

History of Halloween E2-E3

Name _____ Date _____



How did Halloween begin?

Halloween traces back to the old Celtic festival of Samhain.

The Celts from Britain and Ireland saw in the start of the New Year on November 1, All Souls Day. The day marked the end of summer and the harvest.

The Celts believed that on October 31, the worlds of the living and dead overlapped before the start of the New Year. October 31 became All Hallows Eve, a time when the ghosts of the dead could return to destroy the harvest that was stored for winter. People set bonfires on hilltops to keep the evil spirits away before the start of winter.

Trick or Treat?

Trick-or-treating may have also come from the Celts. Poor children in Britain and Ireland went door-to-door on All Hallows Eve. They were given food in exchange for promising to pray for dead relatives on All Saints Day.

Jack-o'-Lanterns (Pumpkins)

There are many legends surrounding the Jack-o'-Lantern and where the name comes from. People believed that carving scary faces onto turnips would frighten away evil spirits. In America the tradition changed to pumpkins because they were easier to find and to carve.

Costumes

During the Samhain festival, people wore masks so that evil spirits could not see them. Wearing costumes at Halloween took off in the United States with the rise of trick-or-treating. Early reports of costumes date to the 1930s.

Witches, Ghosts and Skeletons

The ideas of death and evil spirits at All Hallows Eve led to the use of skeleton and ghost images at Halloween. The interest in witches came to America from Europe, and combined with Native American beliefs in evil spirits. Both fit with the spooky themes of October 31.

Celtic priests told people that black cats were humans gone bad, so cats became symbols of Halloween too.

Haunted Houses

The idea of having haunted houses was created simply as a way to make money.



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Questions

1. Which festival does Halloween come from?
2. What date did the Celts see as the start of a New Year?
3. What name did the Celts give to October 31st?
4. Why did people set fires on hilltops?
5. What were poor children given on All Hallows Eve?
6. What vegetable did people traditionally carve?
7. Why did they carve turnips?
8. When did costumes start being made for Halloween in America?
9. What did Celtic priests tell people about black cats?
10. Why did people come up with the idea of haunted houses?

