Printable Halloween Stories

Jack of the Lantern

Did you know that before people began carving pumpkins to make Jack O' Lanterns, they used to carve other things like potatoes, turnips, and beets? It all began with an old Irish folklore about a man called Stingy Jack who played tricks on everyone. Because of his trickery, Jack's soul was doomed to roam in the darkness forever. Jack supposedly carved a turnip and placed a flame inside it to help him see as he wandered through the dark. The Irish called him Jack of the Lantern.

In Ireland and Scotland, people believed that spirits could return to the land of the living on Halloween. To keep wandering spirits like Stingy Jack from entering their homes, people made their own lanterns by carving scary faces into turnips or potatoes and placing a hot piece of coal inside to light them. They called their lanterns Jack O' Lanterns after Stingy Jack. People in England also caved their own versions of Jack O' Lanterns out of beets to keep spirits away on this night. They believed that the lanterns would light the way for the spirits to move out of their town, keeping them safe until next Halloween.

So how did this tradition evolve into carving pumpkins for Halloween? When millions of Irish people immigrated to America after the Irish potato famine, they had trouble finding potatoes and turnips. They began to use pumpkins, which were more abundant and easier to carve. Today, this Irish tradition is a large part of the American celebration of Halloween.

TELL ME A STORY

It's _____! _____ is coming over to get ready to
    (holiday)   (person)

_____ with me! _____ helped us _____
(action)   (person)   (action)

pumpkins, and now _____ and I are going to put
               (person)

them _____. We are full after eating _____, and
   (place)   (food)

are ready to go now! _____ told us to watch out for
             (person)

the _____ down the street because it is scary
   (place)

with _____ webs and broken _____. It's the
    (bug)   (thing)

house where _____ and _____ live! But I'm
         (person)   (person)

not _____! Happy _____ to everyone from
  (feeling)   (holiday)

_____!
(person)

Trick or Treat

Did you ever wonder where the idea of Trick-or-Treat comes from? Well, it all started with an old Irish tradition.

The Irish believed that on Halloween night the veil between our world and the spirit world was thin. On that night, ghosts could come back to visit their loved ones.

But they also believed that some ghosts were unhappy and used Halloween to frighten people. The Irish people would put out bowls of milk and fruit on their doorstep. If the spirits were happy with their treats, they would go somewhere else to make their mischief.

Everyone tried to stay inside on Halloween night where it was safe. But anyone who had to go out for some reason would wear a costume and a mask. If the costume was good enough it would confuse the spirits and they wouldn't bother you.

Over time these traditions changed. During the Middle Ages, teenagers and young adults took the place of the spirits. They would dress up and go door to door saying "trick-or-treat." If they were given a treat, they went on to the next house. But if not, they played a trick on that person. These were harmless tricks and no one ever got hurt from them. Still, it was better to just give them a treat.

When the Irish came to America during the Great Potato Famine, they brought the tradition of "trick-or-treat" with them. Soon everyone was joining in and who can blame them? What could be more fun than dressing up and going from house to house getting candy and treats?