

Eye on Campus

The History Of Halloween

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Why do people don silly costumes and dole out trick-or-treat goodies on Halloween?

Halloween is a holiday that has transformed over the last 2,000 years.

It started when the Celts of Northern Europe celebrated "Samhain," their equivalent of the winter season.

In the beginning, Halloween was known as "All Hallow's Eve," referring to the day before All Saint's Day (November 1st). Interestingly enough, October 31st is also the day Martin Luther, the famous 16th century Reformationist, posted his Ninety-Five Theses.

Halloween didn't really become an American holiday until the immigration of the working classes from the British Isles in the late 19th century, each adding their folklore to the holiday.

The mischievous characteristics of the holiday were eye-catching to many young American people at that time.

Today Halloween is almost exclusively celebrated by Americans. Most people don't even know about the history behind the holiday when they dress up in bizarre costumes.

For instance, bobbing for apples was a pagan practice to bestow the spiritual world's 'blessings' on a couple's romance. Costumes were supposed to be modeled after one of the saints.

Spirits could be chased away by carving a grotesque face in a gourd or root vegetable; the Scots used turnips to create their "ghost chasers."

Whatever people do to celebrate, Halloween is a reflection of their culture's rich history.

Nationwide Businesses Reap a Bountiful Harvest This Halloween

Halloween has been scaring up new demand on the nation's economy, stirring up the "decorating" market, making this holiday "serious business."

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Halloween, the second biggest decorating and sixth largest retail holiday, is growing steadily. The National Retail Federation predicts that consumers, this year, will spend \$3.3 billion on Halloween items. More than a 5% increase from last year's \$3.12 billion.

Adults and young adults are beginning to join into the Halloween holiday which is the suspected increase in sales. The average adult will spend close to \$60 dollars a costume with the average young adult spending \$50. The prices have been raised by 13% and 30% respectively since last year.

Traditional retail stores are not the only ones expecting to see an increase in Halloween sales. BuyCostumes.com estimates to make \$25 million this year. A \$7 million dollar increase in sales from last year.

Costumes are likely to bring in \$1.15 billion of estimated Halloween sales of the \$3.3 billion anticipated to sell. The other \$2.15 billion is projected to come from outside and inside décor.

More adults are garnishing their yards with the conventional autumn symbols such as pumpkins and scarecrows. Theme based parties have caused an augmented need for indoor furnishings.

Anne McKenna, manager of Partyland in Brookhaven, PA, overhauled the store for Halloween. A banner outside asserts itself as Halloween Headquarters.

Halloween decorations and products are put on shelves as early as August and consumed over half of the store.

McKenna has done this for the past ten years. "You increase (products) over the years. You try to add new things," she said. "Costumes and decorations sell equally."

The newest item added to the supply is a large hanging zombie creature which sells for \$45. The zombie can be used for outside or inside decoration.

The store's sales are half to adults and half to children.

Julie Murphy, a salesperson, said "A lot of families are coming in and getting their kids

costumes. An adult came in here asking for a Star Wars costume for herself. She was about 30."

Partyland is located on route 352, down the road from another Halloween based store, The Halloween Superstore.

The Halloween Superstore is a seasonal based operation and begins to set up the last week of September. This is the first year the store is open in the Delaware County area, however, the national company has existed since 1984.

Ngac Pham, manager of The Halloween Superstore, caters to 70-100 customers, a day whom on average spend \$30.

"The big thing this year is Darth Vader. We're running out of those," said Pham, referring to the store's most popular item. "It is different each season though."

A permanent year round Halloween Superstore may be coming to Philadelphia.

In regards to the question of what use Halloween items have besides the holiday Pham said "It can be all kinds of things. There are a lot of people who have costume parties. A lot of adults come in and look for ideas. They just come in and look around."

The steady rise of interest in Halloween has spurred theme parks to stay open longer. Halloween has extended theme parks seasons, which would normally end in late September, to stay open until late October.

Theme parks utilize the holiday for a month long scare-fest combining costumes, mazes, haunted houses and activities to increase sales. Halloween has not only increased revenue for these parks it has turned into a marketing tool with unlimited creativity.

Busch Gardens offers its "Howl-O-Scream" weekends throughout the month of October. The event consists of several scare-tactics in several shows, night-time roller coasters, and unpredictable horrors.

Halloween impacts retail stores, internet sales, and is elongating entertainment seasons while bringing better and scarier events to the consumers.

Halloween is no longer just for kids or just about getting candy. The holiday has progressed into a multi-billion dollar event drawing in corporation's attention and reverting consumers back to kids.



Compiled by Frank Friday
Classic Hollywood Monsters



Compiled by Frank Friday

Teacher Probes the Depths of Halloween's Psyche

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Cindy Dell Clark's new article, "Tricks of Festival: Children, Enculturation, and American Halloween" puts forth the idea that this holiday is more than just free candy and dress up, but a bizarre complex of the national psyche. Published in the anthropology journal *Abstract*, Clark has drawn attention from peers and angry Satanists. "People read the summary about my article and assume I hate Halloween." Prior to her study, Clark had no feelings either way. She is glad that her article is getting so much attention, especially the "healthy reaction from the Satanists."

Clark calls Halloween an "inversion holiday," a time when roles are reversed. "Everything counter normative is allowed" says Clark. This holiday allows children and adults to suspend reality and play on their greatest fears. Kids typically will dress as something they aspire to be: a boy will don a superhero outfit or a pretend to work in a parent figure's profession. Adult's costumes tend to be more extreme with the mild mannered dressing like celebrities or in the case of men going in drag, something they are definitely not.

Parents encourage Halloween whole-heartedly in most cases. Clark thinks "adults are opening Pandora's box" by switching the tables on young ones. While trick or treating, children are thrust in front of their chap-

ones, and urged to knock on stranger's doors asking for candy. In their later years, kids are allowed to venture out on their own. The veiled threat of "trick or treat" always results in free candy. The amount of candy a child brings home is equivalent to the amount of power they feel. This type of empowerment can boost their confidence overall.

On the other end, adults use this holiday to relieve some of their greatest fears. While many parents think Halloween is purely fun, kids take it literally. For part of

"Halloween is an 'inversion holiday.' Everything counter normative is allowed"

-Prof. Cindy Dell Clark

her research, Clark interviewed a small group of children showing them pictures of things commonly associated with Halloween. Those who have grown past the age of trick or treating take skeletons and vampires very lightly, but for many children, they hold strong connotations of death.

Neighbors who conceal themselves in bushes waiting for ghosts and princesses to frighten rationalize the inflicted terror by likening it to a game. Kid's perspec-

tives have less depth: they may know it's not a real bush monster and affirm it verbally but will refuse to return if asked. This urge to scare children is caused by adults coming to terms with their own fears. They most likely have experienced the same situation once in their life and want to control that emotion to affirm its falsehood.

Some children have other reasons to fear Halloween also. At the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania (CHOP) many young ones struggle through terminal illnesses and have little tolerance for morbid humor. "Parents of sick children beg the gift shop not to sell Halloween products involving ghosts and tombstones," explains Clark. The subliminal message of death is funny can be detrimental to a child's progress.

Many things can bring out the underlying messages of Halloween. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 brought those fears into a more realistic light for many adults, says Clark. The heavily embedded images of death resurfaced during the Halloween following the tragedy and as a result parents toned the holiday down. "Instead of trick or treating, parents organized parties with Halloween themed activities," Clark said. She found that this wasn't just to protect children but for their own piece of mind.

Clark feels that Halloween should leave a positive mark on children. When kids visit your house seeking candy "you want them to leave feeling empowered not terrified."