

HOLIDAYS: WHICH CAME FIRST?

HALLOWEEN



Halloween or Hallowe'en (a contraction of Hallows' Even or Hallows' Evening), also known as Allhalloween, All Hallows' Eve, or All Saints' Eve, is a celebration observed in several countries on 31 October, the eve of the Western Christian feast of All Hallows' Day. It begins the three-day observance of Allhallowtide, the time in the liturgical year dedicated to remembering the dead, including saints (hallows), martyrs, and all the faithful departed.

It is widely believed that many Halloween traditions originated from ancient Celtic harvest festivals, particularly the Gaelic festival Samhain; that such festivals may have had pagan roots; and that Samhain itself was Christianized as Halloween by the early Church. Some believe, however, that Halloween began solely as a Christian holiday, separate from ancient festivals like Samhain.

ACTIVITIES

Halloween activities include trick-or-treating (or the related guising), attending Halloween costume parties, carving pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns, lighting bonfires, apple bobbing, divination games, playing pranks, visiting haunted attractions, telling scary stories, and watching horror films. In many parts of the world, the Christian religious observances of All Hallows' Eve, including attending church services and lighting candles on the graves of the dead, remain popular, although elsewhere it is a more commercial and secular celebration. Some Christians historically abstained from meat on All Hallows' Eve, a tradition reflected in the eating of certain vegetarian foods on this vigil day, including apples, potato pancakes, and soul cakes.

Trick-or-treating is a customary celebration for children on Halloween. Children go in costume from house to house, asking for treats such as candy or sometimes money, with the question, "Trick or treat?" The word "trick" implies a "threat" to perform mischief on the homeowners or their property if no treat is given. The practice is said to have roots in the medieval practice of mumming, which is closely related to souling.

Mummers' Plays are folk plays performed by troupes of amateur actors, traditionally all male, known as **mummers** or **guisers**. It refers particularly to a play in which a number of characters are called on stage, two of whom engage in a combat, the loser being revived by a Doctor character.

A **soul cake** is a small round cake which is traditionally made for All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day to commemorate the dead in the Christian tradition. The cakes, often simply referred to as souls, are given out to soulers (mainly consisting of children and the poor) who go from door to door during the days of Allhallowtide singing and saying prayers "for the souls of the givers and their friends".

In Scotland and Ireland, "**guising**" — children going from door to door in disguise — is traditional, and a gift in the form of food, coins or "apples or nuts for the Halloween party" (in more recent times chocolate) is given out to the children. The tradition is called "guising" because of the disguises or costumes worn by the children.

SAMHAIN

Samhain is a Gaelic festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter or the "darker half" of the year. Traditionally, it is celebrated from 31 October to 1 November, as the Celtic day began and ended at sunset. This is about halfway between the autumn equinox and the winter solstice. It is one of the four Gaelic seasonal festivals, along with Imbolc, Bealtaine and Lughnasadh.

Like Bealtaine, Samhain was seen as a liminal time, when the boundary between this world and the Otherworld could more easily be crossed. This meant the *Aos Sí*, the 'spirits' or 'fairies', could more easily come into our world. Most scholars see the *Aos Sí* as remnants of the pagan gods and nature spirits. At Samhain, it was believed that the *Aos Sí* needed to be propitiated to ensure that the people and their livestock survived the winter. Offerings of food and drink were left outside for them. The souls of the dead were also thought to revisit their homes seeking hospitality. Feasts were had, at which the souls of dead kin were beckoned to attend and a place set at the table for them. Mumming and guising were part of the festival, and involved people going door-to-door in costume (or in disguise), often reciting verses in exchange for food. The costumes may have been a way of imitating, and disguising oneself from, the *Aos Sí*. Divination rituals and games were also a big part of the festival and often involved nuts and apples.

In the 9th century AD, the Western Christian church shifted the date of All Saints' Day to 1 November, while 2 November later became All Souls' Day. Over time, Samhain and All Saints'/All Souls' merged to create the modern Halloween. Historians have used the name 'Samhain' to refer to Gaelic 'Halloween' customs up until the 19th century.

EXERCISES:

1. Translate the following expressions into Slovene.

saint _____

martyr _____

harvest _____

bonfire _____

prank _____

contraction _____

to abstain _____

to commemorate _____

custom _____

costume _____

2. Connect the words to their definitions.

Pagan

-relating to public worship, sacramental

Liturgical

- not connected with religious or spiritual matters

Divination

- win or regain the favour of (a god, spirit, or person) by doing something that pleases them

Secular

- the time or date (twice each year) when day and night are of equal length

Solstice

-either of the two times in the year marked by the longest and shortest days

Vigil

Mischief

- seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means

Equinox

- holding religious beliefs other than those of the main world religions

Liminal

- a period of keeping awake, especially to keep watch or pray

To propitiate

- a transitional or initial stage of a process

- playful misbehaviour, especially on the part of children

3. In 5 to 10 sentences describe how we celebrate Halloween and All Hallows' Day in Slovenia. Which traditions or customs do we observe?





HALLOWEEN QUIZ



Question 1

The word "witch" originally meant "a wise woman."

☐ True ☐ False

Question 2

Many adults like to wear costumes at Halloween parties.

☐ True ☐ False



Question 3

The colors of Halloween are orange and black. What does black represent?

- A. Night
- B. Black Cats
- C. Death
- D. Witches

Question 4

People thought an owl could change into which of the following?



- A. A witch
- B. A ghost
- C. A vampire
- D. A wolf

Question 5

A bonfire is a symbol of Halloween, but what does "bon" mean?



(Your answer)

Question 6

Which of the following are considered "candy" in American English?

- A. Chocolate
- B. Gummy Bears
- C. Gum
- D. M&M'S



Question 7

Halloween is always the last Friday in October.

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☐ True ☐ False

Question 8

Children and adults go trick-or-treating in America.

☐ True ☐ False

Question 9

Which day has higher sales of chocolate in the USA?

- A. Valentine's Day
- B. Halloween



Question 10

What food should you eat to avoid Dracula on Halloween?

- A. Sushi
- B. A Tomato
- C. A Carrot
- D. Garlic



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