



The London Eye
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Halloween: A Spooky Celebration with a Rich History

PODCAST #S1E3 : Welcome to this new episode of “The Deep Dive” In today’s episode, Dan and Mary will talk about a popular tradition we all celebrate. We hope you enjoy it! Happy Halloween!

D: Hey, everyone, and welcome to our Halloween special.

M: We’re diving deep into the history of Halloween.

D: Yeah. Peeling back the layers of this spooky celebration to see how it all began.

M: Oh, yeah.

D: We’ve got some really cool excerpts from “*Halloween, a spooky celebration with a rich history*” to guide us.

M: Sounds good.

D: So, basically, our mission is to go way beyond the costumes and candy.

M: Okay.

D: And uncover the real story of how Halloween evolved from these ancient rituals to what we know and love today.

M: Alright. So let's get started.

D: This source material talks about this ancient Celtic festival called Samhain.

M: I've heard of it. But to be honest, I don't really know what it was all about. What can you tell us about that?

D: Samhain, well, it marked the end of the harvest season

M: Okay.

D: For the Celts. And it was considered the start of the darker half of the year.

M: I see. The darker half.

D: Yeah. So it was believed that the veil between, like, the worlds of the living and the dead, it was thinnest at this time.

M: Ah! So that's why it's all spooky.

D: Yeah.

M: It's like a time when spirits could more easily cross over.

D: Exactly. Yeah. You got it.

M: Okay. So that explains the whole ghost and spirit thing we associate with Halloween today. Did the Celts have any specific rituals for Samhain?

D: Oh, yeah. They did. For example, they would build these huge bonfires

M: Okay.

D: Partly to ward off those spirits that were coming through.

M: I see.

D: And, it's also believed that some people even wore costumes and masks

M: Wow.

D: Maybe to, like, mimic the spirits or blend in with them.

M: Interesting.

D: Yeah.

M: It's amazing how these ancient beliefs are still, like, a part of how we view Halloween today. We still love a good ghost story, especially around this time of year.

D: But let's move on a bit.

M: Okay.

D: The source mentions Roman influence on Halloween.

M: So how did the Romans get mixed up in all of this?

D: Well, you know, as the Romans conquered those Celtic territories

M: Right.

D: They, of course, brought their own traditions

M: Okay.

D: Their own festivals.

M: Yeah.

D: So it became like a cultural blending, you could say, to Roman festivals in particular, Pomona, celebrating the goddess of fruits

M: Okay.

D: And Feralia, a day to commemorate the dead. These kinda got incorporated with the existing Celtic practices.

M: Interesting.

D: Yeah. And you can actually see, like, the echoes of Pomona, that fruit festival in our modern day bobbing for apples.

M: That's so cool.

D: Yeah.

M: So we've got this, like, Celtic base layered with some Roman influence.

D: But how did this all transform into the Halloween we know and love here in America?

M: Well, that journey really started with the European settlers.

D: Okay.

M: Mainly those from Scotland and Ireland who, when they came across the Atlantic, they brought their Halloween traditions with them.

D: Of course.

M: And, initially, you know, Halloween was more common in certain parts of the US, like the South and the West where those immigrant communities settled. And it wasn't really until the mid to late 19th century that Halloween gained this, like, widespread popularity, you know, becoming the holiday with costumes and trick or treating that we celebrate now.

D: I see.

M: Yeah.

D: Okay. So now let's talk about the name.

M: Halloween!!

D: Sounds simple enough. Right? But I bet there's more to it than meets the eye.

M: Oh, absolutely. Halloween is actually, like, a shortened version of "All Hallows' Eve".

D: Oh.

M: So the evening before All Saints' Day, a Christian holiday honoring all the saints.

D: I see.

M: And if you look at the word "*hallow*", it comes from the old English word, "*halig*". And it didn't strictly mean holy, you know, in, like, the religious sense.

D: Oh, really?

M: Yeah. It was also used for anything considered special or set apart.

D: Okay.

M: So Halloween, even just in its name, was seen as a time outside of the ordinary.

D: It's like a bridge between the everyday world

M: Yeah.

D: And something more mystical.

M: Yeah. I like that.

D: Speaking of mystical things, what about how we celebrate Halloween today?

M: What traditions have really stuck with us through all these years?

D: Well, I mean, obviously, trick or treating is the big one.

M: Of course.

D: Yeah. It's become such a huge part of the celebration these days. Then there's pumpkin carving, which is interesting. You know? It's gone from people just carving simple root vegetables to these super elaborate works of art.

M: Yeah. That's really impressive.

D: And then, of course, there are the costume parties and haunted houses and all the spooky decorations. It seems like we just can't resist transforming ourselves and, like, our whole surroundings for Halloween.

M: Totally. It really brings out the creativity in everyone.

D: You're right.

M: I love seeing all the different costumes and decorations.

D: Yeah. Yeah. Me too.

M: Okay. Before we wrap up

D: Our source talks about all this Halloween vocabulary.

M: And it seems like each word has its own little history lesson behind it.

D: Oh, for sure.

M: Which terms did you find the most interesting when you were reading this?

D: Well, the word "*witch*" is interesting.

M: Oh, yeah.

D: Because in many ancient cultures, witches weren't always seen as like evil figures.

M: Really?

D: Yeah. They were often seen as healers or wise women who had this deep knowledge of herbs and nature.

M: Interesting.

D: It was during the witch hunts.

M: Right.

D: Yeah. In the middle ages and the early modern period that witches really started to be associated with evil and the supernatural.

M: That makes sense. It really shows how our perception of things can change so much over time.

D: Definitely.

M: What about "*jack o'-lanterns*"?

D: Is there a story behind those?

M: Yeah. The tradition is believed to come from an old Irish folktale

D: Okay.

M: About this guy named Stingy Jack.

D: Stingy Jack.

M: Yeah. He tricked the devil. Tricked the devil several times, actually.

D: Oh, no.

M: And when Jack died, he was denied entry to both heaven and hell.

D: Wow.

M: So he was condemned to wander the earth with only this burning coal inside a carved out turnip to light his way.

D: A turnip.

M: Yeah.

D: Okay.

M: So the Irish started calling these lanterns “jack of the lantern”

D: Right.

M: Which eventually got shortened to “*jack o’lantern*”. And it was the Irish immigrants who brought this tradition over to America where they discovered, hey, pumpkins.

D: Pumpkins are everywhere.

M: Yeah. Way easier to carve than a turnip, and the rest is history.

D: And now we have jack o’-lanterns everywhere for Halloween. Wow. So we’ve gone from ancient Celtic rituals to Roman influences to early American settlers. And we’ve ended up with this huge collection of Halloween traditions and words that are all steeped in history.

M: It’s quite a journey, isn’t it?

D: It really is. It makes you think about how Halloween might continue to evolve in the future.

M: I know. Right? Like, will new technologies change how we celebrate? Will there be new folklore emerging?

D: It’s definitely something to ponder as we all enjoy this year’s Halloween festivities.

M: It is.

D: Well, thanks so much for taking us on this deep dive into the history of Halloween.

M: Oh, it's been my pleasure.

D: And to all our listeners out there, remember to keep an eye out for those returning spirits.

M: You never know who or what you might encounter.

D: Happy Halloween.

M: Happy Halloween.