

Halloween

Festivals & Holidays

- Teacher's Insights -

At a Glance

-  60 minutes
-  A2, **B1**, B2
-  -ed and -ing adjectives, Halloween vocabulary

Preparation

-  0-5 minutes
- Print one worksheet for each student.
- Print the Teacher's Insights or keep them at hand as they contain the answers to the exercises.

Exercise Summary

Kickoff: speaking intro on Halloween and days to remember the dead

Vocabulary Focus: match Halloween words to definitions

Speaking I: use the new vocab & answer questions

Reading: read where Halloween comes from and answer questions

Grammar Focus: learn -ed and -ing adjectives (scared or scary?) and choose the right one

Speaking II: talk about feelings with -ed and -ing adjectives

Speaking III: match superstitions (if + will) and talk about them

Story Time: fun filler game: tell a spooky story together, one sentence each

Today's class is all about Halloween: where it comes from, how people celebrate it, and the vocabulary that goes with it. Along the way, students learn the difference between -ed and -ing adjectives (scared or scary?). For lower levels, go slowly through the vocabulary; for higher levels, let each question become a conversation.

Kickoff: Ask and answer the questions as a group.

① These questions introduce the topic and allow all students to arrive. Answers change a lot from country to country, which makes for good conversation. Some ideas are given after each question.

1. Do people celebrate Halloween in your country?
= it is big in the US, Canada, Ireland and the UK, and it has become popular in many other countries over the last few decades
2. What do you think of when you hear the word "Halloween"?
= e.g. pumpkins, costumes, sweets, witches, ghosts, skeletons, scary films
3. Have you ever dressed up for a party? What did you go as?
4. Do you enjoy scary films? What is the scariest film you have ever seen?
5. Is there a day in your country when people remember the dead?
= e.g. All Saints' Day (the 1st of November) in many countries, the Day of the Dead (Día de Muertos) in Mexico, the Qingming Festival in China, Obon in Japan
6. Do you think Halloween is more for children or for adults?

Halloween

Festivals & Holidays

Vocabulary Focus: Match the underlined words with the definitions.

① This activity introduces the vocabulary needed in the next speaking activity. Read each sentence together and let the students guess the meaning from the context first. Point out that sweets (UK) are candy in the US.

a little bit scary, in a fun way = spooky	clothes you wear to look like someone or something else = costume	the thin threads a spider makes = cobwebs	to cut a shape or a face into something = carve
going from door to door in a costume to ask for sweets = trick-or-treating	visited by ghosts = haunted	to put on a costume of someone or something = dress up as	a pumpkin with a face cut into it and a light inside = jack-o'-lantern

- We always carve a pumpkin on the 30th and put it in the window.
- My little sister wants to dress up as a witch this year.
- The kids went trick-or-treating and came home with a whole bag of sweets.
- Nobody lives in that old house anymore. People say it's haunted.
- Look at the jack-o'-lantern on their doorstep! It has a really big smile.
- I love the spooky music they play at the Halloween party.
- My costume took three hours to make, but it was worth it!
- The attic is full of dust and cobwebs. I'm not going up there!

Speaking I: Answer the questions using your new vocabulary.

① This activity gets students speaking with the new vocabulary. Encourage full answers, not just yes or no.

- Have you ever carved a pumpkin? Was it easy?
- What is the best costume you have ever seen?
- If you dressed up for Halloween this year, what would you dress up as?
- Did you ever go trick-or-treating as a child? Would you like to?
- Do you know a place that people say is haunted? Would you spend a night there?
- Do you prefer spooky decorations or cute ones?
- Would you put a jack-o'-lantern outside your home?
- Are you afraid of spiders and cobwebs?



Halloween

Festivals & Holidays

Reading:

Read the text and answer the questions.

① This is an informative text on the history of Halloween. You may choose to have the students read it out loud, to have them skim it and answer the questions before reading it in detail, or to read it to them as a joint reading and listening exercise.

Where does Halloween come from?

Halloween is celebrated every year on the 31st of October. Today, many people think of it as an American holiday, but its roots go back more than 2,000 years to Ireland, Britain and northern France.

The Celts, who lived there, celebrated a festival called Samhain (say "SOW-in") at the end of the harvest, when the long, dark winter began. They believed that on that night, the world of the living and the world of the dead came very close together, and that ghosts could walk the earth. People lit large bonfires and wore costumes, often made from animal skins. Many believe this was so that the spirits would not recognise them.

In the 8th century, the Church made the 1st of November a day to honour the saints. It was called All Saints' Day, or All Hallows' Day, and the evening before it became All Hallows' Eve. Over time, the name was shortened to Halloween.

In Ireland and Scotland, people carved faces into turnips and put candles inside them to scare away bad spirits. When millions of Irish people moved to the United States in the 1800s, they took their traditions with them. In America, pumpkins were bigger, softer and easier to find than turnips, so the jack-o'-lantern became the pumpkin we know today.

