



ORIGIN OF HALLOWEEN

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Halloween is a traditional celebration held on October 31st. Today, Halloween is an excuse for Halloween theme costume parties, and entertainment with horror films, haunted houses and other activities around the popular themes of ghosts, witches, Dracula, werewolves and the supernatural. Children love to dress up in halloween costumes and go from door-to-door in their neighbourhood following the old tradition of trick-or-treating, collecting sweets and gifts, sometimes money.

Halloween began as an ancient Celtic festival in Great Britain and Ireland, and has survived most strongly among Irish, Scottish and Welsh communities. Immigrants from these communities carried the tradition to North America where it has gained in popularity. In turn, as part of American pop culture, Halloween has spread in popularity to most corners of the English speaking western world, and increasingly into Western Europe in recent times.

Originally Halloween was a pagan festival, around the idea of linking the living with the dead, when contact became possible between the spirits and the physical world, and magical things were more likely to happen. Like most pagan festivals, long ago it was absorbed into the festivals of the expanding Christian church, and became associated with All Hallows Day, or All Saints Day, which eventually fell on November 1 under the Gregorian calendar. A vigil for the festival was held on All Hallows Evening on October 31. In the vernacular of the times, All Hallows Evening became Hallowe'en and later the Halloween we know today.

The celebration of Halloween survived most strongly in Ireland. It was an end of summer festival, and was often celebrated in each community with a bonfire to ward off the evil spirits. Children would go from door to door in disguise as creatures from the underworld to collect treats, mainly fruit, nuts and the like for the festivities. These were used for playing traditional games like eating an apple on a string or bobbing for apples and other gifts in a basin of water, without using your hands. Salt might be sprinkled on the visiting children to ward off evil spirits. Carving turnips as ghoulish faces to hold candles became a popular part of the festival, which has been adapted to carving pumpkins in America.