

## **Halloween**

Halloween celebrations have become very popular in recent years, but they have been a part of Irish traditions for centuries and a major influence on how it is celebrated in the USA. Halloween first originated from the festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-en) which dates back over 2,000 years.

This festival marked the end of the bright half of the year and the start of the dark half. It was a time to honour the dead using as it was believed that souls of the departed would return to their former homes on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Given the Celtic roots of this holiday, the Irish have developed many customs for Halloween over the years.

It was (and still is) celebrated with bonfires and dressing up. There were also games and foods which varied in different parts of the country.

### **Some useful questions to trigger discussion**

Did you celebrate Halloween in your family?

What preparations did you make at home or at school?

What was the origin of children dressing up?

What games did you play?

Apples and nuts were usually plentiful being the end of harvest. What games did you play involving apples?

Did you have lanterns? How were they made?

Did anybody tell ghost stories? Were you scared?

Did you have barm brack?

What objects were hidden in the barm brack and what did they mean?

### **Traditional Barm Brack recipe**

<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/food-and-drink/recipes/the-perfect-traditional-irish-barmbrack-1.2842588>

## **Sources of background information**

The following websites are rich sources of heritage information from different counties collected as part of the National Folklore Collection.

<https://www.duchas.ie/download/15.10.23-halloween.pdf>

<https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/origin-of-Halloween.html>

<https://irishfolktours.com/halloween-traditions-ireland/>