



# The Origins of Halloween

Intermediate and above Weekly Warmer

Time: 15 - 20 minutes

This warmer could be used with a Halloween lesson or a lesson about festivals or rituals.

**Language Aims:** To encourage accuracy in listening through listening to a passage and filling gaps with the correct words, to learn vocabulary appropriate to a festival, reading for understanding.

**Preparation:** Write the words in the list below (in Procedure 1.) or put them on an OHT. Make copies of the reading text on the next page so that each student has one.

**Procedure:** 1. Tell students that you are going to read aloud a passage about the history of Halloween. Before they listen, they need to think and talk about the meanings of the words below. How are they related to Halloween?

<i>candies</i>	<i>costumes</i>	<i>customs</i>	<i>door-to-door</i>	<i>spirits</i>
<i>devil</i>	<i>Heaven</i>	<i>Ireland</i>	<i>prayers</i>	<i>pumpkin</i>



2. When students have finished discussing the words and how they could be related to Halloween, give them a copy of the reading text on the next page. Ask them to listen and fill in the gaps in the passage. Tell them each gap will contain 2 - 4 missing words. (Some of the words will be from the list they discussed in 1.) Read the text at least twice at normal speed.

3. Check students' comprehension of the article by asking them some questions afterwards.

**Reading Text - Text to be read aloud by the teacher:**

Halloween originated in Ireland. It occurs on the evening before All Hallows Day, November 1, when the Catholic Church honors the saints.

In Ireland in about 400 BC, October 31 was the end of summer and the end of the year. On that day it was believed that the spirits of those who had died that year would come back to look for people to control. People did not want this to happen to them and on the night of the 31st they would put out any fires in their houses to make them unwelcoming, dress up in frightening costumes, and go around the neighborhood to scare away the spirits. This became known as "Halloween".

Some contemporary Halloween customs, such as 'trick-or-treating' have evolved through the centuries. Trick-or-treating may have come from the ninth century European custom, 'souling'. In early November Christians walked through villages asking for soul cakes (bread and currants). They would say prayers for people's dead relatives in exchange for the soul cakes. Souling has now evolved into trick-or-treating. Children dress in all sorts of different costumes now (the costumes do not have to be scary) and go door-to-door asking people for a treat. The treats are no longer bread cakes; they are different kinds of candies.

Other customs include the jack-o'-lantern. There is a story from Ireland about a man named Jack who managed to trick the devil into climbing up a tree. To stop the devil getting out of the tree he carved a cross into the trunk. After Jack died he didn't get to Heaven because he hadn't been a very good person, but because he had tricked the devil he didn't have to go to Hell. He was given a burning stick by the devil so he could see and he put it inside a hollowed-out turnip, to make a lamp. "Jack's Lanterns" became "jack-o'-lanterns."

Pumpkin jack-o'-lanterns, which have faces carved out, have replaced turnip jack-o'-lanterns. The reason? The new Irish immigrants in the 1840's discovered there were more pumpkins than turnips in their new land. On Halloween night these glowing jack-o'-lantern faces are lit-up and can be seen in windows or in front of houses for everyone to look at.

Modern-day Halloween customs, based on traditional ones, continue to change in the twenty-first century.



## Halloween



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13. \_\_\_\_\_ , which have faces carved out, have replaced turnip jack-o'-lanterns. The reason? The new Irish immigrants in the 1840's discovered there were more pumpkins than turnips 14. \_\_\_\_\_ . On Halloween night these glowing jack-o'-lantern faces are lit-up and can be seen in windows or in front of houses for everyone to look at. Modern-day Halloween customs, 15. \_\_\_\_\_ , continue to change in the twenty-first century.