

THE HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN

Halloween goes a long way back. To the people today in America, Ireland, and Canada, Halloween is about dressing up to go trick-or-treating with your friends and family. The people in Mexico, and other Latin American countries, celebrate the Day of the Dead. The Day of the Dead honors deceased loved ones and ancestors. In England, Guy Fawkes Day was celebrated. Bonfires were lit, effigies were burned, and fireworks were set off, to celebrate the King's safety.

Many families in Mexico, Latin America, and Spain build an altar to the dead in their homes to honor their deceased relatives and ancestors. They decorate the altar with things such as flowers, photographs, candy, fresh water, and the deceased's favorite foods and drinks. A wash basin and towel are often left out so the spirit can wash before giving in to their feast. Candles and incense are then lit and burned to help the spirit find its way home. Relatives also make the gravesites look better. On November 2, family members gather at the gravesite to picnic and think back to the old times.

Guy Fawkes Day was celebrated in remembrance of the day the Gunpowder Plot was foiled, or stopped, in England. The Gunpowder Plot was a failed attempt to assassinate King James I. On the night the Gunpowder Plot was prevented, bonfires were lit to celebrate the King's safety. Instead of going door-to-door to get candy, the children in England went door-to-door carrying an effigy, a sculpture of a person, asking people for a penny for "the guy", but they got to keep the pennies. That was children's way of trick-or-treating in England back in the day. Guy Fawkes Day was celebrated less and less due to the nation beginning to develop, and eventually died out.

Halloween actually evolved from the ancient Celtic holiday of Samhain. The Celts used the day (October 31) to mark the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter. They believed the change of seasons was a bridge to the world of the dead. The people of Samhain lit fires and wore costumes to scare off ghosts. It was believed that the night of October 31, the ghosts of the dead returned to Earth. To celebrate that event, Druids, members of the high-ranked professional class, built sacred fires to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic gods. The Celts wore costumes, made of animal heads and skins, to attempt to tell each other's' fortunes.