

# [Short essay on history of halloween](https://assignbuster.com/short-essay-on-history-of-halloween/)

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“ When witches go riding, and black cats are seen, the moon laughs and whispers, ‘ tis near Halloween,” wrote an unknown author. Imagine this small poem whispered on the one day for the year that is recognized by many people as the scariest day of the year. Ghosts, goblins, demons, witches and more are iconic things rumored to come out and play on All Hallow’ Eve. But where did Halloween come from and what were the beginnings of our modern traditions? While Halloween had begun with Celtic origins, other cultures have played a role in this holiday’s past.

On many countries calendars there is a day that the people there celebrate the dead and all things that play in the night. This holiday is called Halloween today in the United States. Halloween is on October 31 and is a day for magic and superstition. Closely related to Halloween is All Saint’s day, also called All Hallows’ Day. This is a church established holiday meant for services and religious thought.

The name for both of these days has changed over time. Halloween was All Hallows Even, shortened to Hallowe’en, and then finally it became Halloween. All Hallows’ Eve was Allhallowmas. This was changed to All Hallows’ Eve. Halloween is celebrated as a day to honor the dead and their spirits.

Many customs leave offerings for the dead, such as food, toys, or flowers. It is also a time to celebrate and let chaos rule for a night. The earliest known Halloween celebrations were the Celts. Over 2, 000 years ago this group of people celebrated on October 31 and November 1. On the 31st of the month the Celts thought that a god by the name of Saman organized the souls of the dead.

This night was called the Vigil of Samhain. On the 1st of November they offered animal sacrifices to their sun god to come back through the winter. Saman was thought to control the dead spirits. Saman was the Lord of the Dead and his holiday, Samhain, meant ‘ summer’s end.’ He was linked to fertility and death, fertility for the fall harvest and then the death that occurred during the lean winter months.

It is said that Saman gave free reign to chaos on this day. Goblins, fortunes, magic, cats, and evil were associated with Samhain. Also at this time, Celtic druids built big bonfires to scare away evil spirits. All other fires were extinguished then re-lit from these fires. The Romans in contrast, had a festival on November 1.

This honored their goddess Pomona who was the Mistress of Fruits and Gardens. Pomona Day was surrounded byApples, nuts, and other harvest symbols. The Romans conquered Celtic lands and the mixing of these two customs created an even greater fall holiday. In another country, the English church was against Halloween.

They thought that evil gathered and so strengthened the religious correlation with November 1st in the hopes that it would shift people from Halloween and disband the celebration of ‘ evil.’ Around this time in the Middle Ages, witchcraft emerged and October 31st became the Night of the Witches. As this became a bad thing, more people feared Halloween as the church wanted. Even so, many people still celebrated. This created many of the traditions that are associated with Halloween. Even with rich Celtic origins, England also seemed to have a hand in some of the things linked with Halloween.

One of these is the act of going door to door and asking for treats. In England, many of the wealthy would have parties on November 1st to celebrate. On November 2nd, the poor would go door to door of these wealthy and beg for food. This came to be known as ‘ going a-souling.’ The wealthy would give treats to the poor in the exchange that the poor would pray especially for that person and their family. More and more people joined in this practice and children were sent out in the stead of adults.

Another tradition, bobbing for apples, is said to mostly likely have originated in England. Dressing up in costumes came from the Roman Catholic Church. On Halloween they would dress up in patron saint or devil costumes for a play. They believed that the scary costumes would trick the demons into leaving them alone. Witches as well were mostly from the church. As religious colonists of the Americas were afraid of Satan accusations and suspicions were thrown out and people thought to be in league with Satan were called witches.

Witch hunts and executions followed. With witches come black cats. The relation between Halloween and this particular color of car is not known. Fairies are another imagining of England. They are undecided between good and evil.

Fairies are said to have been made two ways. Either they were created on the third day by God but lacked a soul, or in the fight between Lucifer and God they chose to be neutral. These iconic symbols of Halloween have persevered to the modern day. Celtic areas have also contributed to Halloween. Getting treats was also practice in Ireland but for a different reason.

A group of people would go door to door on October 31st to ask for contributions for the god Muck Olla. If the contributions from one person were good they would have good luck, if not they would have bad luck or get a ‘ trick.’ There were a few popular tricks around this time. They included putting goats down chimneys, throwing kale roots at houses, and disassembling and reassembling and leaving something in a person living room. These tricks soon got dangerous however. Around the 1900s people started to burn and overturn outhouses.

Jack-o’-lanterns are a very popular Halloween tradition. They originated in Ireland. The story goes that the Devil appeared beside a man named Jack to take him to Hell. Jack tricked the Devil into climbing a tree to pick an apple and carved a cross in the tree so the Devil was unable to come down. They made a deal that the Devil would never claim Jack’s soul.

When Jack’s time came, he was not allowed in Heaven and the Devil had promised not to take him. The Devil gave Jack a burning coal who then put it in a turnip he was holding. Ever since then he has wandered. Turnips were sometimes used but as the traditions spread to the United States and pumpkins were more plentiful there, it was changed to using pumpkins. Halloween shows us the superstitious side of the modern day. The side of human nature that believes, and possibly remembers, a time that was more barbaric and rooted in dark past.

Next time you go out on Halloween night, however, remember you have nothing to fear from the ghosts and ghouls of our time. Works Cited Bain, Carol. “ Halloween.” World Book 2002. Chicago: World Book Inc. 24-26.

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