

LEVELED Book • U

# The History of HALLOWEEN

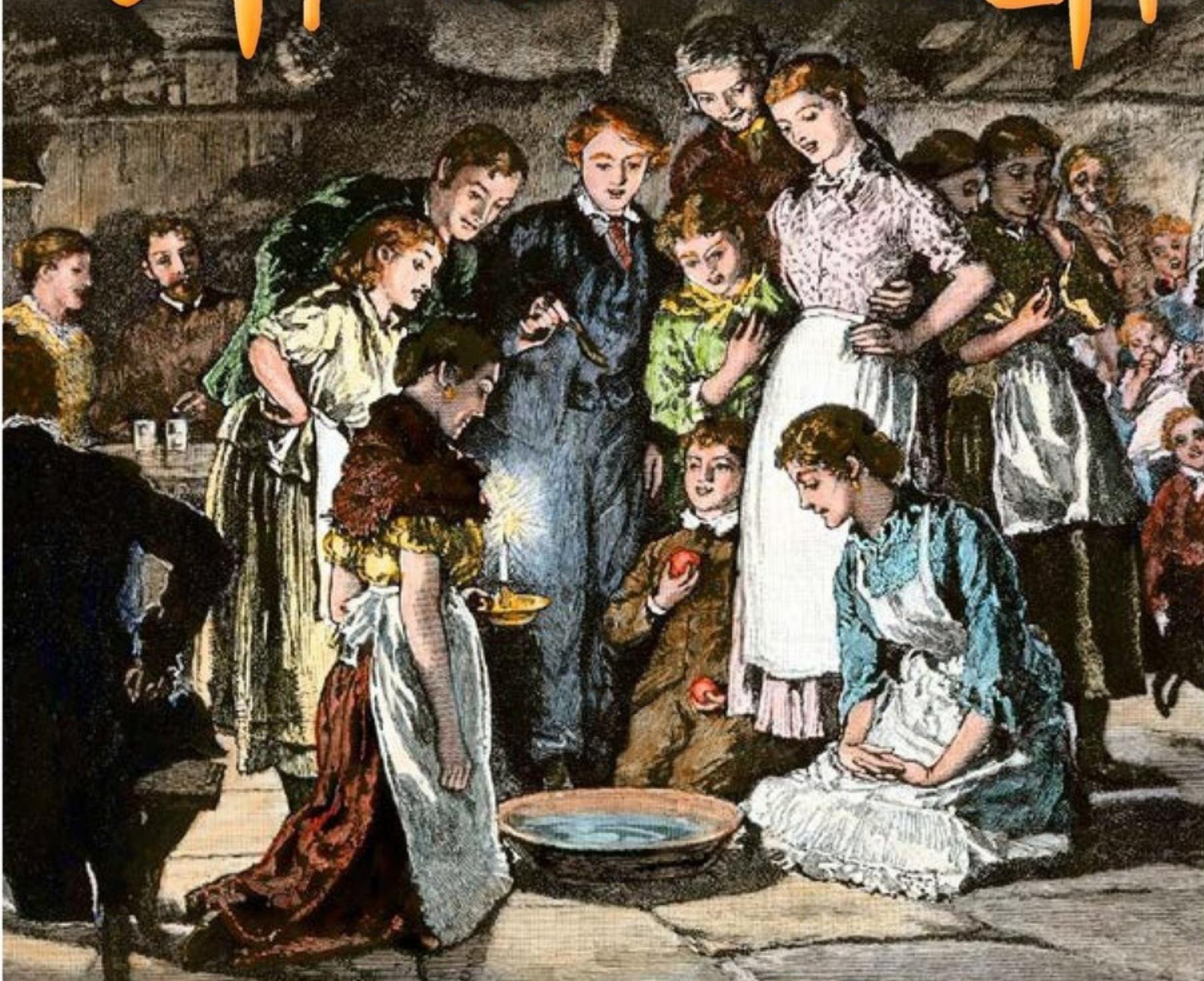


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# The History of HALLOWEEN



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## Focus Question

How has the celebration of Halloween changed throughout the years?

# Words to Know

Celtic  
enthusiasm  
immigrants  
medieval  
pranks  
predictions

Puritans  
rich  
roam  
supernatural  
tradition  
underworld

Title page: A hand-colored woodcut shows people bobbing for apples at a Halloween party in Ireland in the 1800s.

