

# Why Do We Get Spooky?

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By Marie Defreitas

## I. Love. Halloween.

I do, I can't get enough of it. The costumes, the decorations, the parties, the candy. It's by far my favorite holiday, as it is for a lot of people. Like every major holiday, there's quite a bit of history behind it, and it's just as awesome as free candy.

**The History** Like a lot of holidays, Halloween's roots lie in Pagan traditions. It all started with an old Gaelic festival called Samhain, pronounced 'SAW-win' or 'SOW-in'. This was a badass Celtic festival that was held from October 31 to November 1, because the Celtic day began and ended at the sunset. Going as far back as 2,000 years ago, this was a celebration of the "darker half of the year" and the festival usually entailed costumes and dancing around a large bonfire. This was the time when the world of the living and the world of the dead are thought to be the closest. Fast forward to about the 8th century when Western Christianity comes into play, and their "All Saints Day" is moved to November 1st while "All Soul's Day" was November 2nd. This was a time of remembering the dead, including saints (hallows) and martyrs. The night before became known as "All Hallow's Eve" and eventually the contraction we know as Halloween. Why the costumes, and, not that we need question this, but why the candy? Costumes were a part of the Celtic Samhain festival indeed. People would dress up to ward off or blend in with the spirits that were thought to enter into our world on the eve of the festival. Costumes started as more scary for this reason. Later the tradition of "Souling" or "Guising" originated in Medieval Britain. "Souling" was when poorer people would go around to doorsteps begging for a pastry known as a "soul cake". In return for this they would pray for these people's dead relatives. "Guising" came about when younger people would get into costume and ask for things like food, wine or money in exchange for singing, reciting poetry or doing some stand-up comedy.

Sounds like a good deal! Fast forward again to 19th Century when Irish and Scottish immigrants revived some of these traditions in America. So you can thank them for the result, known as Trick-or- Treating. This started off as more pranks like the well-known tp-ing and egging of houses. But later, around the 1950's, Halloween became a much more family- friendly, kid-focused holiday. But we all know costumes and candy aren't just for little kids!

What about Jack O' Lanterns?

Carving creepy faces into pumpkins is one weird tradition. And it's got some weird Irish folklore to go with it. Legend has it that there was a drunk dude named stingy Jack who pulled a fast one on the devil. Jack managed to convince the devil to never take his soul, but when his time came St. Peter wouldn't let him into the gates of heaven either. So Jack returned to the devil, who couldn't let him into hell either, per their agreement. Instead the devil gave Jack a piece of burning coal to light his way as he wandered through purgatory. Jack carried the coal in a carved out turnip. From this, Irish families would put hollowed out turnips on their doorsteps to prevent Stingy Jack and other spirits from entering their homes. They often carved scary and grotesque faces into the turnips. Then when these Irish immigrants made their way West, they discovered the pumpkin, which was native to America. This was a much more ideal fruit for carving, and thus the Jack O' Lantern was born.

Celebrate how you want! Whether you're dancing around a bonfire for Samhain, lighting a candle for someone you've lost, dressing up and getting candy, heading out to a haunted party, or just sitting on the couch binge-watching horror flicks, Halloween is a fun time for everyone. So celebrate how you like and revel in the spookiness!

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Got it!

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