

Halloween

The Hidden History

The dark night howls a spooky tune. Children cackle like tickled hens. Hay-filled wagons rumble down the road. Boo! It is Halloween, a night when children behave like crazed animals looking for a treat. Jack-o-lanterns greet visitors with bright smiles or an evil eye. Candy is spilling over bowls like a waterfall of heavenly treats. How does such a tradition begin? The Halloween tradition, celebrated each year on October 31st, has a story that began about 2,000 years ago.

The Celts

Long ago, there were a group of people who lived in what is now Ireland. They were called the Celts. They also lived in the United Kingdom and northern France. The Celts had a festival each year called Samhain (pronounced Sah-win). This festival celebrated from sunset on October 31st to sunset on November 1st. It marked the end of the harvest season. It also marked the end of summer when the warm sun would go to bed earlier and the beginning of the winter when death would scurry through the crops like the Grim Reaper.

The Celtic people believed that the past and present intermingled at this time and the spirits of the dead could come to visit the living. To ward off these spirits, the Celts would dress up in frightening costumes and build massive bonfires. Treats of food and drink were set out to placate the spirits. Many Celts would dress up to try to fool their neighbors into thinking they were the visiting dead just to get these treats.



On the Festival of Hallow Eve, Ireland, 1833;
Painting by Daniel Maclise

The Catholic Church

In AD 837, Pope Gregory set aside November 1st as All Saints' Day. The holy day, or *hallowed* day, was a day to honor all of the saints and their relics. November 2nd would later be established by the Catholic Church as All Souls' Day, a day to remember all faithful departed souls.

Some believe that the Catholic Church may have been trying to replace the Celtic

festival. This holy day could commemorate the dead in a more Christian way. In fact, All Souls' Day was celebrated in a similar way to Samhain long ago. The faithful Christians had bonfires as big as the sky and parades that danced through the streets. They dressed up as angels, saints, and devils. They called this holy day All Hallows Day (from the English *Alhallowmesse* that meant All Saints' Day). The night before became known as All Hallows Eve.

Coming to America

Once the Europeans began to settle in the new world, they began sharing many of their cultures and beliefs with the Native Americans. The cultures mixed together like a giant bowl of soup. The first celebrations of Halloween were events meant to celebrate the end of the harvest. Colonists would share stories of the dead and dance.

As time went on, these celebrations grew more popular. Large festivals were. Ghost stories would be told. Eventually, as more and more immigrants came to America, Halloween was celebrated all over the country. Just as the Irish and English had done thousands of years before, Americans of all ages would dress up and thump on doors asking for treats.

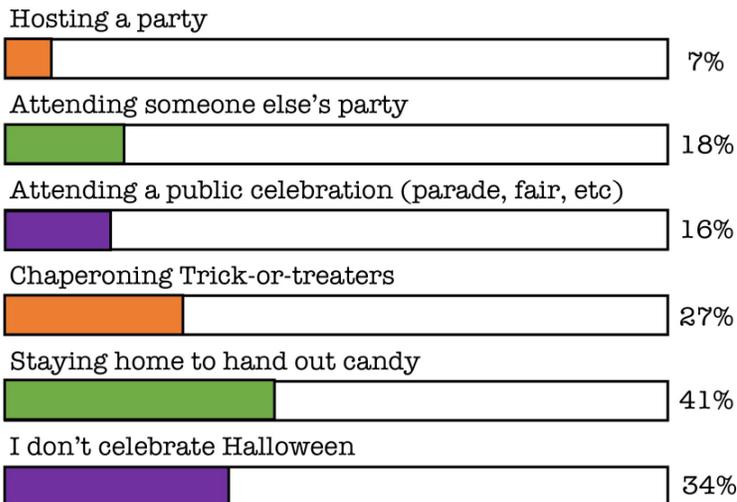
By the late 1800s, Halloween had become more like the celebration we know today, although less grotesque. Along with it, however, many would cause lots of mischief by playing tricks on others.

Halloween Today

By the 1950's, Halloween had evolved into a secular, or nonreligious, holiday for children. The large parties of the past are now neighborhood parties. Families give out candy to avoid getting tricked. Many neighborhoods today still have bonfires and hayrides. Many enjoy dressing up. Today's costumes can scare you into next week or make you laugh like a clown.

Dressing up for Halloween is becoming more popular each year! It is such a popular holiday that it has become the second largest holiday for stores, right behind Christmas. Each year, Americans spend about \$9 billion on Halloween costumes, decorations, and candy. Trick-or-Treat!

How are you going to celebrate Halloween this year?



