

## ***HALLOWEEN.....OR NOT?***

by Vicki S. Norris

How many of us really understand Halloween - its origin, its traditions, its significance. If you're like me, you understand that it is something that we as Christians need to avoid — but why?? Test your Halloween IQ by taking this quiz! (Answers are at the end of the quiz - don't cheat!)

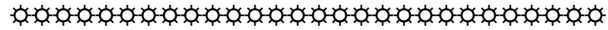
1. When did the festival that we call Halloween originate?
  - a) 2000+ years ago
  - b) 1000 years ago
  - c) in 1776
  
2. Where did the festival originate?
  - a) France
  - b) England
  - c) Ireland
  
3. What was its original name?
  - a) Feralia
  - b) Samhain
  - c) Pomona
  
4. Why was it celebrated?
  - a) to mark the end of summer and the harvest
  - b) because it was believed that October 31 was the night that ghosts of the dead could return to earth
  - c) both a and b
  
5. What was the significance of bonfires in this celebration?
  - a) to keep warm
  - b) for the Druids (Celtic priests) to make sacrifices of animals and crops (and sometimes humans) to the Celtic deities
  - c) to aid in the foretelling of people's futures
  
6. Samhain later merged with what TWO Roman festivals?
  - a) Feralia
  - b) Halloween
  - c) Pomona
  
7. What did Feralia commemorate?
  - a) Rome's victory over their enemies
  - b) the emergence of a new Caesar
  - c) the passing of the dead

8. Who was Pomona?
  - a) the Roman goddess of fruit and trees
  - b) the Roman goddess of women
  - c) the Roman goddess of housework
  
9. Masks and costumes were worn to:
  - a) hide from the bill collectors
  - b) hide from the evil spirits returning from the world beyond
  - c) have fun
  
10. "Trick or treat" began as:
  - a) a way for children to get lots of candy
  - b) gifts of fruits, nuts, and other treats left outside the door to appease the wandering spirits
  - c) a way to get rid of unwanted food
  
11. A jack-o-lantern was the ancient symbol for a damned soul and was originally carved out of a:
  - a) potato
  - b) watermelon
  - c) turnip

Answers:

*For the sake of any children who might read this, explanations have been "toned down."*  
The festival that we today call Halloween originated 2000+ years ago in Ireland as a Celtic festival called Samhain (pronounced sow-en or sow-een). It was a celebration of the end of summer and the harvest and it was believed that the boundary that separated this world from the world of the dead grew very thin on this particular day thus allowing the souls or ghosts of the dead to cross back over. Although Samhain was considered the best time to be able to foretell someone's future, the bonfire's significance lay in the Druids appeasing the Celtic deities by making sacrifices to them. Samhain, sometime after 43A.D., merged with the Roman festivals Feralia and Pomona. While Feralia commemorated the passing of the dead, Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees, whose symbol was the apple, was honored on her own special day and this is likely where "bobbing" for apples originated. Believing that the spirits returning from the dead were sometimes not so nice, the tradition of masquerading as one of the demonic, an imp, ogre or other creature was started so that the costume-wearer would blend in with the demonic spirits. Gifts of food were left outside the door to the house to appease those spirits trying to return to their former homes or to cause trouble, leading to the modern tradition of trick-or-treat. In the Celtic culture, turnips were most often used for jack-o-lanterns, but upon arriving in America, the Irish, not being able to find an adequate supply of turnips favored the pumpkin as a replacement.

I could go on, but as you can see, nothing associated with this ancient festival is even remotely Christian.



Take YOUR Halloween alternative or Fall Festival to a new level.....

***A Night of Reformation***

(published by Doorposts)

As a very Christian alternative, I would like to introduce you to a resource from Doorposts entitled *A Night of Reformation*. Most of you have heard of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, but did you know that it was nailed to the door of Wittenburg Church on October 31, 1517? Why not introduce your church, homeschool group, or private school to the celebration of Reformation Day? *A Night of Reformation* gives you ideas for costumes, food, decorations, contests, music, games and booths, all true to that time period. It also provides you with titles of other books to use to help in preparation. If this sounds like too much or is overwhelming, they have ideas for quiet, relaxing get-togethers as well. [Here](#) is a copy of the Table of Contents, Why Celebrate Reformation Day, and What Is A Reformation Party, all from the front of the book. We are pleased to now stock this book at Hidden Treasures Homeschool Store or you may order it from our Online Store at [www.HiddenTreasuresHS.com](http://www.HiddenTreasuresHS.com). Get your copy today so that you can start making plans!!

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