

Halloween: From Turnips to Jack-o'-Lanterns

Reading, vocabulary, simple past and creative writing · Year 9 Oberschule · A2–B1

Name: _____ Klasse: _____ Datum: _____

Learning goals · I can ...

explain two Halloween traditions in English; use eight Halloween words in context; choose simple past or present perfect; write a ghost story with a clear ending.

Exercise A · A festival that travelled ____ / 6

Goal: find key information in a short cultural text.

Read the text and the diagram. Circle the correct answer: a, b or c.

Halloween **began** as part of old seasonal traditions in Ireland and Britain. Samhain **marked** the start of winter in the traditional Irish calendar. People **carved** turnips into frightening lanterns and wore disguises. They also played games and visited neighbours for food and entertainment.^[1]

In the nineteenth century, Irish and Scottish immigrants took Halloween customs to North America. Pumpkins were larger and softer than turnips, so they were easier to carve. The pumpkin lantern became the jack-o'-lantern we know today.

Modern Halloween is a mixture of old and new traditions. Children dress in costumes, neighbours decorate their porches, and families tell spooky stories. In many places, trick-or-treating is also a social event: people meet, talk and share treats. A frightening festival can therefore bring a community together.

Glossary: *disguise** — clothes or a mask that hides who you are; *porch** — a covered area at a house entrance; *treat** — something pleasant, often sweets.

Old traditions turnip lanterns disguises and games	Across the Atlantic Irish and Scottish immigrants larger, softer pumpkins	Halloween today costumes and porches stories and community
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1. Samhain marked the start of ...

a) winter b) summer c) the school year

2. Early lanterns were made from ...

a) pumpkins b) paper c) turnips

3. Customs travelled to North America with ...

a) English teachers b) Irish and Scottish immigrants c) American farmers

4. People chose pumpkins because they were ...

a) easier to carve b) cheaper to buy c) brighter at night

5. The diagram and text show Halloween as ...

a) only a children's game b) a religious ceremony c) a mixture of old and new traditions

6. Trick-or-treating can unite people because they ...

a) wear identical costumes b) meet, talk and share treats c) travel abroad

Need help? Look below for tips: Help corner A.

Fast finisher (bonus): Retell the three stages of the diagram in three sentences without looking at the text.

Partner check: Compare answers. Point to the exact words in the text that support two of your choices.

Exercise B · Halloween vocabulary in context ____ / 8

Goal: use eight topic words accurately.

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Use each word once.

Word bank

lantern · costume · treat · carve · spirit · disguise · porch · spooky

1. We put a candle inside the pumpkin to make a _____.
2. Maya wore a vampire _____ to the party.
3. The neighbours gave us a small _____ when we knocked.
4. Use a safe tool to _____ a face in your pumpkin.
5. The old story says that a _____ returns to the house every October.
6. His mask was a clever _____; nobody recognised him.
7. They left a bowl of sweets on the _____ for visitors.
8. The empty house looked _____ in the moonlight.

Need help? Look below for tips: Help corner B.

Fast finisher (bonus): Write two new sentences using *costume* and *porch*.

Partner check: Read your completed sentences aloud. Explain the meaning of two words without translating them.

Exercise C · Simple past or present perfect? ____ / 8

Goal: connect each event to the correct time.

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Last Halloween, we _____ (decorate) the classroom with paper bats.
2. My sister _____ (carve) three lanterns so far this week.
3. In 2024, our neighbours _____ (organise) a street party.
4. I _____ never _____ (wear) a vampire costume in my life.
5. The film _____ (start) ten minutes ago.
6. They _____ (live) in this house since 2020.
7. When I was younger, I _____ (tell) ghost stories with my cousins.
8. Look! Someone _____ (leave) a mysterious bag on our porch.

Need help? Look below for tips: Help corner C.

Fast finisher (bonus): Write one sentence about last Halloween and one about your Halloween experiences up to now.

Exercise D · The Lantern in the Window ____ / 3

Goal: write a structured story with accurate past-tense verbs.

Your school newspaper needs a Halloween story for younger readers. Write **70–90 words**. Entertain your audience and give the story a surprising ending. Use at least five simple-past verbs.

Beginning: On a dark Halloween evening, you saw a lantern in an empty house.

Middle: Describe two strange events and your feelings.

Ending: Explain the lantern—or surprise the reader.

Useful language: suddenly · a moment later · whispered · crept · was shaking · finally · to my surprise

Need help? Look below for tips: Help corner D.

Fast finisher (bonus): Give your story a title and write a different final sentence.

Help corner

A: Underline time words and names in the text; match each question to one sentence. **B:** First letters: l, c, t, c, s, d, p, s. **C:** Finished time (last, ago, in 2024) → simple past. Time up to now (so far, since, in my life) → present perfect. **D:** Start with “On Halloween evening, I walked past ...”. Sequence two events with “suddenly” and “finally”.

