

# Happy Halloween

## Pre-reading

### Questions:

- What do you know about Halloween?
- What would you like to know about it?

### Definitions:

- Abolish – to get rid of or put an end to
- Appease – to satisfy, calm, or soothe



## Reading

18 Leaves have fallen from the trees, a cool autumn breeze is in the air, pumpkins, candy and ghosts  
36 abound – these are all sure signs that Halloween is near. This October 31<sup>st</sup> holiday began over 2000 years  
54 ago in what is now Ireland and Europe. It grew out of a Celtic celebration called Samhain (pronounced  
69 sow-en). This **pagan** holiday combined the Celt’s harvest and New Year festivals. Time, order and  
83 structure were abolished, and chaos was encouraged to reign during the three-day festival.

102 The day before Samhain was considered the last day of summer (or of the old year) and the day  
123 after Samhain was the first day of winter (or of the new year). It was associated with the seasonal cycles of  
141 life and death as the last crops were harvested and livestock were brought in for winter or for slaughter.

156 Being between seasons or years, Samhain was considered a magical and fearful time. The barrier  
175 between the worlds of the living and dead broke and spirits walked on the Earth. People tried to make  
193 contact with friendly spirits of the dead, who were often seen as sources of guidance. Many people wore  
205 masks made of animal heads and skins to frighten off evil spirits.

223 It was thought that the spirits of the dead required food and drink. So, during the festival people  
241 would leave various articles of food outside to appease the spirits. The spirits would go door-to-door  
259 demanding the best food and wine. If none were given, a hungry and possibly irritated spirit might enter the  
268 house and cause trouble for the home dwellers.

282 Sacred bonfires were very important during the fiery festival. They provided light against the  
299 growing darkness and evil spirits. As the celebration ended, families carried home embers from the fire to  
303 relight their hearth fires.

320 The Jack-O’-Lantern is said to have come from this age-old practice of carrying home embers in  
340 hollowed-out turnips. In an Irish folk tale, a man named Jack once escaped the devil with a turnip lantern.  
356 When the Irish came to America, Jack’s turnip was exchanged for the more easily carved pumpkin.

371 Christians tried to replace the pagan festival with a church-approved holiday. November 1<sup>st</sup> was  
390 designated All Saints’ Day to honor saints and martyrs, and November 2<sup>nd</sup> became All Soul’s Day, a day to  
399 remember the departed and to pray for their souls.

415 Together, All Saints’ Eve, All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day were called Hallowmas. The night  
431 before, came to be called All-hallows Evening. After some time, the name was shortened to “Halloween.”

## Understanding

1. What does the word **pagan** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Why do you think Halloween is celebrated in the fall of the year? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What is a folk tale? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. How were spirits viewed as both “good” and “bad”? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Why did the Christian church try to replace Samhain? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What can you infer are the roots of trick-or-treating? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. Why is Samhain described as a “magical and fearful time”? \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Writing

Option A: Compare and contrast the “Halloween” of 2000 years ago to the Halloween of today.

Option B: Summarize the reading in your own words.

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