

Topic: Holidays and Traditions – Halloween

Let’s get started... Halloween can be a fun, and funny holiday, if you know what it is and what to expect. If you do not know about it, you might be curious, puzzled, or even afraid. Have you ever experienced Halloween in the United States? How did you feel?

Background: Halloween is a traditional, cultural, non-legal holiday in the United States. It is celebrated on October 31 every year. It started from holidays from several different cultures. First it was a holiday to remember deceased ancestors. It changed into a holiday for children. They dress up in costumes, and go door to door asking for candy treats. Many adults also have costume parties at this time. The special colors of Halloween are orange and black. It is a fall holiday, so many leaves on trees are turning orange. People carve orange pumpkins to make “jack-o-lanterns.” In England and much of Europe (where the holiday started) and the United States, black is the color of death and mourning. Some other cultures, such as Mexico with Día de los Muertos, also celebrate a similar holiday. Japan has a holiday in late August to remember deceased ancestors, called Obon. Today, we will be talking about these traditions and celebrations.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

- How does your home country remember and pay respect to ancestors? Does your country have any special traditions, or celebrations? Talk with a partner from a different country, and tell your partner about these traditions and celebrations.
- Does your home country have a fall harvest festival to celebrate the end of summer, the end of the summer growing season, and the coming of winter? Talk with a partner from a different country, and tell your partner about this festival.

Share your partner’s answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

Do your children or grandchildren celebrate Halloween? What do they do to celebrate?

Some people do not celebrate Halloween because of religious reasons. They might have a harvest festival instead. Are there any holidays in your home country that some people do not celebrate because of religious reasons?

In your home country, do you have a holiday similar to Halloween - dressing up in costumes or remembering deceased ancestors? Tell a partner from a different country about the holiday. Then, share your information with the whole group.

Did you live in the United States last Halloween? Did someone knock on your door? Did they wear a costume? What did they say? What did you do?

What can you do if you do not want anybody to come to your house on Halloween?

Do the people in your neighborhood decorate their yards for Halloween? What do they use for decorations?

In the United States, the special colors for Independence Day (Fourth of July) are red, white and blue. The special colors for Halloween are orange and black. The special colors for Christmas are red and green. Do any holidays in your home country have special colors? Please tell about it. What is the meaning of these colors?

Have you ever been to a Halloween party? What did you do there? What did you eat?

Most countries in the world have some superstitious beliefs and traditions about good luck and bad luck. In the United States, some people think it is bad luck if a mirror breaks. Other people think it is bad luck if a black cat walks in front of you. Are people in your home country superstitious?

Some people think if you carry a rabbit's food on your key chain, you will have good luck, and bad things will not happen to you. Are there good luck charms in your home country?

Tell a partner from a different country about some customs and traditions in your home country about bad luck and good luck.

Do you believe in good luck/bad luck? Why or why not?

New words and Idioms: fun, funny (difference between these 2 words); expect; curious; puzzled; afraid; deceased; ancestors; beloved; charm; costumes; customs; treats; special colors; carved; "jack-o-lantern"; death; mourning; similar; traditions; celebrations; pay respect; harvest festival; growing season; coming of winter; frightening; experience (noun and verb); dressing up; superstition; fear; bad luck; good luck; rabbit's foot; key chain; beliefs.