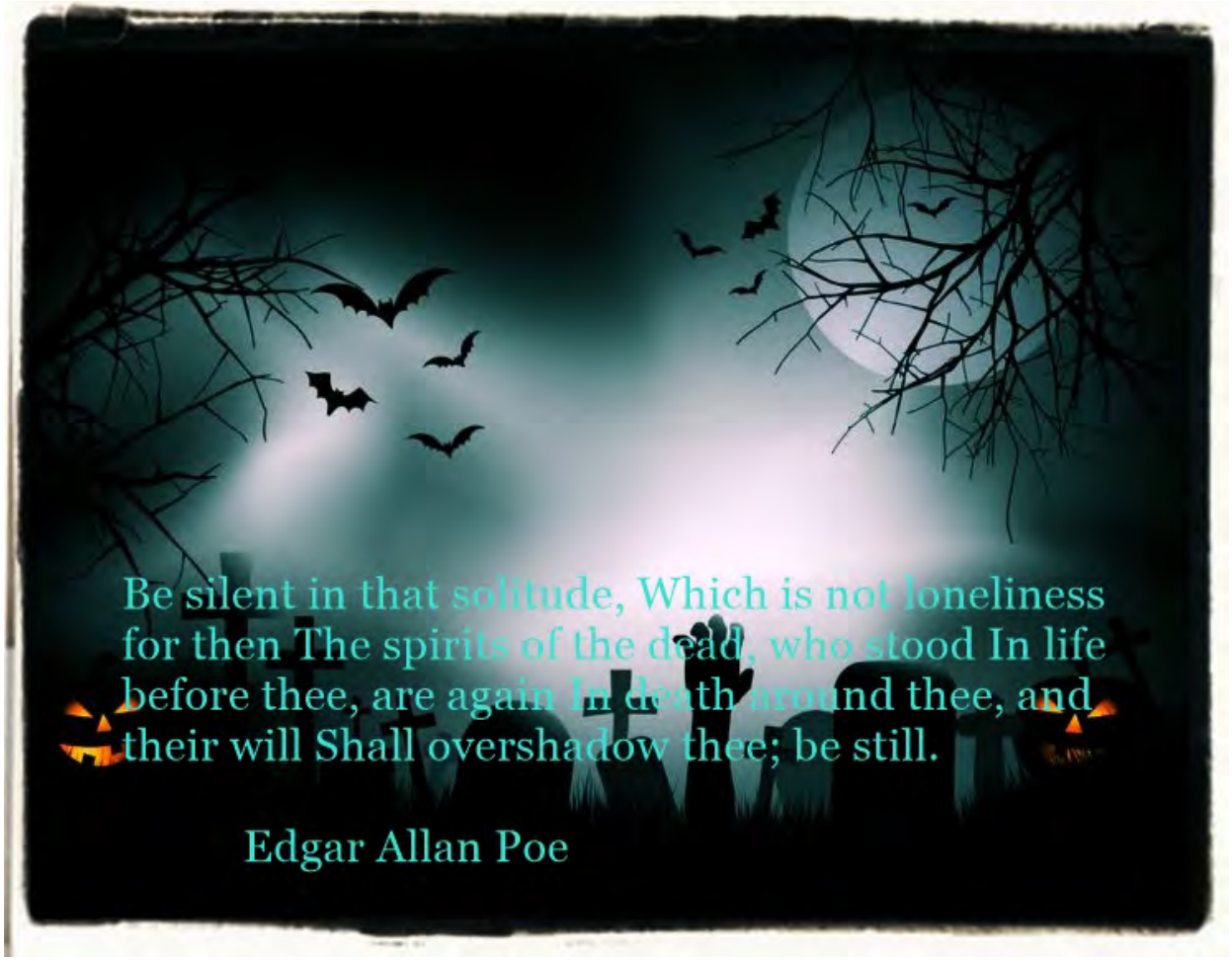
HALLOWEEN also called All Hallows' Eve

Holiday, October 31, now observed largely as a secular celebration. As the eve of All Saints' Day, it is a religious holiday among some Christians.

