

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

