

On All Souls Day, November 2nd the needy would beg for pastries known as soul cakes. In return they would pray for people's dead relatives. This was called soling.

In the medieval Halloween tradition of guising young people would dress up in costume and accept food, wine, money and other offerings in exchange for singing, reciting poetry or telling jokes.

In 19th century America, Irish and Scottish immigrants revived these old traditions. The result was trick-or-treating. At first it was much more about the tricks in the form of pranks and high jinks than the treats. It wasn't until the 1950s that the custom took on its current family-friendly, kid centered form.

Today, Halloween is big business with US consumers spending more than 2.5 billion on costumes annually. Add in the candy and it's estimated that Americans spend up to 6 billion on Halloween each year making it the second most commercial holiday after Christmas.

So whether you're a fan of tricks treats or trivia there's a bit of Halloween history. We bet you didn't know,



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