



Trick or Treat: A History of Halloween

Lisa Morton

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Trick or Treat provides a thorough history of this most misunderstood phenomenon. Offering a fascinating overview of how Halloween has spread around the globe, it asks how festivals as diverse as the Celtic Samhain, the British Guy Fawkes Day and the Catholic Holy Days of All Saints and All Souls could have blended to produce the modern Halloween. The holiday was reborn in the United States – where costuming and ‘trick or treat’ rituals became new customs – with parallels in the related, yet independent holidays of Central America, in particular Mexico’s Day of the Dead. The recent explosion in popularity of haunted attractions is discussed and we see also how Halloween’s popularity is rising in non-Western countries like Russia, Japan and China. Finally, Morton considers the impact of such events as 9/11 and the economic recession on the celebration as urban legends and costuming wax and wane.

Halloween’s influence on popular culture is examined via the literary works of Washington Irving and Ray Bradbury, films such as John Carpenter’s Halloween and Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas, and television series including Buffy the Vampire Slayer, The Simpsons and True Blood.

Examining Halloween in the context of its increasing worldwide popularity, and illustrated with over 40 images, Trick or Treat leads us on a journey from the spectacular to the macabre, making it a must for anyone looking beyond the mask to the deepest roots of this modern holiday.

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