

# Halloween

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Halloween is a celebration observed in a number of countries on 31 October, the eve of the Western Christian feast of All Hallows' Day

It is widely believed that many Halloween traditions originated from ancient Celtic harvest festivals

pancakes, and soul cakes. Some Christians historically abstained from meat on All Hallows' Eve, a tradition reflected in the eating of certain vegetarian foods on this vigil day, including apples, potato



# Symbols

Development of artifacts and symbols associated with Halloween formed over time. Jack-o'-lanterns are traditionally carried by guisers on All Hallows' Eve in order to frighten evil spirits. There is a popular Irish Christian folktale associated with the jack-o'-lantern, which in folklore is said to represent a "soul who has been denied entry into both heaven and hell":

In Ireland and Scotland, the turnip has traditionally been carved during Halloween, but immigrants to North America used the native pumpkin, which is both much softer and much larger – making it easier to carve than a turnip

The modern imagery of Halloween comes from many sources, including Christian eschatology, national customs, works of Gothic and horror literature (such as the novels Frankenstein and Dracula) and classic horror films (such as Frankenstein and The Mummy)

Imagery of the skull, a reference to Golgotha in the Christian tradition, serves as "a reminder of death and the transitory quality of human life" and is consequently found in memento mori

and vanitas compositions; skulls have therefore been commonplace in Halloween, which touches on this theme



Traditionally, the back walls of churches are "decorated with a depiction of the Last Judgment, complete with graves opening and the dead rising, with a heaven filled with angels and a hell filled with devils", a motif that has permeated the observance of this triduum. One of the earliest works on the subject of Halloween is from Scottish poet John Mayne, who, in 1780, made note of pranks at Halloween; "What fearfu' pranks ensue!", as well as the supernatural associated with the night, "Bogies" (ghosts), influencing Robert Burns' "Halloween" (1785

# Trick-or-treating and guising

- ▶ Trick-or-treating is a customary celebration for children on Halloween. Children go in costume from house to house, asking for treats such as candy or sometimes money, with the question, "Trick or treat?" The word "trick" implies a "threat" to perform mischief on the homeowners or their property if no treat is given.
- ▶ In England, from the medieval period, up until the 1930s, people practiced the Christian custom of souling on Halloween, which involved groups of soulers, both Protestant and Catholic, going from parish to parish, begging the rich for soul cakes, in exchange for praying for the souls of the givers and their friends.
- ▶ The thousands of Halloween postcards produced between the turn of the 20th century and the 1920s commonly show children but not trick-or-treating.
- ▶ A popular variant of trick-or-treating, known as trunk-or-treating (or Halloween tailgating), occurs when "children are offered treats from the trunks of cars parked in a church parking lot", or sometimes, a school parking lot



# Games and other activities

- ▶ There are several games traditionally associated with Halloween. Some of these games originated as divination rituals or ways of foretelling one's future, especially regarding death, marriage and children.
- ▶ The following activities were a common feature of Halloween in Ireland and Britain during the 17th–20th centuries
- ▶ Several of the traditional activities from Ireland and Britain involve foretelling one's future partner or spouse. An apple would be peeled in one long strip, then the peel tossed over the shoulder.
- ▶ In Ireland and Scotland, items would be hidden in food—usually a cake, barmbrack, cranachan, champ or colcannon—and portions of it served out at random. A person's future would be foretold by the item they happened to find; for example, a ring meant marriage and a coin meant wealth.
- ▶ Up until the 19th century, the Halloween bonfires were also used for divination in parts of Scotland, Wales and Brittany. When the fire died down, a ring of stones would be laid in the ashes, one for each person. In the morning, if any stone was mislaid it was said that the person it represented would not live out the year.
- ▶ Telling ghost stories and watching horror films are common fixtures of Halloween parties. Episodes of television series and Halloween-themed specials (with the specials usually aimed at children) are commonly aired on or before Halloween, while new horror films are often released before Halloween to take advantage of the holiday.

# Food



- ▶ Barmbrack (Ireland)
- ▶ Bonfire toffee (Great Britain)
- ▶ Candy apples/toffee apples (Great Britain and Ireland)
- ▶ Candy apples, Candy corn, candy pumpkins (North America)
- ▶ Monkey nuts (peanuts in their shells) (Ireland and Scotland)
- ▶ Caramel apples
- ▶ Caramel corn
- ▶ Colcannon (Ireland; see below)
- ▶ Halloween cake
- ▶ Novelty candy shaped like skulls, pumpkins, bats, worms, etc.
- ▶ Roasted pumpkin seeds
- ▶ Roasted sweet corn
- ▶ Soul cakes

