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Halloween Then and Now: Comparison

What does a modern person think when they hear about Halloween? Most likely, they associate this holiday with children asking for candy and adults dressing up as celebrities. However, the spooky festival has not always been kid-friendly. There are drastic differences between the original Halloween and its modern form.

For a start, the general purpose of the celebrations on October 31st changed after a thousand years. Initially, Halloween began as Samhain which symbolized the transition between autumn and winter, light and dark, or life and death (Watson). Moreover, the Celts, who started the tradition, wanted to protect themselves from the supernatural forces lurking in the night. Their approach was so serious that only druids, Celtic religious leaders, could wear costumes and do divination rituals and sacrifices. Modern-day Halloween has a less practical purpose. Since people feel safer nowadays, they perceive former Samhain mostly as entertainment. Nobody believes they are in danger without a costume. So the end of October became a perfect opportunity for dressing up, partying, and bonding.

Since the original meaning of Halloween evolved, its other aspects, like costumes, changed too. In Northern Europe circa 1000 BC, Halloween time was a rather eerie sight. At that time, the goal of festivities was to blend with the folkloric monsters (Thomas). Therefore, Celts wore animal skins and terrifying masks. Contrarily, today people celebrate a more glamorous



version of Halloween. This holiday experiences the strong impact of popular culture, which produces new costume ideas like Marilyn Monroe or Michael Jackson. Even the traditional vampires, witches, and zombies flaunt stunning makeup looks and fancy sparkly clothes. If anything, the paranormal forces might get envious rather than scared.

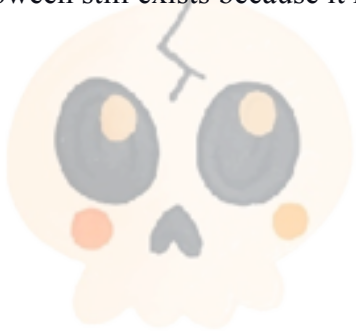
Another crucial Halloween tradition is pumpkin carving, which carried an important meaning earlier. Similarly to uncanny masks, the grotesque pumpkin faces had to scare ghosts away from houses in Celtic Ireland (Thomas). Furthermore, potatoes, beetroots, and other roundish vegetables also served lighting and protection functions. The modern approach to making jack-o-lanterns is more creative than practical. Both kids and adults enjoy making unique shapes, an accessible form of artistic expression for everyone. Moreover, some elevate their carving skills to a whole other level. Such enthusiasts create sceneries with complicated patterns and intricate details.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine Halloween festivities without traditional food. However, the diet was different a thousand years before the first shops appeared. People strictly followed religious customs in ancient times, including fasting during holidays (Watson). In other words, Celts enjoyed the harvest, which was apples and pumpkins, and avoided meat. Naturally, the food tradition continued through centuries but took another form and meaning. Although pumpkins and apples are still symbols of the spooky holiday, the food choice is now much broader. Candy corn, jelly worms, chocolate candy, and pumpkin spice pastries are now in every house at the end of October.

In conclusion, Halloween has almost completely changed throughout the centuries. The holiday still carries the original symbols; however, it has a more elevated feeling. Halloween



used to be a dramatic holiday focused on frightening away ghosts and spirits, but nowadays, it's more commonly associated with candy and kids running around in costumes. After all, Halloween still exists because it has a special place in many people's hearts.





Works Cited

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