

SECONDARY

1. Halloween Through the Ages

Research and create a historical survey that explains the origins of Halloween in Europe, and its evolutions after arriving in North America.

- What were the original functions of the rituals?
- Which of these functions are still important in our society?
- What new functions does Halloween serve?

Use the terms “halloween” and “history” in your web searches. Verify your information by consulting multiple sources. Correctly cite all sources of information.

2. Halloween as a Site of Struggle

While some people regard Halloween as a fun, harmless pastime, others see it as a dangerous and evil ritual descended from a pagan religion. Halloween has become a “site of struggle,” or an event around which groups within society have staged many debates and contests. The results of these debates and contests will invariably redefine society in several ways. This unit examines Halloween as a site of struggle, tries to define the struggles, and invites students to suggest some possible outcomes.

Some organizations want to ban Halloween, and their members refuse to participate in Halloween activities. In 1995, a California school board banned Halloween activities from its school.

- Why do you think some people believe Halloween should be banned?
- Do you think some of their reasons make sense?
- Which aspects of Halloween might be unhealthy? Why?

Create a report, poster, TV or radio documentary, or website that presents the cases for and against celebrating Halloween.

- What changes would YOU make to Halloween activities? Why?

Use “ban Halloween” and “anti-holidays” as search terms on the Internet.

3. Halloween Imagery

Consider some of the recurring images of Halloween. Share your prior knowledge of these images, and/or guess how they might have come to be strongly associated with Halloween. Then research to discover the variety of historical explanations for their being a part of Halloween celebrations.

Some possible images include:

- a. trick-or-treating
- b. jack-o'-lanterns
- c. bonfires
- d. bobbing for apples

- e. costumes
- f. skeletons, skulls, and corpses
- g. bats, owls, and black cats
- h. goblins, demons, ghosts, and ghouls

4. New Halloween Stories

Consult the list of Halloween images you generated in Activity 4. Add a list of common Halloween activities. Explore, combine, and recombine the images and activities into a story that somehow involves Halloween.

Produce the story as an outline, flow chart, or concept map.

Choose one scene from your story, and develop it into a short story, script, or storyboard.

Examine your story.

- How have you made your story DIFFERENT from other Halloween-themed stories?
- How cleverly have you included traditional Halloween images and activities?
- How have the traditional Halloween images and activities influenced the structure and events of your story?

5. Halloween and Edgar Allen Poe

Edgar Allen Poe’s writing is connected to Halloween on several websites.

- Do you think this is an accurate and fair connection, or does it create misinformation about both Poe and Halloween?
- Did Poe write any Halloween-themed stories, or have the connections been made by others, e.g., teachers or webmasters?
- Why might they have connected Poe to Halloween?
- Reflect on what you have learned about Halloween as you read some Poe short stories, then suggest some explanations for the connections.
- What qualities do Halloween and Poe’s stories have in common?
- In what ways are the two very different?

Explain why people might connect the two, and why the connection is not entirely accurate. Finally, explain your own position concerning the connections, i.e., whether you think it is accurate or misleading, and why.

6. Growing up with Halloween

Create a first-person, autobiographical or biographical explanation of the ways in which people’s understandings and uses of Halloween change as they grow older.

Begin with your own recollections of your early childhood Halloween experiences. Then describe ways in which your attitudes and behaviour changed from one Halloween to the next. Describe the influences from friends, family, and the media that caused you to change.

Some useful questions might include the following:

- How does a person’s awareness and use of Halloween change from childhood to adulthood?
- Is a boy’s Halloween different from a girl’s Halloween?
- What is your earliest recollection of Halloween?
- Can you name all the characters you and your friends dressed up as?
- What patterns emerge from the list of characters, e.g., fantasy characters, celebrities, criminals, movie characters, powerful characters, beautiful/handsome characters?
- How important was trick-or-treating in your Halloween activities?
- How did your parents participate in your Halloween activities, e.g., chaperoned during trick-or-treating, checked candy, hosted a party, helped choose or make a costume?
- Do you remember being afraid?
- Of what were you afraid?
- What safety precautions did your parents take to protect you while trick-or-treating?
- At what age do you think people should stop trick-or-treating? Why?
- At what age did you stop trick or treating? Why?

Some people think a major social value of Christmas holidays is to help families celebrate togetherness.

- What do you think might be a major social value of Halloween?
- Does Halloween promote many social benefits? If so, what are they?
- What Halloween-themed television shows do you remember watching as a child?
- How important was watching these shows compared to other Halloween activities?
- Were they as important as the shows people usually watch during Christmas holidays?
- When did you become aware of Halloween-themed movies?
- Did you or your friends experience any parental guidance when going to Halloween-themed movies?
- Do you think you were allowed to see any movies that were inappropriate? Why?

Halloween Apples!