



# Reading Comprehension

## HALLOWEEN

Halloween is celebrated annually on 31st October. Although today it has been commercialised to dress-ups, trick-or-treating and pumpkin carving, it had a much darker beginning.

Halloween originated from Samhain, the ancient 'festival of the dead' celebrated in Ireland and Scotland. To mark the end of Summer and the start of the New Year (which the Celts observed as 1st November), pagans would dress up in costumes and light bonfires to keep themselves safe from ghosts and evil spirits. They believed that on this night, the dead and living mixed. Poor children went from door to door promising to pray for household's dead relatives in exchange for food. Samhain is still celebrated today by some, but is different to modern day Halloween celebrations.



Centuries later, the Catholic church declared 1st November as All Saints Day. On this day, people honoured those who have gone to heaven. Festivities incorporated some of the traditions from Samhain.

**1** Use a dictionary to define the word pagan: \_\_\_\_\_

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**2** Explain how the church attempted to Christianise the pagan Samhain festival: \_\_\_\_\_

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**3** What traditions of the ancient Samhain festival are evident in modern day halloween celebrations?

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**4** Should we continue to celebrate halloween today? Explain your response:

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