

# History of Halloween E3-L1

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## How did Halloween begin?

Halloween traces back to the ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain. The ancient Celts from Britain and Ireland saw the start of the New Year as being November 1, All Souls Day. The day marked the end of summer and the harvest.

People came to believe 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 where 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 the winter season.

## Trick or Treat?

Trick-or-treating may have also come from Celtic tradition because poor children in Britain and Ireland went door-to-door on All Hallows Eve. The children received food in exchange for the promise of praying for the giver's dead relatives on All Saints Day.

## Jack-o'-Lanterns (Pumpkins)

There are many legends surrounding the Jack'-o'-Lantern and where he got his name. The tradition began with people believing that carving scary faces onto turnips would frighten away evil spirits. The tradition turned to pumpkins in America because pumpkins were easier to find and much easier to carve.

## Costumes

During the Samhain festival, some people wore masks and other disguises to avoid being recognised by evil spirits. The rise of costumes as a major part of Halloween actually took off in the United States with the rise of trick-or-treating. Early reports of costumes date to as early as the 1930s.



## Witches, Ghosts and Skeletons

The ideas of death and fearing spirits that surrounded All Hallows Eve gave rise to the skeleton and ghost imagery. As for the fascination with witches, it appears that the European interest in witches was brought to America. It joined with the Native American beliefs in evil spirits, which both fit with the spooky themes of October 31.

Celtic priests had convinced people that black cats were humans gone bad, which made them symbols of Halloween too.

# History of Halloween E3-L1

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Answer the questions using full sentences.**

1. How does the layout of the text help you find information?
  
2. What is the main purpose of the text?
  
3. Describe two important dates in the Celtic calendar.
  
4. Why did people set fires on hilltops?
  
5. What did the poor children promise to do when they were given food on All Hallows Eve?
  
6. Why did people carve faces onto vegetables?
  
7. When did costumes start being made for Halloween in America?
  
8. What did Celtic priests tell people about black cats?
  
- 9a. Use a dictionary or a web search to explain what is meant by 'imagery' in this sentence.  
*The ideas of death and fearing spirits that surrounded All Hallows Eve gave rise to the skeleton and ghost imagery.*
  
- 9b. Now rewrite the sentence in your own words.