Page 3: An illustration from the 1890s shows a group of children using their jack-o'-lanterns to scare away an adult on Halloween.

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## Correlation

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## Table of Contents

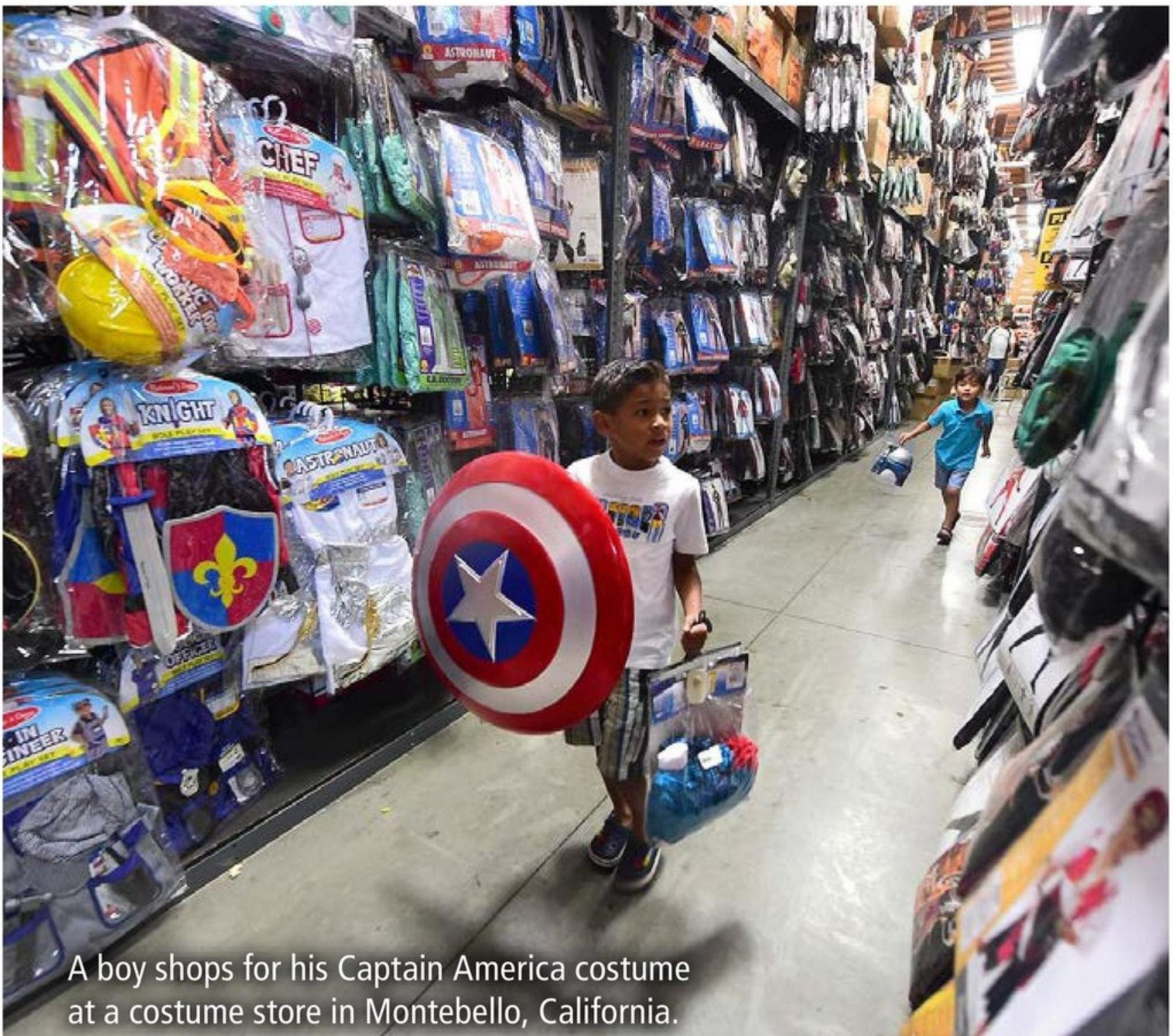
A Fun and Scary Holiday .....	4
The Celts: Samhain .....	6
The Beginnings of Halloween .....	7
Costumes and Trick-or-Treating .....	8
Jack-o'-Lanterns .....	9
Traditions of the Past .....	11
Halloween Today .....	12
Celebrating in a Crowd .....	14
A Mix of Old and New .....	15
Glossary .....	16

