**Taken from** [**http://www.halloweenhistory.org/**](http://www.halloweenhistory.org/)

**History of Halloween**

Halloween is a holiday celebrated on the night of October 31. The word Halloween is a shortening of All Hallows' Evening also known as Hallowe'en or All Hallows' Eve.

Traditional activities include trick-or-treating, bonfires, costume parties, visiting "haunted houses" and carving jack-o-lanterns. Irish and Scottish immigrants carried versions of the tradition to North America in the nineteenth century. Other western countries embraced the holiday in the late twentieth century including Ireland, the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom as well as of Australia and New Zealand.

Halloween has its origins in the ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain (pronounced "sah-win").

The festival of Samhain is a celebration of the end of the harvest season in Gaelic culture. Samhain was a time used by the ancient pagans to take stock of supplies and prepare for winter. The ancient Gaels believed that on October 31, the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead overlapped and the deceased would come back to life and cause havoc such as sickness or damaged crops. Masks and costumes were, therefore, worn in an attempt to mimic the evil spirits or to blend in with them so that they would not recognize you and, therefore, leave you alone

The festival would frequently involve bonfires. It is believed that the fires attracted insects to the area which attracted bats to the area. These are additional attributes of the history of Halloween.

**Trick or Treating**

Trick-or-treating, is an activity for children on or around Halloween in which they proceed from house to house in costumes, asking for treats such as confectionery with the question, "Trick or treat?" The "trick" part of "trick or treat" is a threat to play a trick on the homeowner or his property if no treat is given. Trick-or-treating is one of the main traditions of Halloween. It has become socially expected that if one lives in a neighborhood with children one should purchase treats in preparation for trick-or-treaters.

The history of Halloween has evolved. The activity is popular in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, and due to increased American cultural influence in recent years, imported through exposure to US television and other media, trick-or-treating has started to occur among children in many parts of the world.

Part of the history of Halloween is Halloween costumes. The practice of dressing up in costumes and begging door to door for treats on holidays goes back to the Middle Ages, and includes Christmas wassailing. Trick-or-treating resembles the late medieval practice of "souling," when poor folk would go door to door on Hallowmas (November 1), receiving food in return for prayers for the dead on All Souls Day (November 2). It originated in Ireland and Britain, although similar practices for the souls of the dead were found as far south as Italy. Shakespeare mentions the practice in his comedy The Two Gentlemen of Verona (1593), when Speed accuses his master of "puling [whimpering, whining], like a beggar at Hallowmas."

**Halloween costumes**

Halloween costumes are outfits worn on or around October 31, the day of Halloween. Halloween is a modern-day holiday originating in the Pagan Celtic holiday of Samhain (in Christian times, the eve of All Saints Day). Although popular histories of Halloween claim that the practice goes back to ancient celebrations of Samhain, in fact there is little primary documentation of masking or costuming on Halloween before the twentieth century. Costuming became popular for Halloween parties in America in the early 1900s, as often for adults as for children. The first mass-produced Halloween costumes appeared in stores in the 1930s when trick-or-treating was becoming popular in the United States.

What sets Halloween costumes apart from costumes for other celebrations or days of dressing up is that they are often designed to imitate supernatural and scary beings. Costumes are traditionally those of monsters such as vampires, ghosts, skeletons, witches, and devils. There are also costumes of pop culture figures like presidents, or film, television, and cartoon characters. Another popular trend is for women (and in some cases, men) to use Halloween as an excuse to wear particularly revealing costumes, showing off more skin than would be socially acceptable otherwise.

**Jack O'Lantern**

A jack-o'-lantern (sometimes also spelled Jack O'Lantern) is typically a carved pumpkin. It is associated chiefly with the holiday Halloween. Typically the top is cut off, and the inside flesh then scooped out; an image, usually a monstrous face, is carved onto the outside surface, and the lid replaced. During the night, a candle is placed inside to illuminate the effect. The term is not particularly common outside North America, although the practice of carving lanterns for Halloween is.

In folklore, an old Irish folk tale tells of Jack, a lazy yet shrewd farmer who uses a cross to trap the Devil. One story says that Jack tricked the Devil into climbing an apple tree, and once he was up there Jack quickly placed crosses around the trunk or carved a cross into the bark, so that the Devil couldn't get down. Another myth says that Jack put a key in the Devil's pocket while he was suspended upside-down;

Another version of the myth says that Jack was getting chased by some villagers from whom he had stolen, when he met the Devil, who claimed it was time for him to die. However, the thief stalled his death by tempting the Devil with a chance to bedevil the church-going villagers chasing him. Jack told the Devil to turn into a coin with which he would pay for the stolen goods (the Devil could take on any shape he wanted); later, when the coin/Devil disappeared, the Christian villagers would fight over who had stolen it. The Devil agreed to this plan. He turned himself into a silver coin and jumped into Jack's wallet, only to find himself next to a cross Jack had also picked up in the village. Jack had closed the wallet tight, and the cross stripped the Devil of his powers; and so he was trapped. In both myths, Jack only lets the Devil go when he agrees never to take his soul. After a while the thief died, as all living things do. Of course, his life had been too sinful for Jack to go to heaven; however, the Devil had promised not to take his soul, and so he was barred from Hell as well. Jack now had nowhere to go. He asked how he would see where to go, as he had no light, and the Devil mockingly tossed him an ember that would never burn out from the flames of hell. Jack carved out one of his turnips (which was his favorite food), put the ember inside it, and began endlessly wandering the Earth for a resting place. He became known as "Jack of the Lantern", or Jack-o'-Lantern.