

History of Halloween

Halloween is a popular holiday that takes place on October 31. In the United States and Canada, children dress in costumes and go trick-or-treating. Many people carve jack-o'-lanterns out of pumpkins. Halloween parties for children feature fortunetelling, mock haunted houses, scary stories, and games, such as bobbing for apples. People decorate their houses and yards with images of ghosts, skeletons, witches, black cats, bats, and other symbols of Halloween. Many communities across the United States also hold parades and other celebrations for Halloween.

Halloween developed from an ancient pagan festival celebrated by Celtic people over 2,000 years ago in the area that is now the United Kingdom, Ireland, and northwestern France. The festival was called Samhain (pronounced SOW ehn), which means "summer's end." The festival marked the beginning of the dark winter season and was celebrated around November 1. In the 800's, the Christian church established a new holiday, All Saints' Day, on this date. All Saints' Day was also called All Hallows'. Hallow means saint, or one who is holy. The evening before All Hallows' was known as All Hallows' Eve, or as it came to be abbreviated, All Hallow e'en. This name was eventually shortened to Halloween.