

# The History of Halloween

Written By  
*Nicolas Moore*



**H**alloween is a day that kids and adults alike enjoy and look forward to every year. Filled with candy and fun costumes, it is no wonder why the holiday is so popular. Halloween has a long and intriguing history that started long ago that has changed and been passed down through many generations.

Halloween is a contraction that stems from “All Hallows Eve” and is a mostly nonreligious holiday that is observed on October 31st every year on the eve of All Saints day.

Before it was known as “All Saints Day”, the festival of Samhain was a holiday that was celebrated by the people of Ireland and Britain. This fell on the eve of their winter. During this time, it was believed that the spirits would come home and visit their families, which is why there are a lot of traditions

that involve honoring the dead. This meant that all the Celts would participate in honoring the spirits of the past and remembering them during that time.

In the 7th century, the religious holiday “All Saints Day”, which used to take place in May, moved to the same time as the festival in order to bring a religious aspect to the holiday. According to Britannica, the evening before “All Saints Day” became known as “All Hallow’s Eve”, thus bringing up the name Halloween.

Halloween began to become very popular and stuck with people for centuries. Eventually, when people from Britain and Ireland began migrating to the United States, the holiday followed their culture. Once people settled into the United States, Halloween became a very popular holiday that began

to make its presence in American culture and society. This is when it became mostly popular around children because of the secular ways the holiday changed. With the handing out of free candy, dressing up in costumes and performing harmless pranks on others, the holiday began to change into more of a fun day for people than the eve of a religious holiday.

As time went on, the holiday became less about religion and started being known for having magic and death as the focal point. It started to incorporate the idea of witches, vampires, ghosts and everything dark (including the stigma about black cats later on). As Halloween has changed with the times, it has almost completely removed itself from being associated with a religious holiday. The ideals behind the holiday have continued to change

as well, due to many people viewing it as a children's holiday to get candy and not a day when the spirits come back to life. In America, Halloween is a holiday that mainly focuses on dressing up and getting candy and has very little correlation to its original purpose.

In Mexico, the day of the dead is another celebration that is celebrated on the days after Halloween. It started over 3,000 years ago when the Aztecs and other native peoples began honoring the dead based upon their beliefs. They believed that when someone died, it took them years to pass

through different levels of the afterlife, and every year they would leave out food and drink for the spirits to feed on to help them through their journey. Over time, this day became known as Día de los Muertos, or the

day of the dead. The customs stuck around in Mexico and eventually worked its way into American culture as well, with people celebrating the day with altars and "ofrendas" from October 31st to November 2nd. Halloween started off the celebration of the dead, and then carried it through the other two days of honoring those who have passed away.

Halloween is different now than when it started, but is one of the longest standing holidays in our calendar year.



Sources:  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Halloween>  
<https://www.history.com/topics/halloween/day-of-the-dead>