

## **Cultural Differences of the Paranormal Holidays**

The Earth has been around for millions and millions of years and in that time many cultures have been formed and many cultural events have been formed and celebrated for years. Some of those cultures include the French, the British, the Italians, and many more with a very long history. Some of the cultural events that have been celebrated for years in different cultures include, Day of the Dead in Mexico, in Germany there's Walpurgis Night, and of course there's Halloween which is celebrated in Ireland, in the United States of America, and many other cultures around the world. Before the similarities and differences are covered, what are these holidays, how are they celebrated, and how did they come to be?

Halloween the spookiest time of year where it's believed supernatural creatures roam the earth one night a year. Originally Halloween was meant to be the day that marks "the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, and the time of year that was often known for death" (History.com. 2021b). This holiday dates all the way back to the "ancient Celtic festival of Samhain" (History.com. 2021b). The Celts lived around "2,000 years ago and lived mostly in what is known today as Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the northern part of France" (History.com. 2021b). They were known to celebrate their new year every "1<sup>st</sup> of November" (History.com. 2021b). Fast-forward a few centuries Halloween eventually made it to "colonial New England but was very limited due to the Protestant belief system" (History.com. 2021b). Some of the festivities that were featured in Colonial Halloween include "telling ghost stories, events held to celebrate the harvest called play parties, neighbors telling other's fortunes, dancing, and singing" (History.com. 2021b). Today it's known as the holiday to get free candy from strangers, to have some fun and dress up as your favorite superhero, princess, or even your favorite monster, or even watch your favorite Halloween movie/ tv show. While Halloween

maybe seen as a holiday for businesses to make money like Christmas and Valentine's day it wasn't always seen like that.

Next is the Mexican holiday known as The Day of the Dead also known as “el Día de los Muertos” in Spanish (History.com. 2021a). The holiday has a blend of “Mesoamerican ritual, European religion, and the Spanish culture” (History.com. 2021a). Some countries that celebrate Day of the Dead include Mexico, “Latin countries for example Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Bolivia, there's also some other countries but it's not as widely for example Argentina, Venezuela, and of course the United States due to the vast immigration” (Lobo N. 2021). The holiday is celebrated every year on “October 31<sup>st</sup> and ends on November 2<sup>nd</sup>; October 31<sup>st</sup> for Halloween, November 1<sup>st</sup> for souls that died as children known as The Day of the Innocents, The Day of the Little Angels, or el Dia de los Inocentes in Spanish; and November 2<sup>nd</sup> to celebrate all souls known as All Souls Day or the Day of the Dead” (History.com. 2021a). According to tradition the “gates of heaven are opened at midnight on October 31<sup>st</sup> and the spirits of children and adults return to their families for a brief reunion” (History.com. 2021a). The origins of Day of the Dead date back “3,000 years ago to the rituals honoring the dead in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica” (History.com. 2021a). During the time of the “Aztecs and other Nahua cultures living in what is known today as central Mexico, held a repeated view of the universe and saw death as a necessary ever-present part of life” (History.com. 2021a). After death it was believed a soul would “travel to Chicunamictlán, which was believed to be the land of the dead” (History.com. 2021a). The soul would be “tasked with going through a total of nine difficult levels a task that would take several years to accomplish” (History.com. 2021a). After going through “all nine levels it was believed that the soul would finally reach Mictlán, which was believed to be the final resting place” (History.com. 2021a). Rituals for honoring the dead were

traditionally held in “August, family members would provide food, water, and tools anything that would help the deceased in the difficult journey to Mictlán” (History.com. 2021a). This ritual would “inspire the Day of the Dead practice of loved ones leaving food or other offerings on their relative’s graves” (History.com. 2021a). Some other activities that are done during Day of the Dead include “cleaning gravesites, having picnics and graveside vigils, dressing up in colorful costumes, displaying skeletons, and more” (Homeschool Super Freak 2021).