Halloween had its origins in the festival of Samhain among the Celts of ancient Britain and Ireland. November 1 was considered the end of the summer period, the date on which the herds were returned from pasture and land tenures were renewed. The festival of Samhain is a celebration of the end of the harvest season in Gaelic culture, and is sometimes regarded as the "Celtic New Year." The festivals would frequently involve bonfires, into which bones of slaughtered livestock were thrown. Costumes and masks were also worn at the festivals in an attempt to mimic the evil spirits or placate them. Traditionally, the festival was a time used by the ancient Celtic pagans to take stock of supplies and slaughter livestock for winter stores. The ancient Gaels believed that on October 31, now known as Halloween, the boundary between the living and the deceased dissolved, and the dead become dangerous for the living by causing problems such as sickness or damaged crops. It was also a time when the souls of those who had died were believed to return to visit their homes. People set bonfires on hilltops for relighting their hearth fires for the winter and to frighten away evil spirits, and they sometimes wore masks and other disguises to avoid being recognized by the ghosts thought to be present. It was in these ways that beings such as witches, hobgoblins, fairies, and demons came to be associated with the day. The period was also thought

to be favourable for divination on matters such as marriage, health, and death. When the Romans conquered the Celts in the 1st century ad, they added their own festivals of Feralia, commemorating the passing of the dead, and of Pomona, the goddess of the harvest.

Halloween flourished in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, parts of England and in isolated localities such as the Orkney and Shetland Islands. In these places during this celebration the inhabitants lighted bonfires on hilltops and played Halloween games such as "Bob apple." They also engaged in divination by such means as pulling kale, placing stones or nuts in the fire and throwing a shoe over the house. Some divination occured even on the church porch, which was believed to be an especially reliable place to learn of future events. Pranks and mischief were also common on Halloween in rural areas of Ireland and Great Britain. Wandering groups of celebrants blocked doors of houses with carts, carried away gates and plows, tapped on windows, threw vegetables at doors and covered chimneys with turf so that smoke could not escape. In some places, girls and boys dressed in clothing of the opposite sex and, wearing masks, visited neighbours to play tricks. These activities generally resembled the harmful and mischievous behaviour attributed to witches, fairies and goblins. The contenporary "trick or treat" custom resembles an ancient Irish practice associated with Allhallows Eve. Groups of peasants went from house to house demanding food and other gift in preparation for the evening's festivities. Prosperity was assured for liberal donors and threats were made against stingy ones.



Immigrants from Great Britain and Ireland took secular Halloween customs to the U.S., but the festival did not become popular in that country until the latter part of the 19th century. This may have been because it

had long been popular with the Irish, who migrated there in large numbers after 1840. In any event, a number of the traditional Halloweens symbols and folk practice appeared in the U.S. during the late 1800s. Among these were the figures of the witch, the black cat, the death's head cut from a pumpkin, candles, bobbing for apples, the trick or treat custom, masks, parties and pranks. Though some churches observed Halloween with religious services, most persons regarded it as a secular festival. This reflected the prevailing American Protestant attitude toward a great many church festivals and holy days. During the latter decades of the 19th century, Halloween pranks and mischief became common in the U.S. and often descended to vandalism. In rural areas, fences were built across roads, wagons placed on top of barns, gates removed, outbuildings overturned and farm animals hidden. In cities and towns, "spooks" placed porch furniture on top of telephone poles, overturned garbage cans, opened water faucets and soaped windows in houses and stores. In some cities overenthusiastic celebrants filled cloth sacks with flour and rubbed these against the clothing of passers-by. In the course of the 20th century, the American public became less tolerant of Halloween pranks. This was the result, in large part, of a different mode of life, brought about by increasing urbanization and the ubiquity of the automobile. These factors altered the material environment and lessened the vitality of folk beliefs and customs. In addition, Halloween mischief became very costly to property owners and was of serious concern to public officials.

