

Halloween - October 31

No one knows exactly when Halloween was first celebrated. It is believed that the ancient Druids of England were the first to recognize this special day. The Druids observed their New Year's Day on November 1st. The night before, October 31st, was considered their New Year's Eve. They believed that on this night, the lord of the dead called forth the evil spirits to visit the earth. Druids lit great fires on this night to scare them away. They also dressed as ghosts and goblins in hopes of escaping the night unharmed.

Eventually, this celebration became the Christian holiday of All Hallows' Day. The Christians spent this day honoring the saints of the Church. The night before, on All Hallows' Eve (or Halloween) people dressed in masks and costumes meant to represent the saints. It was their duty to lead the spirits of the dead out of town before the next day's celebrations.

After the Romans conquered Britain, harvest festivals became a part of the Halloween celebrations. In Scotland, farmers carried torches through fields in hopes of a good crop for the next year, and also to frighten away witches and ghosts that might be hiding in orchards and pastures. People in Ireland hollowed out and carved potatoes and turnips which were lit from inside by candles and used to scare away evil spirits.

Halloween has changed through the years. Next to Christmas, Halloween is the favorite holiday of many children. It is a time to dress up, pretend and explore the neighborhood in search of treats.

When writing spooky Halloween stories, have students try using some of these colorful words in place of common Halloween words, witch, ghost, scary, and dark.

WITCH:

hag
sorceress
soothsayer
siren
demon
warlock

GHOST:

ghoul
phantom
spirit
spook
fiend
poltergeist

SCARY:

frightful
spooky
awesome
grim
horrifying
ghastly
terrifying
fiendish

DARK:

vague
cloudy
hazy
shadow
foggy
dim
gloomy

