

Halloween History

(from National Geographic)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-VRAemIvbl>

Watch the documentary and answer the questions:

1. What does the narrator mean in the beginning, when he says:
"From communion with the dead to pumpkins and pranks, Halloween is a *patchwork holiday*...."

2. When did it all begin? What was the celebration for?

3. Why were bonfires lit?

4. Explain the meaning of "frown on" in this passage:

"... But, as the Catholic Church's influence grew in Europe, it frowned on the pagan rituals like 'Samhain'". ...

5. Complete the gaps: (1'25)

"... Both _____ holidays had to _____ with the _____ and about survival after _____.

... It was a calculated move on the part of the _____ to _____ more people _____ fold."

6. How and when did the holiday go to North America?

7. Which of the things below were Irish customs mentioned by the narrator?

* bubbling for apples

* playing soccer

* baking pumpkin pies

* having costume parties

* playing pranks

* hanging jack-o-lanterns

* asking for candies

8. What happened to the tradition over the years? What did store keepers and neighbours do to make the situation better?

9. What is the holiday greeting nowadays?

Halloween History - Document Transcript

From communion with the dead to pumpkins and pranks, Halloween is a patchwork holiday, stitched together with cultural, religious and occult traditions that span centuries. It all began with the Celts, a people whose culture had spread across Europe, more than 2,000 years ago. October 31st was the day they celebrated the end of the harvest season, in a festival called "Samhain". That night also marked the Celtic new year, it was considered a time "between years", a magical time when the ghosts of the dead watched the Earth. "It was the time when the veil between death and life was supposed to be at its thinnest". On "Samhain", the villagers gathered and lit huge bonfires to drive the dead back to the spirit world and keep them away from the living. But, as the Catholic Church's influence grew in Europe, it frowned on the pagan rituals like "Samhain". In the 7th Century, the Vatican began to merge it with the Church Sanctum holiday, so November 1st was designated "All Saints' Day", to honor martyrs and the deceased faithful. "Both of these holidays had to do with the afterlife, and about survival after death. It was a calculated move on the part of the Church, to bring more people into the fold. All Saints' Day was known then as "Hallowmas". "Hallow" means "holy" or "saintly", so the translation is -roughly- "Mass of the Saints". The night before October 31st was "All Hallows' Eve", which gradually morphed into "Halloween". The holiday came to America with the wave of Irish immigrants during the potato famine of the 1840s. They brought several of their holiday customs with them, including "bubbling for apples", and playing tricks on neighbors, like removing gates from the front of houses. The young pranksters were masked, so they wouldn't be recognized. But over the years, the tradition of harmless tricks grew into outright vandalism. "Back in the 1930s, it really became a dangerous holiday, and there was such hooliganism and vandalism. "Trick-or-treating" was originally an extortion deal: "Give us candy or we'll trash your house". Store keepers and neighbours began giving treats or bribes to stop the tricks, and children were encouraged to travel door to door for treats, as an alternative to trouble-making. By the late thirties, "trick-or-treat" became a holiday greeting.