

Name _____

The History of Halloween

Halloween, the spooky and exciting holiday we all love, has a long and interesting history that dates back to ancient times. Its roots are a combination of Celtic traditions, Roman festivals, and Christian influences. Let's explore how Halloween evolved over the centuries.

Halloween's story begins with the ancient Celtic people, who lived in what is now Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern France. They celebrated a festival called Samhain (pronounced "sow-in") around October 31st. Samhain marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. The Celts believed that on this night, the boundary between the living and the spirit world was blurred. They thought that ghosts and other supernatural creatures could cross over into our world.

To protect themselves from these spirits, the Celts lit bonfires and wore costumes made of animal heads and skins. They believed that these disguises would help them blend in with the spirits and avoid harm. People also left offerings of food and drinks outside their homes to appease the wandering ghosts.

Around the 1st century AD, the Romans conquered the Celtic lands, and their traditions mixed with those of the Celts. One Roman festival, Feralia, commemorated the passing of the dead, while another festival, Pomona, honored the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. These Roman influences added elements of harvest and the afterlife to the evolving Halloween celebration.

As Christianity spread across Europe, the Church tried to replace pagan festivals with Christian holidays. In the 7th century, the Church declared November 1st as All Saints' Day, a day to honor saints and martyrs. October 31st became All Hallows' Eve, the night before the holy day. The word "Halloween" is derived from "All Hallows' Eve."

The medieval period saw the merging of these customs. People would go "souling," visiting homes to receive soul cakes in exchange for prayers for the deceased. Costumes, including disguises, were still part of the celebration. The tradition of carving pumpkins, or Jack-o'-lanterns, also began, with people initially using turnips and other root vegetables.



Halloween as we know it today started to take shape in North America. Immigrants from Ireland and Scotland brought their Halloween customs to the United States. Over time, these traditions mixed with Native American and other European influences, evolving into the fun and spooky holiday we celebrate today.

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Halloween has a rich and diverse history that combines Celtic, Roman, and Christian traditions. It's a holiday filled with ancient beliefs, superstitions, and the joy of dressing up and going trick-or-treating. As you enjoy Halloween's tricks and treats, remember that you're participating in a tradition with roots that stretch back thousands of years!

1. What was the name of the festival celebrated by the Celtic people that begins the story of Halloween? _____

2. Why did the Celts wear costumes? _____

3. From what did the word "Halloween" come? _____

4. Before they used pumpkins, what did people initially carve into Jack-o'-lanterns?

5. What is the text structure of this passage? (circle one)

description

cause and effect

compare and contrast

problem and solution

sequence