Consequently, civic authorities and private citizens attempted to deal with this difficulty by both repressive and educational means. As early as 1908 some U.S. community sponsored Halloween parties for the young in the hope of preventing injury to life or possessions. The police, local merchants or civic groups organized these festivities, and both parents and teachers cautioned children against vandalism. In some istances, merchants even invited the young to soap the windows of their stores on Halloween in the belief that this might lessen property damage. These efforts had only limited success. Nowadays the tendency to manipulate rather than to celebrate folk festivals such as Halloween is charateristic of the 20th century. It reflects the growing influence of a rational outlook on life and the loss of interest in imagination and fantasy. The secular character of contemporary culture is also reflected in public neglect of the religious significance of Halloween as well as in progressive loss of its folk vitality. Children are least effected by this disenchantment and consequently the more important folk occasions tend to be dominated by the young.

As a secular holiday, Halloween has come to be associated with a number of activities. One is the practice of pulling usually harmless pranks. Celebrants wear masks and costumes for parties and for trick-or-treating A group of children trick-or-treating on Halloween. It is thought to have derived from the British practice of allowing the poor to beg for food, called “soul cakes.” Trick-or-treaters go from house to house with the threat that they will pull a trick if they do not receive a treat, usually candy. Halloween parties often include games such as bobbing for apples, perhaps derived from the Roman celebration of Pomona. Along with skeletons and black cats, the holiday has incorporated scary beings such as ghosts, witches, and vampires into the celebration. Another symbol is the jack-o’-lantern, a hollowed-out pumpkin, originally a turnip, carved into a demonic face and lit with a candle inside. Since the mid 20th century, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has attempted to make the collection of money for its programs a part of Halloween.

Games and other activities

There are several games traditionally associated with Halloween parties. The most common is dunking or apple bobbing, in which apples float in a tub or a large basin of water; the participants must use their teeth to remove an apple from the basin. A variant of dunking involves kneeling on a chair, holding a fork between the teeth and trying to drop the fork into an apple. Another common game involves hanging up treacle or syrup-coated scones by strings; these must be eaten without using hands while they remain attached to the string, an activity that inevitably leads to a very sticky face.

Some games traditionally played at Halloween are forms of divination. In Puicíní (pronounced "poocheeny"), a game played in Ireland, a blindfolded person is seated in front of a table on which several

saucers are placed. The saucers are shuffled, and the seated person then chooses one by touch; the contents of the saucer determine the person's life during the following year. A saucer containing earth means someone known to the player will die during the next year; a saucer containing water foretells emigration; a ring foretells marriage; a set of Rosary beads indicates that the person will take Holy Orders (becoming a nun or a priest). A coin means new wealth, a bean means poverty, and so on. In 19th-century Ireland, young women placed slugs in saucers sprinkled with flour. A traditional Irish and Scottish form of divining one's future spouse is to carve an apple in one long strip, then toss the peel over one's shoulder. The peel is believed to land in the shape of the first letter of the future spouse's name. This custom has survived among Irish and Scottish immigrants in the rural United States.

Unmarried women were frequently told that if they sat in a darkened room and gazed into a mirror on Halloween night, the face of their future husband would appear in the mirror. However, if they were destined to die before marriage, a skull would appear. The custom was widespread enough to be commemorated on greeting cards from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The mirror gaze was one of many forms of love divination around Halloween and other ancient holy days.

The telling of ghost stories and viewing of horror films are common fixtures of Halloween parties. Episodes of TV series and specials with Halloween themes (with the specials usually aimed at children) are commonly aired on or before the holiday, while new horror films, like the popular Saw films, are often released theatrically before the holiday to take advantage of the atmosphere.

Bob apple game: a traditional Halloween game enjoyed by young and old. Bobbing for apples requires a large tub of water, apples and a group of people willing to get their faces - and maybe their heads - wet.
Instructions: 1) Find a large, deep trash container or party tub that at least two people can get their heads into at the same time. 2) Set trash container on ground, or place tub on a table or cart strong enough to

hold it when it is full of water. The top of the trash container or tub should be about waist-high to participants in the game. 3) Fill tub with water, leaving 4 to 6 inches of space at the top so that water doesn't slosh out. 4) Float several apples in water. 5) Place some towels at base of the tub so that the floor won't get wet, if playing inside. 6) Select first two or three players and have them put their hands behind their backs. 7) Say, "Go," and have players try to grab an apple with their teeth, all at the same time. The first to bring an apple up wins. 8) Provide towels for all players. Even losers will be wet.