Peer feedback: Swap texts. Tick: ■ 70–90 words ■ clear beginning, middle and ending ■ five simple-past verbs ■ surprising ending.

One strength: _____ One improvement: _____

Group task · One shared ending

In groups of 3–4, choose a narrator, timekeeper, language checker and reporter. Agree on the strongest story ending. Produce one new three-sentence ending together; every group member must suggest or improve one detail.

Check yourself: ■ I can explain two traditions. ■ I can use the eight words. ■ I can choose the right tense. ■ I can structure a ghost story.

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Lösungen · Teacher answer key

Remove this section before giving the pack to students.

Exercise A · Reading ____ / 6

Goal: one point per answer.

1. **a — winter**
2. **c — turnips**
3. **b — Irish and Scottish immigrants**
4. **a — easier to carve**
5. **c — a mixture of old and new traditions**
6. **b — meet, talk and share treats**

Bonus: Answers should mention old Irish/British customs, migration and pumpkins, then modern community traditions.

Exercise B · Vocabulary ____ / 8

Goal: one point per answer.

1. **lantern**
2. **costume**
3. **treat**
4. **carve**
5. **spirit**
6. **disguise**
7. **porch**
8. **spooky**

Exercise C · Grammar ____ / 8

Goal: one point per answer.

1. **decorated** — “Last Halloween” is a finished past time.
2. **has carved** — “So far” connects the unfinished week to now.
3. **organised** — “In 2024” is a finished past year.
4. **have never worn** — “In my life” describes experience up to now.
5. **started** — “Ago” marks a finished past time.
6. **have lived** — “Since 2020” describes a situation continuing to now.
7. **told** — “When I was younger” is a finished past period.
8. **has left** — The visible result matters now; no finished past time is given.

Exercise D · Musterantwort ____ / 3

Goal: assess with the rubric below.

On Halloween evening, I walked past an empty house and saw a lantern in the window. I stopped because the light suddenly turned blue. Then someone whispered my name, and my hands started shaking. I crept up the steps and opened the old door slowly. A black cat ran past me, so I laughed with relief. Finally, I found my little brother behind the curtain with a torch. He had planned the whole trick, but I still gave him my sweets.

82 words. Other answers are valid when they meet the task and rubric.

Erwartungshorizont · Exercise D

Kriterium	Konkrete Erwartung	Punkte	Volle / halbe / keine Punkte
Inhalt	Lantern situation, zwei seltsame Ereignisse, Gefühl und überraschendes Ende; 70–90 Wörter.	1	1: alle Aspekte und Umfang · 0,5: ein Aspekt fehlt oder deutlich zu kurz · 0: mehrere fehlen
Sprache	Mindestens fünf Simple-Past-Verben; verständlicher Wortschatz; größtenteils korrekte Formen.	1	1: fünf korrekte Formen · 0,5: drei bis vier oder wiederholte Fehler · 0: weniger als drei
Aufbau und Stil	Beginning–middle–ending, passende Sequenzierer, unterhaltsam für jüngere Leser.	1	1: klar und zielgruppengerecht · 0,5: teilweise klar · 0: unzusammenhängend

Hinweise für Lehrkräfte

Einsatz: Unterricht, Vertretung, Hausaufgabe oder Wiederholung; insgesamt etwa 45–60 Minuten. **Kompetenzbereiche:** Leseverstehen, Wortschatz, Sprachgebrauch und Schreiben im Rahmenlehrplan Berlin-Brandenburg. **Differenzierung:** Hilfen erst nach dem ersten Versuch; Bonusaufgaben ohne Pflicht; Partner- und Gruppenprodukt.

Phase	Min.	Sozialform	Lehrerimpuls
Einstieg	5	Plenum	Vorwissen zu Halloween aktivieren; Ziele nennen.
Erarbeitung	20	Einzel, Partner	A–C bearbeiten; textbasierte Partnerprüfung.
Sicherung	15	Einzel, Partner	Story schreiben; Peer-Feedback mit Kriterien.
Transfer	10	Gruppe	Gemeinsames Ende produzieren und kurz vorstellen.

Reflexion nach der Stunde

1. Which tradition surprised you, and why?
2. Which time expression helped you choose a tense?
3. What made your group ending effective?

Quellenangaben

Texte: Kimi, Moonshot AI, reviewed by the author; cultural information checked against [1] National Museum of Ireland (2023), “Ghost turnips, the púca, fortune-telling and evil abductions ... how our ancestors inspire our Halloween celebrations today”.

Schrift: Helvetica (standard PDF font).

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