## A Fun and Scary Holiday

Halloween is a colorful—and delicious—holiday. It's mostly celebrated in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, where it first began. On October 31, trick-or-treaters pour into the streets. Creepy music oozes from Halloween parties and haunted houses, and people dress up in all kinds of costumes. Monsters, ghosts, superheroes, and princesses of all ages celebrate together.



Three girls show off their Halloween costumes in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1929.



A boy shops for his Captain America costume at a costume store in Montebello, California.

Today, Halloween's greatest popularity may be in the United States, where it's important in both culture and business. Halloween turns up in Hollywood movies and popular songs. Halloween means big business for American stores, too, since people buy Halloween candy and costumes every year.

The Halloween holiday celebrated today is part of a very old **tradition**. It began with the **Celtic** (KEL-tik) peoples who lived in Great Britain, Ireland, and northern France about two thousand years ago.



Modern-day druids perform a blessing at Stonehenge in southern England.

## The Celts: Samhain

The Celts celebrated a harvest festival called Samhain (SOW-in) each fall. Samhain had some things in common with our New Year's celebrations as well as with Halloween. According to the Celtic calendar, October 31 was the final day of the year. The Samhain celebration on October 31 was a way to say farewell to the old year.

The Celtic Samhain festival also had a **supernatural** side. The Celts believed that the doorways between the world of the living and the dead were open on the eve of Samhain. As a result, the spirits of people who had died during the previous year could cross over to the **underworld**. The dead could appear and communicate with the living. To help the dead on their journey, Celts lit bonfires and sacrificed crops and animals. The Celts also believed that priests could see the future during this festival. The **predictions** made at Samhain were an important part of planning for the new year.

## The Beginnings of Halloween

Later, as Christianity spread throughout Europe, the Catholic Church tried to replace Samhain with its own traditions. For example, the Church declared an All Saints' Day on November 1. This celebration was also known as All Hallows Day. October 31, the day before All Hallows, came to be called All Hallows Eve, which was later shortened to Halloween.

Many of the older Celtic traditions lived on in this new holiday—especially the belief in supernatural activity on the night of October 31. The Halloween traditions we know today are influenced by the Celts, the Catholic Church, and legends from **medieval** Europe.



Catholic churchgoers make a procession through a town in Poland to celebrate All Saints' Day.

## Costumes and Trick-or-Treating

The tradition of dressing up in costumes has changed many times over the centuries. Halloween costumes probably began with the Celts, who dressed up like animals during Samhain. In medieval England, people walked the streets dressed like fairies, witches, and ghosts, hoping to frighten away these creatures.



This practice was called *mumming*, and people often gave mummers food and drink. If food and drink were offered, people thought that the spirits would go away without making trouble. This practice has come down to us today as trick-or-treating. Adults give candy to children, who, if they get a treat, will hopefully move along without performing any tricks.

A modern druid wears a stag costume during a Samhain celebration in England.

## Jack-o'-Lanterns

Many people create jack-o'-lanterns each year at Halloween. Jack-o'-lanterns are made by carving faces or designs into a pumpkin. Then a candle or other light is placed inside the pumpkin to light up the carving. Jack-o'-lanterns come from an Irish story about a man named Stingy Jack.

Stingy Jack liked to play tricks on his friends. When Jack died, his spirit was forced to **roam** in the darkness as punishment for his mean personality. To light his way, he carved a hole in a turnip and placed a candle inside. Because of this, the Irish called him “Jack-of-the-lantern” and, later, “Jack-o’-lantern.”



The legend of Stingy Jack started one big Halloween tradition.

People in Ireland and England used to carve scary faces into turnips, beets, and potatoes. Then they would place candles inside to create a jack-o'-lantern. These jack-o'-lanterns were meant to look like Stingy Jack's terrifying face (or to frighten him away). When many Irish people moved to North America in the 1800s, they brought the jack-o'-lantern tradition with them.