Foods

Because the holiday comes in the wake of the annual apple harvest, candy apples (also known as toffee, caramel, or taffy apples) are a common Halloween treat made by rolling whole apples in a sticky sugar syrup, sometimes followed by rolling them in nuts.
Candy apple At one time, candy apples were commonly given to children, but the practice rapidly waned in the wake of widespread rumors that some individuals were embedding items like pins and razor blades in the apples. While there is evidence of such incidents, they are quite rare and have never resulted in serious injury. Nonetheless, many parents assumed that such heinous practices were rampant. At the peak of the hysteria, some hospitals offered free x-rays of children's Halloween hauls in order to find evidence of tampering. Virtually all of the few known candy poisoning incidents involved parents who poisoned their own children's candy, and there have been occasional reports of children putting needles in their own (and other children's) candy in a bid for attention.[citations needed]
One custom that persists in modern-day Ireland is the baking (or more often nowadays, the purchase) of a barmbrack (Irish "báirín breac"), which is a light fruitcake into which a plain ring, a coin, and other charms are placed before baking. It is said that those who get a ring will find their true love in the ensuing year. See also king cake.

THE LEGEND OF STINGY JACK

Stingy Jack was a miserable, old drunk who loved playing tricks on anyone and everyone. One dark, Halloween night, Jack ran into the Devil himself in a local public house. Jack tricked the Devil by offering his soul in exchange for one last drink. The Devil quickly turned himself into a sixpence to pay the bartender, but Jack immediately snatched the coin and deposited it into his pocket, next to a silver cross that he was carrying. Thus, the Devil could not change himself back and Jack refused to allow the Devil to go free until the Devil had promised not to claim Jack's soul for ten years.

The Devil agreed, and ten years later Jack again came across the Devil while out walking on a country road. The Devil tried collecting what he was due, but Jack thinking quickly, said, "I'll go, but before I do, will you get me an apple from that tree?"

The Devil, thinking he had nothing to lose, jumped up into the tree to retrieve an apple. As soon as he did, Jack placed crosses all around the trunk of the tree, thus trapping the Devil once again. This time, Jack made the Devil promise that he would not take his soul when he finally died. Seeing no way around his predicament, the Devil grudgingly agreed.

When Stingy Jack eventually passed away several years later, he went to the Gates of Heaven, but was refused entrance because of his life of drinking and because he had been so tight-fisted and deceitful. So, Jack then went down to Hell to see the Devil and find out whether it were possible to gain entrance into the depths of Hell, but the Devil kept the promise that had been made to Jack years earlier, and would not let him enter.

"But where can I go?" asked Jack.

"Back to where you came from!" replied the Devil.

The way back was windy and very dark. Stingy Jack pleaded with the Devil to at least provide him with a light to help find his way. The Devil, as a final gesture, tossed Jack an ember straight from the fires of Hell. Jack placed the ember in a hollowed-out turnip...one of Jack's favourite foods which he always carried around with him whenever he could steal one. From that day forward, Stingy Jack has been doomed to roam the earth without a resting place and with only his lit turnip to light the way in the darkness.

Stingy Jack, perhaps also known as Jack the Smith and Jack of the Lantern, is a mythical character apparently associated with All Hallows Eve. It is common lore that the "Jack-o-Lantern" is derived from the tale of Jack the Smith.

HALLOWEEN (just another text)

Straddling the line between fall and winter, plenty and paucity, life and death, Halloween is a time of celebration and superstition. It is thought to have originated with the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off roaming ghosts. In the eighth century, Pope Gregory III designated November 1 as a time to honor all saints and martyrs; the holiday, All Saints' Day, incorporated some of the traditions of Samhain. The evening before was known as All Hallows' Eve and later Halloween. Over time, Halloween evolved into a secular, community-based event characterized by child-friendly activities such as trick-or-treating. In a number of countries around the world, as the days grow shorter and the nights get colder, people continue to usher in the winter season with gatherings, costumes and sweet treats.

