



The Story Of Halloween

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Almost two thousand years ago on the final day of October, people in a small village in Ireland had been gathering their harvest in time for the winter to make sure they'd have enough food for their families to eat when it was too cold for vegetables to grow. In the cold dark months at the end of the year the villagers lost a lot of family members to sickness and hunger so it was important to keep their crops as well stocked as possible.

When they had finished farming they were all very tired after working so hard, so they decided they would have a party to celebrate on October 31st. All of the villagers prepared for a wonderful celebration and were very excited. However, some of the food they had collected had gone bad and they had to throw it away. The villagers talked amongst themselves and they worried that it could be evil spirits and ghosts coming back to life to cause trouble and take away their loved ones through sickness on this one night of the year.

To show the evil spirits and ghosts that they were not scared of them, and to keep them away from the rest of their crops, the villagers all made costumes to mimic the evil spirits and they danced and ate and sang songs all day long. When it got dark the villagers were cold and couldn't see, so they lit a bonfire to keep them warm so they could carry on the celebration where they threw seasonal vegetables and pumpkins they had grown into the fire to thank the Gods for a wonderful harvest. But because the fire was so bright and beautiful insects flew into the flames, nearby bats swooped down to gobble the bugs before they made it to the fire. The villagers did not mind the bats as they had their spooky costumes on and were having fun with their family and friends.

Some villagers believed on this night they were closest to the dead and they would speak to them and help them to predict the future through witchcraft. The children of the village were all tucked up in their beds late at night but saw their parents outside having a great time and eating lots of food. They crept into the darkness to join the party. When they saw all of the wonderful food they held out their hands to the adults and asked if they too could have some of the delicious treats (which today is called trick or treating), in return the children were very polite and said a prayer or sang a song for the wonderful treats they had been given.

As the years passed more villages joined in the with celebration, the children became adults and had children of their own. It soon became a game for young children to ask the elders for treats on this one night of the year, and if they said no the children would get upset and throw things at them as a trick or hide from them to jump out and try to scare everyone. Pomona was a Roman goddess of fruit and trees who the villagers often thanked for her kindness and fruitful nature, her image was an apple and over time they made games with apples in a barrel of water which was named 'apple bobbing' and they always played it on this special day.

A thousand years later the Pope decided that the first day of November should be used to celebrate the lives of saints and martyrs as a way to discourage the evilness of the celebrations of the night before. They called it 'All Hallows' day, which through old English translation meant 'All-Saints' day.

Over time the evil night before All Hallows day became known as All Hallows Eve, which then became Halloween. Because of the success of Hallows Day, the church introduced the second day of November as 'All Souls' day to honour the dead and remember loved ones where everybody would dress as angels and saints.

The three days of celebrations Hallows Eve, Hallows Day and All Souls Day were called Hallowmas, much like Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day at Christmas. These days we still love the festive spirit of Halloween, we carve pumpkins and light fires, dress as scary monsters and go trick-or-treating just like our ancestors thousands of years ago.

