



Halloween's Origins

October 31 is Halloween. It is an important event in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and in many other countries, too.



The origins of Halloween

Halloween has Celtic origins. The Celts were European people who lived in northern Europe and Britain about six thousand years ago.

The Celtic calendar was divided in two parts: summer and winter. Summer was from May to the end of October, and winter was from November to the end of April. The ancient Celtic festivity called Samhain celebrated the beginning of winter. It started on the evening of October 31 and continued until the next day.

The Celtic religious men were called Druids. On October 31 they performed religious practices and talked about the future. The Celts believed that ghosts, witches and evil spirits returned on the night of October 31. They believed that evil spirits entered the body of a person or animal. So they wore frightening costumes and made big fires to send them away.

The colors of Halloween are orange and black, and they are of Celtic origin, too. Orange was the color of the harvest, and black was the color of winter and long, dark nights. The Druids believed that black cats had special powers and could feel if spirits were near. So black cats have become symbols of Halloween.

Celebrating Halloween today

Halloween is a festivity for everybody: children, teens and adults! American children take their costumes and masks to school, because in the afternoon there are Halloween parties. Some typical Halloween costumes are witches, ghosts, skeletons, monsters, vampires and aliens. Some parents make the costumes, but others prefer to buy them. There is usually a prize for the best costume.

It is a popular tradition in the United States to buy a big pumpkin and make a jack-o-lantern. People put their jack-o-lanterns in front of the windows of their homes or in their gardens. This tradition started in England and Ireland when people wanted to frighten evil spirits.

Another Halloween tradition is “trick or treating”. This was an Irish tradition that began in the 19th century. Irish immigrants brought



A Halloween parade.



“trick or treating” to America. Today children and teens go “trick or treating” in the evening. They visit their neighbors’ homes in their costumes. When the door opens they say “Trick or treat?” People usually give them money or sweets. But when people don’t give them a treat, the children play a trick. They sometimes write on windows with

soap! And then it’s very difficult to clean the windows.

There are all kinds of Halloween decorations in American towns and cities. The world’s largest Halloween parade is in New York City’s Greenwich Village. The tradition started in 1974 and each year there are thousands of amazing costumes to see.

Pumpkin pie is a favorite dessert for Halloween. It’s delicious and easy to make!

COMPREHENSION CHECK

1. Choose the correct option.

1. Halloween has *American / Celtic* origins.
2. Samhain celebrated the beginning of *summer / winter*.
3. The Celts wore costumes on October 31 to *welcome / frighten* evil spirits.
4. American children have Halloween parties at *home / school*.
5. The tradition of the jack-o-lantern started in *America / England and Ireland*.
6. “Trick or treating” is a *Celtic / an Irish* tradition.
7. The world’s largest Halloween parade is in Greenwich Village, *England / New York City*.