

READING COMPREHENSION



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.

Vocabulary

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 UK, and parts of Northern France. November 1 was their New Year's Day. They believed that the night before the New Year (October 31) was a time when the living and the dead came together.

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

Check Your Understanding

True or False. Check your answers below.

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





Halloween Activities

Apple Bobbing

Apples are put into a large container full of water and contestants have to try to take a bite out of an apple without using their hands and without pushing the apple against the side of the container.



Dressing up

People choose costumes to dress up as ghosts, vampires, witches and many other things.



Carving Jack o'Lanterns



People choose a big pumpkin. They empty it and then carve holes for the mouth, nose and eyes. A candle is then put inside and the pumpkin is often put in front of the house to frighten off evil spirits!

Trick or Treating

Children go out knocking on their neighbours doors to ask for sweets. The sweets are the treat and if they don't get any they might play a trick on you!

