

Term 4 Week 1

The Week of October 17 to 23, 2022

An Introduction to Halloween in the USA: & How to Enjoy it Safely



Success Criteria

Students will gain a basic understanding of the origins of Halloween in the United States, and they will be able to identify where some of the traditions associated with this celebration.

Lesson 1: A Short History of Halloween in the USA

Class Discussion – what do we know about Halloween (Write on board)

Task 1: Watch the video clip that describes Halloween traditions in America at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OD_h-uWvVE

a. Based on the video, how do people in America signal to children that you are not giving out candy? Is this the same in New Zealand?

b. At what time of day do most Americans start getting ready for Trick or Treating?

Class Discussion: Did anything presented in the video surprise you about Halloween in the U.S.?

Task 2: Read the article: “Halloween in the USA” which appears at the end of the questions below.

Task 3: Answer the following questions based on the reading.

You DO NOT have to write the questions in your books – just the answers.

1. Many people associate Halloween with the United States, but it didn't begin there, it started in Europe with the Celtic festival of Samhain. What does Samhain mean?

2. On which day of the month is Halloween celebrated?

3. What did the Celts believe was so special about October 31st?

4. What would some Celts build to try and communicate with supernatural beings?

5. What are 3 different names that were once used to describe Halloween?

a. The Christian feast of All Saints' Day

b. _____

c. _____

6. What immigrants made Halloween popular in the United States?

7. In the 1920s, an effort was made by Americans to organise Halloween gatherings. Why?

8. Before pumpkins were popular at Halloween, what other vegetable replaced pumpkins?

9. What are the two main colours that are associated with Halloween?

10. What do these 2 colours represent or symbolise?

11. Long ago in Europe, why did some people dress up in Halloween costumes?

12. More recently in the early 20th century, some people began dressing up in costume. Why?

13. What is the origin of 'Trick or Treating'?

14. Up until the 1950s, kids who went 'Trick or Treating' were not given candy. Name the 3 items they were commonly given:

a.

b.

c.

15. What is a common Halloween prank in American that involves paper?

16. How did bats become associated with Halloween?

17. How did brooms and black cats become a Halloween tradition?

Reading for Lesson 1:

Halloween in the USA

Celtic roots

How old is Halloween? Well, as old as 2,000 years approximately. This means it is one of the oldest festivals of mankind. Evil spirits and supernatural beings were involved in the Celtic festival of Samhain (translation: Summer's End), which was celebrated at the end of the harvest season, respectively, the beginning of the new year, on October 31st. For the Celts, it was a magical time during which the gate to the realm of spirits was open, and ghosts, elves, demons, and other supernatural beings walked the earth. On Samhain, the Celtic druids held large bonfires to get in touch with them.

Religious renewal

The name Halloween was established when the Catholic Church was on the rise in Europe. To gain more influence over the pagan Celts, the celebration of Samhain was given a "new look." The Christian feast of All Saints' Day, also known as All Hallows' Day, was moved to November 1st. Samhain was renamed All Hallows' Eve, which was later shortened to Halloween. Both celebrations, which revolved essentially around spirits and the supernatural, thus merged into a unit.

American import

Halloween, as we know and love it today, was invented by Irish immigrants who came to the USA in the early 20th century. Not only did they bring their traditions with them, they even added to them in their new country. About 100 years ago, Halloween in the USA was truly dangerous: more and more pranks by young people occurred on Halloween night, some of which resulted in injuries as well as economic damage. Halloween was, therefore, also called Mischief Night. In order to prevent the situation from getting out of control, American cities began to promote organized Halloween activities in the 1920s.

Commercial success

Parades, parties, costume contests, etc., are a must during today's Halloween celebrations. Places like Anoka in Minnesota, the self-proclaimed "Halloween capital of the world," paved the way for this. In Anoka, the first official Halloween celebrations of the USA took place in 1920. Scary costumes became more and more popular in America from the 1930s on, and a huge market was built around Halloween products. In the following decades, artists, advertising agencies, television, and cinema all developed an eerie yet fascinating image of the "most horrible night of the year."