The tradition of using pumpkins in jack-o'-lanterns, however, began in the United States in the mid-1800s. Pumpkins make great jack-o'-lanterns. They are large enough to be carved in all kinds of designs, and they are easy to find in the fall. Today, creating and displaying jack-o'-lanterns is an important part of the Halloween celebration.



Some people still carve turnips for Halloween.



Children bob for apples at a party in the United States in the early 1900s.

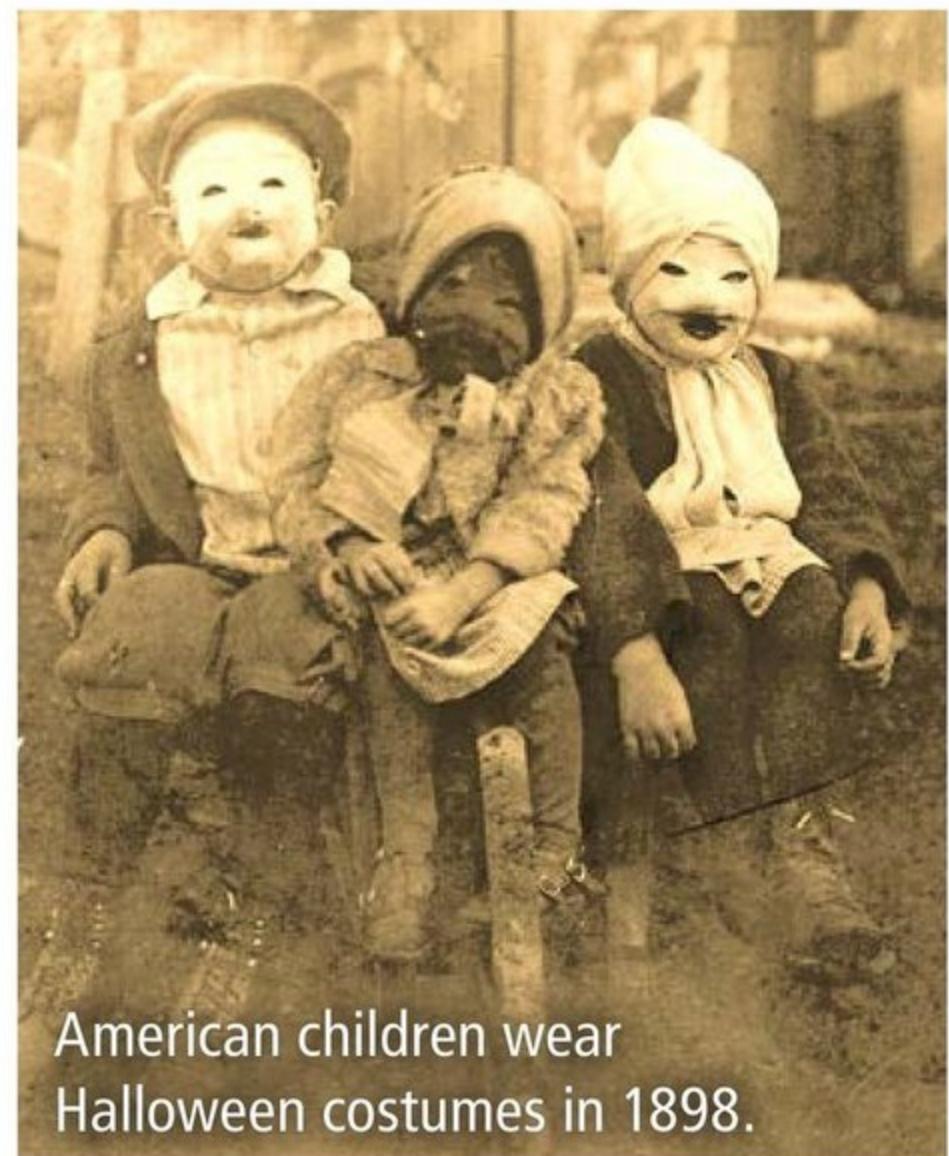
## Traditions of the Past

Some Halloween traditions that were once popular are less well known today. Interestingly, several of these traditions come from the Celtic custom of fortune-telling at Samhain. The classic Halloween party game of bobbing for apples, for example, began as a form of fortune-telling. In this game, players attempt to remove an apple from a tub of water using only their mouths. The first person to get an apple was supposed to be the first to marry later in life. Today, fortune-telling has dropped out of many Halloween games. However, people might meet a fortune-teller at a Halloween party or haunted house.

