

HALLOWEEN



Halloween or All Saint's Eve is celebrated annually on October 31st. It's one of the oldest pagan holidays in the world. They say that Halloween has some features of Celtic culture and some of Christian. Celtic people on this day used to welcome evil spirits, and Christian people commemorate all the saints. The history of Halloween dates back to the times when Britain and partially France were inhabited by Celtic tribes. They worshipped several gods. During summertime it was the god of Sun, and starting from November 1st, which was regarded as the beginning of winter, the Sun was replaced by Samhain – the god of death and lord of darkness. On this day, they believed that border between the real and supernatural worlds stopped existing. The souls of the dead could return and transform into animals. The most dangerous and symbolic ones were the black cats.



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In the 9th century, the time when Christianity spread in the country, Celtic traditions were mixed with new Catholic holiday – All Hallows' Eve. This is how the holiday got its mystical name. Today, the holiday combines the features of both cultures. At the night of Halloween people like wearing evil spirits' costumes, transforming into witches, demons, zombies, skeletons, etc. These characters are scary and funny at the same time. They attend costume parties, go trick-or-treating, decorate houses and lawns. Traditional symbol of Halloween is a pumpkin. People carve it and put a lighted candle inside to make the head of Jack-O-Lantern. Pumpkin denotes the end of harvest and they say it scares away all evil spirits.



Gradually other countries and even continents began celebrating Halloween. It is especially popular in the United States. People arrange posh festivals and carnivals. Children's favourite part is trick-or-treating, as they get lots of sweets from their neighbors. Both adults and children like dressing up on All Hallows Night. It's almost impossible to imagine someone without a theme costume. The tradition of wearing different costumes and masks also has Celtic roots. Knowing that on this night ghosts come back to the earthly world, people wanted to trick them and avoided being recognized. They hoped that the ghosts would mistake them for fellow spirits. Lighting candles in pumpkins outside the homes was also the way of protection against evil spirits.

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Halloween is celebrated in many countries all over the world. In some of them (China, Mexico, Austria) the dead are honored and welcomed: people leave food and gifts for the souls of their deceased loved ones and keep lights in their houses burning all night.

In other countries, like Germany, people are afraid of ghosts and spirits. They even hide knives and other sharp objects in order not to be hurt by these visitors on

Halloween night.



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