



Halloween

THE LEGEND OF THE Jack O Lantern

According to Irish folklore the whole legend of the jack-o-lantern began in the 1700's when a stingy¹ drunkard of an Irish blacksmith named Jack had the misfortune to run into the Devil in a pub, some say on Halloween night. Jack had too much to drink and was about to fall into the Devil's hands, but managed to trick² the Devil by offering his soul in exchange for one last drink. The Devil turned himself into a sixpence to pay the bartender, but Jack quickly pocketed him in his purse. Because Jack had a silver cross in his purse, the Devil could not change himself back. Jack would not let the Devil go until he promised not to claim his soul for ten years.

The Devil agreed and ten years later Jack came across the Devil while walking on a country road. The Devil wanted to collect, but Jack, thinking quickly, said "I'll go, but before I go, will you get me an apple from that tree?" The Devil, thinking he had nothing to lose, jumped on Jack's shoulders to obtain the apple. Jack pulled out his knife and carved a cross in the trunk of the tree. This left the Devil in the air, unable to obtain Jack or his soul. Jack made him promise to never again ask for his soul. Seeing no way out, the Devil agreed.

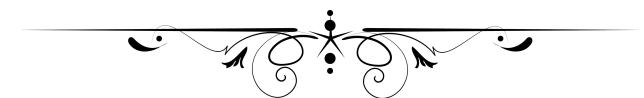
When Jack finally died years later, he was not admitted to Heaven, because of his life of drinking and being tightfisted³ and deceitful. When he went to apply for entrance to Hell, the Devil had to turn him away because he agreed never to take Jack's soul. "But where can I go?", asked Jack. "Back where you came from!", replied the Devil. The way back was windy and dark. Jack pleaded with the Devil to at least provide him a light to find his way. The Devil, as a final gesture, threw a live coal at Jack straight from the fire of Hell. To light his way and to keep it from blowing out in the wind, Jack put it in a turnip⁴ he was eating.

Ever since, Jack has been doomed to wander in darkness with his lantern until "Judgment Day." Jack of the lantern (Jack o'Lantern) became known as the symbol of a damned soul.

The Irish believed that evil spirits and ghosts left their graves to visit their earthly homes on Halloween. Villagers would leave candies and fruit at the door to appease these spirits. They dressed in scary costumes and carried Jack-O-Lanterns to scare the ghosts and spirits away.

When Irish immigrants came to America it was a bit hard to locate turnips so their custom of celebrating Halloween changed slightly. The Jack-O-Lantern was changed to a pumpkin which was readily available in America during that time of year.

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Overview

1. What type of document is it?
2. Who are the people in the scene?
3. Where is the situation taking place?
4. What is it about?

Focus

5. Describe Jack's personality.
6. How many times does he meet the Devil? For each encounter Explain what happens.
7. What is Jack's problem when he finally dies?
8. Explain why people decide to create lanterns from fruits.
9. Why has it changed into a pumpkin?