## Halloween Today

The modern Halloween celebration is fairly new, though it is often mixed with older traditions. This is especially true in North America, where the holiday was not widely celebrated until the 1800s. Halloween was frowned upon by many of the first European settlers in the New World. The **Puritans**, for example, discouraged people from celebrating it.

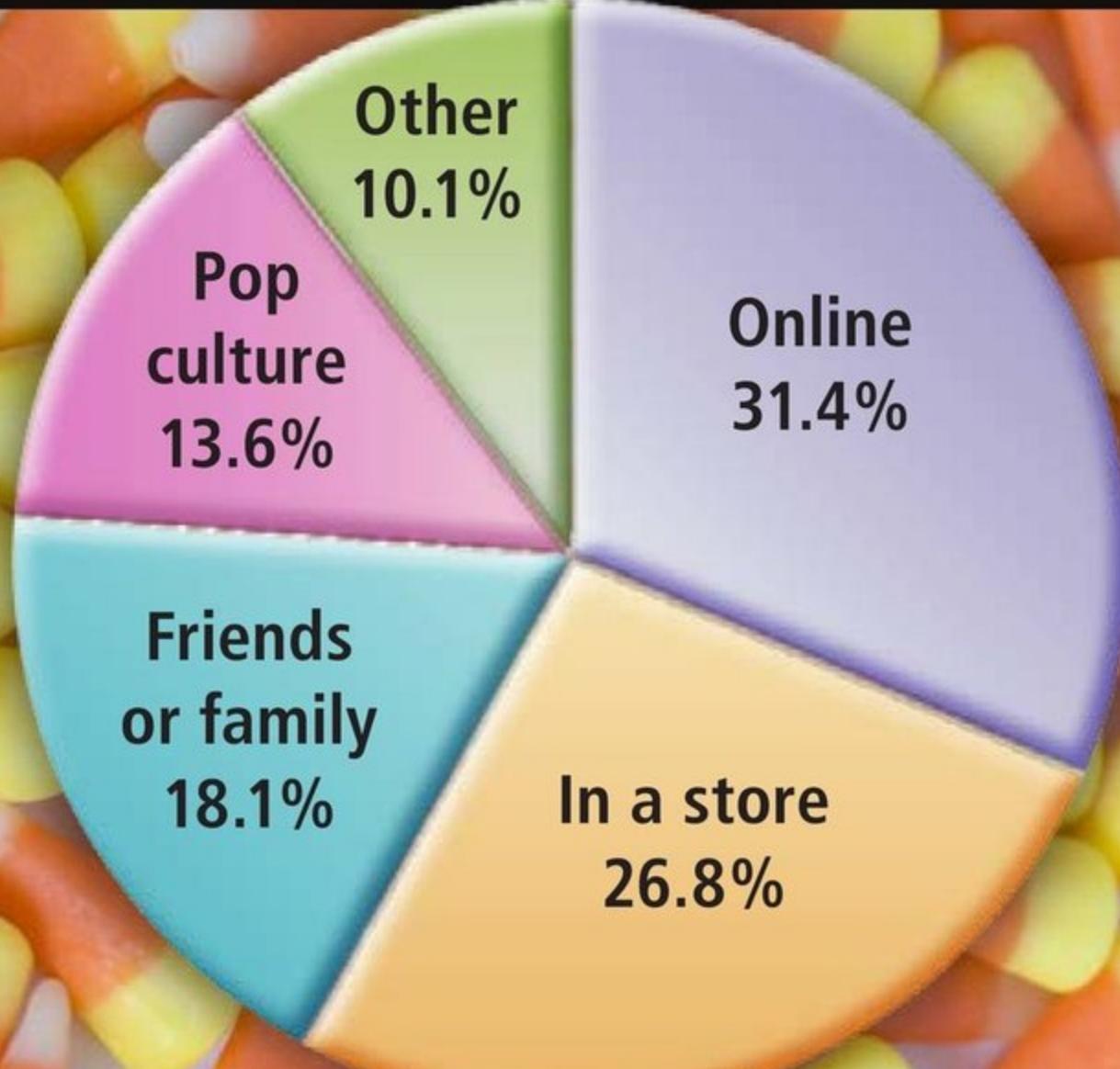
The holiday became much more popular when huge numbers of Irish **immigrants** came to the United States in the 1800s. They brought their Halloween traditions with them, including jack-o'-lanterns and mumming. Gradually, more and more Americans celebrated Halloween. Unfortunately, though, as Halloween celebrations became more popular, **pranks** became common on Halloween night. By the 1930s, the pranks had become a major problem. Some city governments tried to remake Halloween into a family holiday with trick-or-treating events for children. Trick-or-treaters in the 1930s and 1940s received cookies, fruit, toys, and pocket change.