Halloween pumpkins

During the Halloween season, pumpkins are literally everywhere – on decorations, costumes, in cakes, and even in beer. The pumpkin as a Halloween symbol has its origin in the legend of Jack O'Lantern. It tells the story of the Irish blacksmith Jack Oldfield, who was so cunning that he even tricked the devil into not sending him to hell. However, being too much of a sinner to get into heaven, he was condemned to wander between the worlds with his lantern.

Originally, the lantern was a hollowed-out turnip with glowing coal as its light source. But when Halloween came to the USA, American spook fans replaced the turnips with pumpkins. These are easier to carve and abundant in the United States. Also, because pumpkins are larger than turnips, much more elaborate, fearsome faces can be cut out.

Halloween decoration

The American decoration frenzy doesn't stop at Halloween pumpkins. Windows, houses, fences, trees: nothing is safe on Halloween in the USA! Everything gets decorated, and sometimes quite extremely – from spider webs and bats to skeletons, ghosts, and witches, even entire cemeteries can be found in front yards. By the way, the typical Halloween colors black and orange stand for death and the fall season.

Halloween costumes

Needless to say that Americans not only decorate their homes on Halloween but also passionately decorate themselves. The tradition can be traced back to the Samhain celebration, too. In those days, people disguised themselves to remain unnoticed by the spirits. The pranksters in the early 20th century also wore masks to be unrecognizable during their tricks. Nowadays, it's all about getting attention: the more intimidating and elaborate a disguise is, the better!

Trick or treat

"Trick or treat" is the ultimatum of American kids haunting house after house in a sugar rush. This tradition presumably goes back to the Celtic superstition that food and beverages in front of the front door will appease supernatural beings. Until the 1950s, it was a common practice to distribute fruit, nuts, or even coins to children in the USA.

However, things changed when the candy industry recognized the potential of the spooky holiday and began offering packaged candy, especially for Halloween. And so it happened that sweet calorie bombs prevent small, costumed troublemakers from more serious mischief nowadays. Typical American Halloween sweets are Candy Corn or Candy Apples.

Halloween pranks

In the US, you may encounter front gardens covered with toilet paper during Halloween. Contemporary art? Maybe, but most of all, it's a very American kind of Halloween prank. It involves wrapping objects – especially houses, trees, or cars – in toilet paper. The bizarre procedure often also includes the so-called "egging," the throwing of eggs.

Bats

Bats embody Halloween like no other animal. The fact that those creatures of the night are associated with the celebration of horror can be traced back to the Celtic origins of Halloween. When ritual bonfires burned on Samhain, they attracted insects, which in turn are a food source for bats. Thus, the idea was born that bats appear when the portals to the spiritual realm are open.

Black cats

Black cats are another Halloween symbol. This superstition dates back to the witch hunt in the middle ages. With an increasing number of alleged witches, items such as brooms or cauldrons that could be found in every household were declared tools of evil. Cats, being accustomed to staying near warm fireplaces, got under suspicion as "servants of the witches." Black cats, creatures tinged with the color of death, were particularly frightening.

Halloween parties

Halloween parties are a rather new tradition, but it's hard to imagine life without them. With the success of organized Halloween activities, the spooky night evolved more and more from a feast for children to a huge fun for adults. Parties and parades such as the famous New York Halloween Parade now enable all generations of horror enthusiasts to transform themselves into the monster of their nightmares for a short time.

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Lessons 2 & 3: Halloween Safety

How to be Safe at Halloween in New Zealand

There are many aspects of Halloween that students should be alert to including the dangers of wearing certain contact lenses, allergic reactions to foods, dyes and food colourings, road awareness, and taking precautions with your pets.

Have a look at the 3 readings below:

Reading #1: The New Zealand Police have come up with some safety tips for Halloween:

<https://www.police.govt.nz/news/release/trick-or-treat-safety-street>

Reading #2: Halloween can be a dangerous time for pets.

<https://www.southerncrosspet.co.nz/pet-hub/tips-and-tricks/safe-halloween-for-pets/>

Reading #3: The dangers of costumes, candies and coloured contact lenses

<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/halloween-safety-tips-costumes-candy-and-colored-contact-lenses>

We are going to read the 1st 2 articles in class out loud. Students will take turns.

Assignment: Create a Poster in your **Red Books** over 1 or 2 pages that includes important safety information for both humans and pets during Halloween.