Trick-or-treating also has old roots. In Britain and Ireland, poor people and children went from door to door asking for food, and later for money. In return, they prayed for the dead, sang a song or told a joke. In the United States, trick-or-treating became popular in the middle of the 20th century, and today Americans spend more than ten billion dollars a year on Halloween costumes, sweets and decorations.

1. When is Halloween celebrated?
= every year on the 31st of October
2. Where do the roots of Halloween come from?
= from Samhain, a Celtic festival in Ireland, Britain and northern France, more than 2,000 years ago
3. What did the Celts believe happened on the night of Samhain?
= that the world of the living and the world of the dead came very close together, and that ghosts could walk the earth
4. Where does the name "Halloween" come from?
= from All Hallows' Eve, the evening before All Saints' Day (All Hallows' Day) on the 1st of November
5. Why did the jack-o'-lantern change from a turnip to a pumpkin?
= Irish people who moved to the United States found that pumpkins were bigger, softer and easier to find than turnips
6. What did people do in return when they went from door to door?
= they prayed for the dead, sang a song or told a joke

Halloween

Festivals & Holidays

Grammar Focus:

Read the box.

Then, circle the correct word.

① Students at every level mix up these pairs. The quick test: if it is how a person feels, use -ed; if it is the thing, person or situation that causes the feeling, use -ing. A person can be both: a boring person makes other people bored!

-ed or -ing?

We use **-ed** adjectives to say how a person **feels**: *I was terrified during the film.*

We use **-ing** adjectives for the thing, person or situation that **causes** the feeling: *The film was terrifying.*

Common pairs: bored / boring, excited / exciting, frightened / frightening, interested / interesting, surprised / surprising, terrified / terrifying, tired / tiring

Careful! **scared / scary** is a little different: *I was scared.* but *The film was scary.*

1. The kids were really (excited / exciting) about their costumes. = **excited**
2. That haunted house was absolutely (terrified / terrifying)! = **terrifying**
3. I was so (bored / boring) at the party that I went home at ten. = **bored**
4. It was (surprised / surprising) to see so many people dressed up as zombies. = **surprising**
5. My little brother was (frightened / frightening) by the skeleton in the garden. = **frightened**
6. Carving pumpkins is quite (tired / tiring), especially when there are ten of them! = **tiring**
7. Are you (interested / interesting) in the history of Halloween? = **interested**
8. The film wasn't (scared / scary) at all. I laughed the whole time! = **scary**

Speaking II:

Answer the questions using -ed and -ing adjectives.

① Listen out for the -ed and -ing adjectives and correct them gently. If a student says "I am boring", now is a good moment for a laugh and a reminder of the box!

1. What is the most frightening thing that has ever happened to you?
2. When did you last feel really excited about something?
3. What do you find boring? What do you find interesting?
4. Have you ever been terrified on a ride, on a plane or at a party?
5. What is the most surprising thing you have learnt today?

Speaking III:

Match the beginnings and endings of these superstitions.

Then, talk about them.

① These superstitions use the first conditional (if + present, will + verb), so this is a good moment to point it out. Fun facts to share: in the US and much of Europe a black cat is bad luck, but in the UK and Ireland it is often good luck! People say "knock on wood" in the US and "touch wood" in the UK.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| If a black cat crosses your path, | • | • you will have bad luck. |
| If you break a mirror, | • | • you will have seven years of bad luck. |
| If you open an umbrella indoors, | • | • you will bring bad luck into the house. |
| If you find a four-leaf clover, | • | • you will have good luck. |

Halloween

Festivals & Holidays

- If the palm of your hand itches, • [you will get some money soon.](#)
- If you knock on wood after you say something good, • [your good luck won't disappear.](#)
- If you say "Bloody Mary" three times in front of a mirror, • [a ghost will appear.](#)

1. Which of these superstitions do people believe in your country?
2. Do you know any other superstitions?
3. Are you superstitious? Do you have a lucky number or a lucky item of clothing?

Story Time: **Tell a spooky story together, one sentence each.**
Use one word from the box in your sentence.

① This is a fun filler game for the end of the class. It practises past tenses and the new vocabulary. Go round the group: each student adds one sentence to the story and crosses out the word they used. The story ends when all the words are gone, or when someone screams! With higher levels, ask the group to retell the whole story at the end.

Start: "It was a dark and stormy night, and I was alone in the house..."

candle	footsteps	attic	scream	full moon	old key
mirror	black cat	midnight	whisper	creaky door	fog

Extra Speaking: **Ask and answer the questions if you have extra time.**

1. Has Halloween taken the place of local traditions in your country? Is that a good or a bad thing?
2. Do you think Halloween has become too commercial?
3. Should children go trick-or-treating at strangers' houses?
4. Why do you think people enjoy being scared?