American children wear Halloween costumes in 1898.

Candy became a popular treat as trick-or-treating gained steam in the 1950s. However, the little Halloween candy bars common today didn't appear until the 1970s. Although the treats have changed over the years, kids' enthusiasm hasn't. In the United States alone, more than 41 million children went trick-or-treating in 2014.

### Where Costume Ideas Come From



### Fun Halloween Facts

Pounds of fresh pumpkin consumed per person in the United States in 2013: 4.2

Percentage of dedicated Halloween fans who begin shopping before September: 5%

Total spent on Halloween in the United States in 2015: \$6.89 billion



## Celebrating in a Crowd

Halloween's popularity is growing. Especially in the United States and Canada, more people celebrate Halloween every year. Some cities hold community trick-or-treating events at malls, churches, and community centers. These events help keep trick-or-treaters safe from street traffic.

The crowds aren't made up of kids alone, though. Adults are celebrating Halloween in increasing numbers. In 2015, people planned to spend more on costumes for adults than on costumes for children. Many adults also host or go to Halloween parties as well as dress in costume. Halloween is fun for kids—but adults definitely don't want to be left out.



Children trick-or-treat at an organized event.

## A Mix of Old and New

Halloween today looks quite different from the celebrations of the 1950s, the 1800s, and the Samhain festival of the ancient Celts. Its traditions are still changing, mixing the old with the new.

Today, Halloween is **rich** with traditions from several different cultures that people of all ages can enjoy.



Two girls dress up for Halloween in the United States in 1898.

### Do You Know?

An entire industry is built around Halloween candy, costumes, and party supplies. A survey in 2015 found that 93.7 percent of Halloween shoppers planned to buy Halloween candy. Shoppers planned to spend \$2.1 billion on candy alone. Shoppers also planned to spend about \$28 on costumes per household, and many even planned to buy costumes for their pets. A total of 44.8 percent of people celebrating Halloween planned to decorate their yards. And 31.5 percent of shoppers planned either to host a Halloween party or go to one. The average amount spent by people celebrating the holiday was \$74.34.

Source: National Retail Federation, 2015.

## Glossary

<b>Celtic</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to people who lived in ancient Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and western Europe (p. 5)
<b>enthusiasm</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	strong excitement or interest (p. 13)
<b>immigrants</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who come to live in a new country, especially for the purpose of settling there (p. 12)
<b>medieval</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to the Middle Ages, the time period in European history from AD 500 to 1500 (p. 7)
<b>pranks</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	tricks or practical jokes (p. 12)
<b>predictions</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	guesses about what might happen in the future (p. 6)
<b>Puritans</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	members of a British Protestant religious group that opposed the Church of England and came to North America seeking religious freedom (p. 12)
<b>rich</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having many or plenty of something (p. 15)
<b>roam</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to travel or move around without a specific plan (p. 9)
<b>supernatural</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	beyond what can be explained by natural laws; often relating to religion (p. 6)
<b>tradition</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a belief or custom that is passed down from year to year and generation to generation (p. 5)
<b>underworld</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the place where dead souls go in some myths (p. 6)

# The History of Halloween

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,163

## Connections

### Writing

Create a Venn diagram comparing how Halloween is celebrated today to how it was celebrated long ago. Then, use the information to write a paragraph.

### Social Studies

Research to learn more about the history of Halloween. Create a timeline outlining the major events. Share your timeline with your class.

The logo for Reading A-Z features the word "Reading" in a red, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a small sun-like icon above it, consisting of several short lines radiating from a central point. The word "A-Z" is in a larger, bold, black font.

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