2500 Americans Surveyed

Source: PTAP

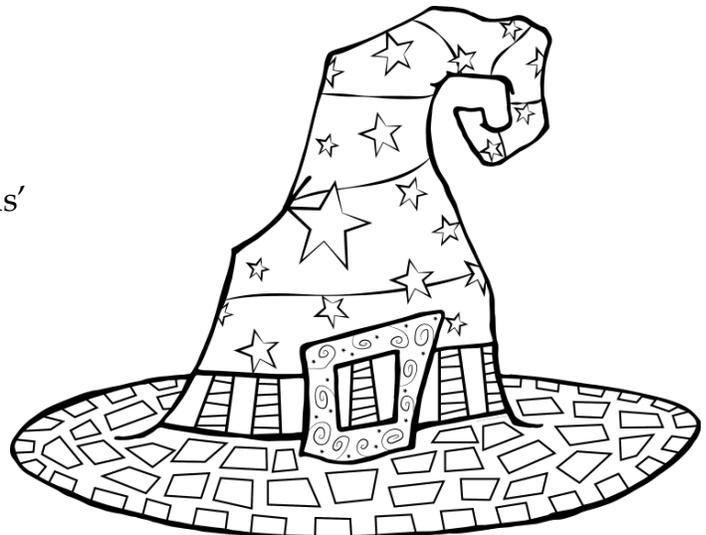


A home in Pennsylvania is decorated for Halloween.

Comprehension Quiz

Choose the best answer according to the article.

- Where did the Celtics live long ago?
 - Present day Ireland
 - Southern France
 - Rome
 - Samhain
- What did the Samhain festival mark?
 - the beginning of summer
 - the first day of Halloween
 - a day to celebrate saints
 - the end of the harvest season
- When did Samhain begin?
 - sunrise on November 1st
 - sunset on October 31st
 - sunset on November 31st
 - sunrise on October 1st
- Which Christian holiday was established in AD 837?
 - All Hallows Eve
 - All Souls' Day
 - All Saints' Day
 - Halloween
- Which date would later become All Souls' Day?
 - November 2nd
 - November 1st
 - October 31st
 - October 30th
- What does the word *secular* mean?
 - hallowed
 - sacred
 - nonreligious
 - darkness
- What do families do to avoid getting tricked?
 - dress up in costume
 - give out candy
 - host bonfires
 - go on hayrides
- How much money do Americans spend on Halloween each year?
 - \$837 million
 - \$3 billion
 - \$50 million
 - \$9 billion



Comprehension Quiz

Answer each question according to the article.

1. Where did the Celts live long ago?

2. What did the Samhain festival mark?

3. When did Samhain begin?

4. Which Christian holiday was established in AD 837?

5. What date would later become All Souls' Day?

6. What does the word *secular* mean?

7. What do families do to avoid getting tricked?

8. How much money do Americans spend on Halloween each year?

Skills Test

Choose the best answer.

- Which definition for **evolved** is most accurate for how it is used in the article? *By the 1950's, Halloween had evolved into a secular, or nonreligious, holiday for children.*
 - to give off gas or heat
 - develop gradually, especially from a simple to a more complex form
 - develop over many eras in time, especially as a result of natural selection
 - The changing of the physical features of a person or animal over time
- Which statement below **best** describes one difference between **Samhain** and **Halloween**?
 - Samhain included bonfires and disguises; Halloween does not include bonfires.
 - Samhain was celebrated from sunset to sunset; Halloween is celebrated for one evening.
 - Samhain was a Christian holiday; Halloween is a pagan holiday.
 - Samhain began in Ireland by the Celts, Halloween began in the Catholic church.
- Read this sentence from the article: *"The dark night howls a spooky tune "* What type of figurative language is used here ?
 - personification
 - onomatopoeia
 - metaphor
 - alliteration
- Read this sentence from the article: *In fact, All Souls' Day was celebrated in a similar way to Samhain long ago.* Which statement below is true about the author's use of this phrase?
 - The author wanted to show where the name Samhain probably originated.
 - The author wanted to show that Samhain and Halloween are nothing alike.
 - The author wanted to show that Samhain and Halloween are the same holiday.
 - The author wanted to show that the Catholic church may have been trying to replace Samhain with a more Christian holiday.
- Which excerpt from the article **best** supports your answer to the previous question?
 - This holy day could commemorate the dead in a more Christian manner.
 - The faithful Christians had bonfires as big as the sky.
 - They called this holy day All Hallows Day
 - As time went on, these celebrations grew in popularity.
- Read this phrase from the article: *"hay-filled wagons rumble down the road.."* What type of sound device is used here?
 - alliteration
 - assonance
 - onomatopoeia
 - consonance