ANCIENT ORIGINS OF HALLOWEEN

Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in). The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago in the area that is now Ireland, the United Kingdom and northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1. This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death. Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of October 31 they celebrated Samhain, when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. In addition to causing trouble and damaging crops, Celts thought that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to make predictions about the future. For a people entirely dependent on the volatile natural world, these prophecies were an

important source of comfort and direction during the long, dark winter.

Did You Know?
One quarter of all the candy sold annually in the U.S. is purchased for Halloween.

To commemorate the event, Druids built huge sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities. During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins, and attempted to tell each other's fortunes. When the celebration was over, they re-lit their hearth fires, which they had extinguished earlier that evening, from the sacred bonfire to help protect them during the coming winter.

By 43 A.D., the Roman Empire had conquered the majority of Celtic territory. In the course of the four hundred years that they ruled the Celtic lands, two festivals of Roman origin were combined with the traditional Celtic celebration of Samhain. The first was Feralia, a day in late October when the Romans traditionally commemorated the passing of the dead. The second was a day to honor Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. The symbol of Pomona is the apple and the incorporation of this celebration into Samhain probably explains the tradition of "bobbing" for apples that is practiced today on Halloween.

On May 13, 609 A.D., Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon in Rome in honor of all Christian martyrs, and the Catholic feast of All Martyrs Day was established in the Western church. Pope Gregory III (731–741) later expanded the festival to include all saints as well as all martyrs, and moved the observance from May 13 to November 1. By the 9th century the influence of Christianity had spread into Celtic lands, where it gradually blended with and supplanted the older Celtic rites. In 1000 A.D., the church would make November 2 All Souls' Day, a day to honor the dead. It is widely believed today that the church was attempting to replace the Celtic festival of the dead with a related, but church-sanctioned holiday. All Souls

Day was celebrated similarly to Samhain, with big bonfires, parades, and dressing up in costumes as saints, angels and devils. The All Saints Day celebration was also called All-hallows or All-hallowmas (from Middle English Alholowmesse meaning All Saints' Day) and the night before it, the traditional night of Samhain in the Celtic religion, began to be called All-hallows Eve and, eventually, Halloween.

HALLOWEEN COMES TO AMERICA

Celebration of Halloween was extremely limited in colonial New England because of the rigid Protestant belief systems there. Halloween was much more common in Maryland and the southern colonies. As the beliefs and customs of different European ethnic groups as well as the American Indians meshed, a distinctly American version of Halloween began to emerge. The first celebrations included "play parties," public events held to celebrate the harvest, where neighbors would share stories of the dead, tell each other's fortunes, dance and sing. Colonial Halloween festivities also featured the telling of ghost stories and mischief-making of all kinds. By the middle of the nineteenth century, annual autumn festivities were common, but Halloween was not yet celebrated everywhere in the country.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, America was flooded with new immigrants. These new immigrants, especially the millions of Irish fleeing Ireland's potato famine of 1846, helped to popularize the celebration of Halloween nationally. Taking from Irish and English traditions, Americans began to dress up in costumes and go house to house asking for food or money, a practice that eventually became today's "trick-or-treat" tradition. Young women believed that on Halloween they could divine the name or appearance of their future husband by doing tricks with yarn, apple parings or mirrors.

In the late 1800s, there was a move in America to mold Halloween into a holiday more about community and neighborly get-togethers than about ghosts, pranks and witchcraft. At the turn of the century,

Halloween parties for both children and adults became the most common way to celebrate the day. Parties focused on games, foods of the season and festive costumes. Parents were encouraged by newspapers and community leaders to take anything “frightening” or “grotesque” out of Halloween celebrations. Because of these efforts, Halloween lost most of its superstitious and religious overtones by the beginning of the twentieth century.

