



The Origins of Halloween



The origins of Halloween are very old. In fact, this festivity started in Celtic¹ Britain. The Celts lived in the British Isles during ancient times. They were pagans. They believed in the gods of nature.

There were two important festivals on the Celtic calendar, Beltane and Samhain.² Beltane celebrated the beginning of summer and Samhain the start of winter, on November 1. Samhain was also the first day of the year on the Celtic calendar. The festival of Samhain started on October 31 and finished on November 1.

The Celts were afraid of winter. The days were short and cold, and the nights were very long. They associated³ winter with death and evil spirits.

1. **Celtic** : American English ['seltɪk], British English ['keltɪk].

2. **Samhain** : [saʊn].

3. **associated** : linked, connected.

HALL WEEN

MAGIC, WITCHES AND VAMPIRES

The Celts believed that on the night of October 31 the spirits of the dead came out of their tombs. The Celts made big fires to frighten ¹ the ghosts. They also wore scary costumes. The Celts played games on October 31 to bring good luck in the year. They ate nuts and apples because they were lucky foods.

END

The Druids were Celtic priests ² and teachers. They were very

1. **frighten** : scare, terrify.
2. **priests** : these people perform religious ceremonies in some religions.



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important in Celtic society. They practiced magic and religious rituals. Everyone respected the Druids. At Samhain the Druids talked about the future and led the celebrations.

Druids today
at Stonehenge.

There are still some Druids today. They believe in the ancient Celtic religion called Druidism. They love and respect nature. They meet and celebrate some Celtic festivities at Stonehenge and in other places.

The colors of Halloween are of Celtic origin. Black was the color of winter and long nights. Orange was the color of the harvest. The black cat is another symbol of Halloween. The Celts believed that the black cat had special powers.

After the Roman invasion in AD 43 the Romans combined Samhain with their festival, Pomona. Pomona was the Roman goddess of gardens and fruit trees and this festival celebrated the harvest.

Many years after the Roman invasion, Christian practices substituted pagan ones. On the first day of November, Christians celebrated All Saints' Day or All Hallows' Day. The evening of October 31 was All Hallows' Eve. This became Halloween.

The Druid religion continued for a long time in Ireland and Scotland, and people continued to celebrate Halloween. In the 19th century, Irish immigrants took their Halloween traditions to the United States. Now Halloween is a very big festivity in the United States and in many other countries too.



UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

KET

1 Are these sentences “Right” (A) or “Wrong” (B)? If there is not enough information to answer “Right” (A) or “Wrong” (B), choose “Doesn’t Say” (C). There is an example at the beginning (0).

- 0 The festivity of Halloween started in the year 500 BC.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 1 The ancient Celts were pagans.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 2 Beltane and Samhain were two important Celtic festivals.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 3 Beltane was the last day of the year.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 4 The Druids were Roman priests.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 5 On 31 October the Celts made big fires to frighten evil spirits.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 6 The colors of Halloween are orange and black.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 7 The word Halloween comes from All Hallows’ Eve.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say
- 8 Fifty Irish immigrants took their Halloween customs to America.
A Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn’t say

GRAMMAR CHECK

2 Nouns are the names of people, places or things. Adjectives are words that describe nouns. Complete the sentences with the correct adjective or noun from the tables below.

ADJECTIVES	NOUNS
scary first important afraid magic	year calendar games festival spirits winter rituals

- a. There were two festivals on the Celtic
- b. Samhain was the day of the
- c. The Celts were of
- d. The Celts dressed in costumes to frighten the bad
- e. They played on October 31.
- f. After the Roman invasion, Samhain became a harvest
- g. The Druids practiced and religious

KET

3 Read the descriptions. What is the missing word? There is an example at the beginning (0).

- 0 They believed in the gods of nature. P _ _ _ _ _ = Pagans
- 1 Celtic beginning of summer. B _ _ _ _ _
- 2 The original Halloween. S _ _ _ _ _
- 3 Color of winter and long nights. B _ _ _ _
- 4 Color of harvests. O _ _ _ _ _
- 5 Celtic priests and teachers. D _ _ _ _ _

T: GRADE 4

4 Seasonal Activities

The ancient Celts celebrated Samhain in the autumn. It was a seasonal festival. We do different activities in different seasons. What is your favorite seasonal activity? Tell the class about it. Use these questions to help you.

- a. What is the name of the activity?
- b. When do you do this activity?
- c. Why do you like this seasonal activity?

5 LOOKING AT PICTURES

Look at the picture on page 7 and answer these questions.

- a. What can you see in the picture?
 trees houses people roads stones
- b. What are the two dominant colors? and
- c. What scene does the picture show?
 a picnic a ceremony a battle
- d. What is the historical setting of the picture?
 before 1000 between 1000-1500 after 1500

Stonehenge

3 Stonehenge is an enormous prehistoric monument near Salisbury in the South of England.

In 2800 BC the people of the Stone Age began to build Stonehenge. There were two big circles of huge¹ stones. They were concentric² circles. By about the year 1400 BC there were two more stone circles inside the original ones. These stones were very heavy. Some of them came from the Preseli mountains in South Wales, 385 kilometers away! How did the people move them? This is an amazing mystery.

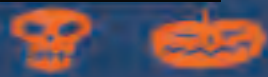
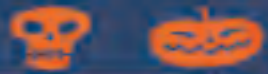
But what was Stonehenge? We don't know. Some people believe it was a type of calendar with a religious meaning. Some astronomers also think that Stonehenge was an astronomical instrument. They think the huge stones measured the movements of the sun, moon and stars. Other people think the Druids used Stonehenge as a temple for religious and magic rituals.

But no one really knows.

1. huge : very big.

2. concentric :





1 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false ones.

- a. Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument in the North of England.
- b. The Druids built Stonehenge.
- c. There were four big circles of huge stones.
- d. The circles were concentric.
- e. Stonehenge was a church.
- f. The Druids probably used Stonehenge to study astronomy.

T	F
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2 ODD ONE OUT!

Circle the word in each group that does not belong.

- a. circle square triangle stones
- b. monument clock calendar watch
- c. priest religious astronomer teacher
- d. Bronze Age Stone Age Halloween Ice Age

Now use the odd words to complete the sentences.

- a. Some people believe Stonehenge had a meaning.
- b. Stonehenge was made of huge
- c. The origins of go back to the ancient Celts.
- d. Stonehenge is a prehistoric

PROJECT ON THE WEB

LET'S TAKE A WALK THROUGH STONEHENGE!

Your teacher will give you the correct web-site address. Look at the different 360° views of the great monument of Stonehenge. What do you think of the monument? Write a sentence about it.