

UPPER-INTERMEDIATE (B2/C1) Lesson Plan on the History of Halloween: Warm-up Questions

- 1) What are your favorite holidays throughout the year?
- 2) Why do we celebrate Halloween? What's it all about?
- 3) Do you know of any festivals or celebrations in other cultures that are similar to Halloween?

Pre-Listening Vocabulary Matching: Match the words with their meaning as used in the article.

1. <u>prank</u> (n)	a. a large outdoor fire, often used in a celebration
2. <u>patchwork</u> (adj)	b. a religious ceremony involving a series of actions done in a fixed order
3. <u>veil</u> (n)	c. a practical joke / trick played on someone
4. <u>frown on</u> (sth)	d. to damage or wreck something
5. <u>ritual</u> (n)	e. action intended to purposefully damage someone's property
6. <u>morph into</u> sth (v)	f. to gradually change into something else
7. <u>bonfire</u> (n)	g. a thing composed of many different parents
8. <u>vandalism</u> (n)	h. a thing used to cover or conceal something
9. <u>trash</u> sth (v)	i. to disapprove of something

Pronunciation: Repeat the above phrases with your teacher, stressing the underlined syllable.

Video: [Halloween History](#) from National Geographic (3:11)

Note: The festival "Samhain" is pronounced as "Sow-win."

Key Vocabulary

- ... from communion with the dead, to pumpkins and **pranks**, Halloween is a **patchwork** holiday. (0:10)
- It was the time when the **veil** between death and life was supposed to be at its thinnest. (0:48)
- ... the villagers gathered and lit huge **bonfires** to drive the dead back to the spirit world. (0:59)
- But as the Catholic Church's influence grew in Europe, it **frowned on** the pagan **rituals** like Samhain (1:05)
- ... the night was All Hallows Eve, which gradually **morphed** into 'Halloween' (1:50)
- But over the years, the tradition of harmless tricks grew into outright **vandalism**. (2:20)
- It was originally an extortion deal: give us candy or we'll **trash** your house. (2:40)

Comprehension: Watch, Recall, Retell: Retell the video's main ideas to a partner in your own words.

Comprehension Questions

- 1) What were the Celts celebrating on a festival called Samhain?
- 2) What did they believe happened on Samhain? What did they do on the holiday?
- 3) What was November 1st known as?
- 4) **Idiom:** "It was a calculated move, on part of the church, to bring more people into the fold." → What does the idiom bring *into the fold* mean?

- 5) Who brought Halloween to America?
- 6) What was different about the holiday in the 1930s?

Replace the underlined phrase with a word from the pre-listening vocabulary list on page 1. Then ask the questions to a partner.

1. you / ever / do / a practical joke / on someone?

_____?

2. Why / people / disapprove of / Halloween?

_____?

3. your city / a thing composed of different parts / of different cultures?

_____?

4. someone / ever / damage / your property?

_____?

Speaking Activities: Debate!

Background: In 2017, Hillcrest Elementary School in Wisconsin decided not to let children wear costumes at school.¹ The school explained, “We want to be inclusive of all families including those families who don’t celebrate Halloween or find purchasing a costume a hardship.” ([Video](#) 1:59)

One parent, Crystal Landry, commented: “I just think it’s sad.... It just kind of seems the way society is going... It just kind of seems silly to take it all away.”

Task: Choose a role and spend a few minutes preparing. The School Board member will go first.

Crystal Landry, Parent	<p>You don’t believe that canceling Halloween is the right choice. Express your disappointment. Also, share reasons and/or personal experiences highlighting the positives of celebrating Halloween in school. Finally, offer possible solutions to solve the school’s problems.</p> <p><i>Key expression: While I understand the concern, ...</i></p>
School Board member	<p>You are happy that students cannot celebrate Halloween at school. There were a few reasons why the holiday was a problem: 1) some students from other cultures did not celebrate it, 2) it is expensive for some families to get a costume, and 3) it takes a lot of time for teachers to get their students in an out of costumes. Explain to the other parent, Crystal Landry, why this decision is the right one.</p> <p><i>Key expression: As a school board, we frown on activities that could exclude students from different communities.</i></p>

Speaking Practice: Role-plays (Each person only reads his/her role.)

Partner A	You and your partner have just moved into your first house together. Next week is Halloween. You want to decorate your house and give out candy. Think of reasons why participating in the Halloween tradition is important. <i>Key expression: If we don't give out candy, the kids might trash our house.</i>
Partner B	You and your partner have just moved into your first house together. Next week is Halloween. You do <u>not</u> want to decorate your house or give out candy. Think of reasons why you should not participate in the Halloween tradition. <i>Key expression: Halloween has morphed into a purely commercial holiday...</i>

Situation: You and your friend are out shopping for Halloween costumes.

Friend A	You have found two costumes that interest you: ninja or Cleopatra. Your friend doesn't think you should choose one of these costumes because they represent other cultures, and therefore, are 'cultural appropriation'. You don't agree, however. <i>Key expression: It's all in good fun. No one takes these costumes seriously.</i>
Friend B	Your friend wants to dress up as either a ninja or Cleopatra. You don't think these are appropriate costumes, however, because they represent other cultures and are therefore 'cultural appropriation'. Talk with your friend. Suggest a different costume. <i>Key expression: Even in festivities, it's important to respect and honor other cultures.</i>

Vocabulary Review: Insert a word from today's lesson into the appropriate blank.

vandalism / trash / ritual / veil / patchwork / pranks / frown on / morph / bonfire

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ...from communion with the dead, to pumpkins and _____, Halloween is a _____ holiday. It was the time when the _____ between death and life was supposed to be at its thinnest. ... the villagers gathered and lit huge bonfires to drive the dead back to the spirit world. But as the Catholic Church's influence grew in Europe, it _____ the pagan _____ like Samhain. the night was All Hallows Eve, which gradually _____ into 'Halloween.' But over the years, the tradition of harmless tricks grew into outright _____. It was originally an extortion deal: give us candy or we'll _____ your house.

Final Discussion Questions

- Is it possible to communicate with the dead?
- Is the way people celebrate Halloween today different from its original intention or history?
- What are your favorite scary movies to watch at Halloween time?
- Is there any way to make Halloween healthier in North America?

Collocation Review

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| 1. frown | a. into |
| 2. morph | b. in good fun |
| 3. bring people into | c. the fold |
| 4. It's all | d. appropriation |
| 5. cultural | e. on |

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Answers to Comprehension Questions:

- 1) They were celebrating the end of the harvest season.
- 2) They believed that the ghosts of the dead walked the earth because it was a time between years. On this holiday, they had large fires to scare the ghosts of the dead away.
- 3) All Saints Day
- 4) To include more people
- 5) The wave of Irish immigrants brought it to North America.
- 6) It was more dangerous because of the level of vandalism.

Vocabulary Answers: 1-c, 2-g, 3-h, 4-l, 5-b, 6-f, 7-a, 8-e, 9-d

Vocabulary Review Answers: see page 1

Collocation Answers: 1-e, 2-a, 3-c, 4-b, 5-d

¹ <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/parents-upset-with-halloween-costume-controversy-at-waukesha-school>