By the 1920s and 1930s, Halloween had become a secular, but community-centered holiday, with parades and town-wide parties as the featured entertainment. Despite the best efforts of many schools and communities, vandalism began to plague Halloween celebrations in many communities during this time. By the 1950s, town leaders had successfully limited vandalism and Halloween had evolved into a holiday directed mainly at the young. Due to the high numbers of young children during the fifties baby boom, parties moved from town civic centers into the classroom or home, where they could be more easily accommodated. Between 1920 and 1950, the centuries-old practice of trick-or-treating was also revived. Trick-or-treating was a relatively inexpensive way for an entire community to share the Halloween celebration. In theory, families could also prevent tricks being played on them by providing the neighborhood children with small treats. A new American tradition was born, and it has continued to grow. Today, Americans spend an estimated $6 billion annually on Halloween, making it the country’s second largest commercial holiday.

TODAY’S HALLOWEEN TRADITIONS

The American Halloween tradition of “trick-or-treating” probably dates back to the early All Souls’ Day parades in England. During the festivities, poor citizens would beg for food and families would give them pastries called “soul cakes” in return for their promise to pray for the family’s dead relatives. The

distribution of soul cakes was encouraged by the church as a way to replace the ancient practice of leaving food and wine for roaming spirits. The practice, which was referred to as “going a-souling” was eventually taken up by children who would visit the houses in their neighborhood and be given ale, food, and money.

The tradition of dressing in costume for Halloween has both European and Celtic roots. Hundreds of years ago, winter was an uncertain and frightening time. Food supplies often ran low and, for the many people afraid of the dark, the short days of winter were full of constant worry. On Halloween, when it was believed that ghosts came back to the earthly world, people thought that they would encounter ghosts if they left their homes. To avoid being recognized by these ghosts, people would wear masks when they left their homes after dark so that the ghosts would mistake them for fellow spirits. On Halloween, to keep ghosts away from their houses, people would place bowls of food outside their homes to appease the ghosts and prevent them from attempting to enter.

HALLOWEEN SUPERSTITIONS

Halloween has always been a holiday filled with mystery, magic and superstition. It began as a Celtic end-of-summer festival during which people felt especially close to deceased relatives and friends. For these friendly spirits, they set places at the dinner table, left treats on doorsteps and along the side of the road and lit candles to help loved ones find their way back to the spirit world. Today’s Halloween ghosts are often depicted as more fearsome and malevolent, and our customs and superstitions are scarier too. We avoid crossing paths with black cats, afraid that they might bring us bad luck. This idea has its roots in the Middle Ages, when many people believed that witches avoided detection by turning themselves into cats. We try not to walk under ladders for the same reason. This superstition may have come from the ancient Egyptians, who believed that triangles were sacred; it also may have something to do with the fact that walking under a leaning ladder tends to be fairly unsafe. And around Halloween, especially, we try to avoid breaking mirrors, stepping on cracks in the road or spilling salt.


HALLOWE'EN

But what about the Halloween traditions and beliefs that today's trick-or-treaters have forgotten all about? Many of these obsolete rituals focused on the future instead of the past and the living instead of the dead. In particular, many had to do with helping young women identify their future husbands and reassuring them that they would someday—with luck, by next Halloween—be married. In 18th-century Ireland, a matchmaking cook might bury a ring in her mashed potatoes on Halloween night, hoping to bring true love to the diner who found it. In Scotland, fortune-tellers recommended that an eligible young woman name a hazelnut for each of her suitors and then toss the nuts into the fireplace. The nut that burned to ashes rather than popping or exploding, the story went, represented the girl's future husband. (In some versions of this legend, confusingly, the opposite was true: The nut that burned away symbolized a love that would not last.) Another tale had it that if a young woman ate a sugary concoction made out of walnuts, hazelnuts and nutmeg before bed on Halloween night she would dream about her future husband. Young women tossed apple-peels over their shoulders, hoping that the peels would fall on the floor in the shape of their future husbands' initials; tried to learn about their futures by peering at egg yolks floating in a bowl of water; and stood in front of mirrors in darkened rooms, holding candles and looking over their shoulders for their husbands' faces. Other rituals were more competitive. At some Halloween parties, the first guest to find a burr on a chestnut-hunt would be the first to marry; at others, the first successful apple-bobber would be the first down the aisle.

Of course, whether we're asking for romantic advice or trying to avoid seven years of bad luck, each one of these Halloween superstitions relies on the good will of the very same "spirits" whose presence the early Celts felt so keenly.