Finally, the last cultural event that’s similar to Halloween and Day of the Dead that’ll be compared is the pagan holiday known as Walpurgis Night. Walpurgis Night is a “modern-day festival held in Germany, Slovenia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Estonia, and Lithuania and is an abbreviation for Saint Walpurgis Night” (Mark, J. J. 2021). It derives from the merging of the “ancient pagan celebration of Beltane with the commemoration of the canonization of the Christian Saint Walburga” (Mark, J. J. 2021). The origins of the holiday date back to “pagan celebrations of fertility rites and the coming of spring” (Mark, J. J. 2021). After the “Norse were Christianized, the celebration combined with the legend of St. Walburga” (Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d.). The legend states that Walburga was an “English-born nun who lived in a monastery in Germany which she later became the lead nun for” (Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d.). She was believed to have “cured many residents and is traditionally connected to May 1<sup>st</sup>” (Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d.). Because of this people were able to “celebrate both events without fear of punishment”. The event is held every year on “April 30<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>” (Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d.). In Sweden for example some activities that people do during the holiday “include singing traditional spring folk songs and the lighting of bonfires to roast marshmallows; at one-point bonfires were used to ward off evil spirits” (Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d.). In Germany the holiday is celebrated by “dressing up in costumes, playing

pranks on others, and creating loud noises to keep evil at bay” (Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d.). Many people celebrate by “hanging blessed sprigs of foliage from homes and barns to ward off evil spirits”; or they leave offerings such as “pieces of bread spread with butter and honey, called ankenschnitt, for phantom hounds” (Encyclopedia Britannica. n.d.).

Now that the cultural events have been described how are they similar and how are they different. First off how is Halloween and Day of the Dead similar and how are they different? Halloween and Day of the Dead are similar because they have “similar practices like decorating pictures of skeletons, they’re held around the same time of the year, and they’re centered on traditions rooted towards acknowledging the dead” (Hench J. n.d.) . They are different however because while they are “both considered spooky holidays Halloween revolves around darkness and uses a more morbid approach to the dead whereas Day of the Day revolves around the afterlife, remembrance, and tends to be more honorable towards the dead” (Hench J. n.d.). Next how is Halloween and Walpurgis Night similar and how are they different? Halloween and Walpurgis Night are similar because they’re both “rooted in ancient pagan customs, superstitions, and festivals for example it even has its own version of Trick or Treat and like Halloween people are able to dress up in costumes” (Wagner S. 2017). While Walpurgis Night isn’t Halloween it is considered a “second Halloween on the eastern side of the globe” (Wagner S. 2017). They’re different though because while Halloween is celebrated on October 31<sup>st</sup>, Walpurgis Night is celebrated towards the “beginning of the year more specifically April 30<sup>th</sup>” (Wagner S. 2017). Finally, how is Day of the Dead and Walpurgis Night similar and how are they different? Day of the Dead and Walpurgis Night are similar because they both “leave offerings on relatives’ tombstone, they both use costumes, and they both celebrate the afterlife” (Wagner S. 2017). They’re different because while Day of the Dead is celebrated in Mexico and

Latin American countries, Walpurgis Night is celebrated in “Norther European countries and Scandinavia” (Wagner S. 2017). Another difference is that Walpurgis Night is celebrated earlier in the year while Day of the Dead is celebrated latter in the year.

The Earth has been around for millions and millions of years and in that time many cultures have been formed and many cultural events have been formed and celebrated for years. With Halloween and Day of the Dead vast approaching it's important to remember our ancestors and thank them for what they sacrificed to give us the Earth we have today. While Halloween, Day of the Dead, and Walpurgis Night are clearly very different, at the same time they're very similar which proves that no matter how different we are, we're all human and deserve nothing but love, kindness, and respect. Treat others the way you'd want to be treated we're all on this Earth for a reason, and life is too short to be hateful towards one another.

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