

# Origins and traditions of Halloween

**Halloween**, celebrated annually by millions across the Western world, has its origins in pagan rituals dating back thousands of years

## ► October 31:

Celebrated from fifth century BC in Ireland, Britain and France as pagan Celtic festival of **Samhain** – to mark end of summer, harvest, and to honour the dead

► **Halloween:** Short for **All Hallows Eve** – originated after Christians replaced pagan festival in ninth century AD with **All Hallows Day** (or **All Saints Day**), celebrated on November 1 to honour Catholic saints

## ► Dressing up:

Masks and costumes may be linked to superstitious practice of wearing disguise to hide from spirits, believed by Celts to visit the living on Samhain night



## ► Trick-or-treating:

Thought to derive from pagan custom of leaving treats on doorstep to pacify wandering spirits some possibly evil, to ensure plentiful harvest in following year



► **Pumpkins:** Carving them into lanterns first linked to America after Irish arrived in 1840s – continuing Celtic custom of carving turnips or beets for

carrying flames from Samhain bonfires to light new fires in homes

*Apple bobbing may have come about through merger of Roman and Celtic customs – both cultures celebrated harvest festivals at same time*

