

HALLOWEEN

Origins of the Holiday & Practical Tips for Dealing with it

Halloween is a holiday children enjoy, simply because they get to dress up and get a lot of candies. Too often, parents themselves are in the dark about the background of occasions and holidays like Halloween. We need to begin by finding out what Halloween really is. Don't think this is a trivial matter. Once you find out why Halloween is celebrated, you will think twice about it!

ORIGINS & HISTORY

Halloween has evolved and been influenced by a number of different cultures and religions, the most important of which are paganism, the Romans, the Celts (the people of Ireland, Scotland, Britain, Wales) and Christianity.

However, almost all of the traditions surrounding Halloween as we know it today can be traced back to the Celtic Day of the Dead, a pagan holiday. The Pope, in the 8th century, decided to Christianize this pagan holiday since he wanted people to abandon the occult and idolatrous practices associated with it, and made November 1 All Saints' Day or All Hallows' (Holy) Day. This is a day to remember all of the Christians who died for their faith. October 31 was then considered All Hallows' Eve, and this word later evolved into the modern day Halloween.

Most of the Halloween activities participated in today can be traced back to occult symbolism. For example:

- 1. Dressing up in costumes:** This was done so that the spirits of the dead would not recognize people. The costumes children wear today comes from this.
- 2. Trick-or-treating:** The Druids would go from house to house on October 31st and demand specific types of food. If their demands were not met, it was believed the people and their homes would be cursed with trouble, sickness and death. Prosperity was promised to those who generously donated. Today, when children are offered treats by neighbors, this goes back to the time people would offer food to appease the spirits.
- 3. Jack-o'-lantern:** This started off as a legend associated with a man of Irish origin named Jack who supposedly enjoyed playing pranks on the Devil. After his death, Jack did not go to Heaven or Hell and therefore, had to wander the earth carrying a lantern which gave him some light to see where he was going. Pumpkins that were hollowed out and had candles lighted inside did the job and they were also supposed to scare evil spirits away.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Understanding the history and origins helps reconsider celebrating this day. So, here are a few tips on how to deal with the Halloween hoopla:

Tip #1: Emphasize that there is nothing wrong with being different

This is crucial because there will be other occasions later on in their lives when Muslim children must not participate in school activities (for example, the prom). This does not mean permanent exclusion from all school and/or peer activities, but it means that as Muslims, they can take what is good, but they also have to learn to reject what is bad in a wise manner.

Allah says in the Quran: "To you be your way, and to me mine." (Al-Kafirun, 109:6)

Tip #2: Rationally explain that we have our own celebrations, which have special meaning

Talking about Halloween in the context of a fiery speech against the holiday will not help our children why they should not participate. Your histrionics will only blind them to reality. Instead, explain that every group or culture has its own celebrations, and we, as Muslims have our own. Halloween is a pagan celebration. **But when Eid comes, that is our celebration.**

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Rasulullah arrived to Al-Madinah when its citizens had two days as festivities (The Arabs had two days of festivities in pre-Islamic time).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "What are those two days?"

They said: "We used to celebrate them in pre-Islamic time."

He said: "Allah has offered you two better alternative days (Day of Al-Adha and Day of Fitr)." [Abu Dawood]

Remind your children that for Muslims, our holidays always have a good, positive meaning. For example, at Eid-ul-Fitr, we celebrate our joy of fasting during the blessed month of Ramadan, which is a time we strive to get closer to Allah and be better Muslims. Halloween, on the other hand, is celebrated partly as a reminder of Shaytan, who is evil, and from whom everyone should avoid and seek refuge in Allah from.

Be careful not condemn those who celebrate Halloween. Rather, explain what it is calmly, point out its dangers, and let your children think about it. Abdullah Hakim Quick, an Islamic Scholar, advises, "Despite our position regarding this holiday, we must respect the rights of those who believe it is a part of their religion or consider it to be just a little fun."

Tip #3: Talk to them in advance

This is made easier by the fact that Halloween sales of candy and costumes are already underway and the yearly ritual of horror movies being released or shown on television will soon begin. So the atmosphere is right to sit our children down to have a talk about Halloween.

Talking to them now as opposed to on the morning of October 31 will give them some time to think about it too, and get used to the concept of not having to go trick-or-treating just because their friends are. Mention the other dangers of Halloween: Horror stories about razor blades in apples, Ex-Lax laxative given instead of chocolate to trick-or-treaters, or the dangers on the street should also be mentioned, but not made the focus of the reasons why you object to Halloween.

Tip #4: Keep your promise about Eid

For a number of Muslim youth who have grown up in North America, Eid is sometimes just another day, with parents not even taking a day off work. In other cases, while parents may take the day off, the ritual is the same: get up, put on new clothes, drive to fancy hall, pray, not understand what's really going on, hug Eid Mubarak, go back home, eat "ethnic" food, get money (as Eid gift). Period. It's no wonder our children's eyes light up when they see Christmas lights, brightly wrapped gifts and hear of Halloween fun and treats.

Make Eid special! Don't just hype it up during Halloween to convince the children not to participate and then break your promise. On Eid, give the children candy; take them out to dinner or an amusement park. Organize a party and invite their friends over. Arrange for them to have a gift exchange. The possibilities for Halal fun are there. We owe it to our children – if we want them to stay Muslim and to be proud of it, to celebrate the occasions in life that really matter to us, like the two Eids.

Excerpted from:

- **Where does Halloween come from?** <http://www.soundvision.com/Info/halloween/origins.asp>
- **Dealing with Halloween: 13 tips for parents**
<http://www.soundvision.com/Info/misc/hollo/13tips.asp>