EPISODE 145

Halloween in America

Full transcript · mini-story · vocabulary review

Hi, everybody! I am Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com. My mission is to help you speak English fluently.

In today's episode:

I'll be talking about one of the most celebrated holidays in the United States: **Halloween**.

After that, you'll practice your speaking with a new mini-story while enjoying my new Question & Answer story.

Very well. Let's get started!

Halloween is a holiday celebrated on the last day of October. I would say it's very popular because everybody's excited about it, especially children.

The word **Halloween** comes from an old English expression, "All Hallows' Eve," and it means the day before All Saints' Day.

Children of all ages really love Halloween because they can **dress up** in funny costumes and knock on their neighborhood doors, shouting "**Trick or Treat**!". The neighbors usually give them candy.

The meaning of the phrase "Trick or Treat" is interesting. In this context, "treat" means getting the candies, and "trick" means the consequence of not getting the sweets. It's like an innocent threat children make. Of course, kids get really excited when they knock on strangers' doors in their neighborhood.

Since Halloween originated as a celebration connected with evil spirits, the most common symbols are witches flying on broomsticks, ghosts, skeletons, black cats, etc. Black is one of the traditional Halloween colors.

Of course, pumpkins are also a Halloween symbol. I'm sure you've seen them in movies. People empty a pumpkin and put a candle inside to make a lamp.

How do you make a Halloween pumpkin?

The first step is hollowing out the pumpkin.

Then we use a keyhole saw to cut the opening.

When using a candle for illumination, you can cut the hole in the pumpkin's top.

For electric lights, make the hole in the bottom or side so you can hide the cord.

The Halloween pumpkin is called a **jack-o'-lantern**. It's common to see jack-o'-lanterns decorating doorsteps before and on Halloween.

The name comes from an Irish legend about a man named Jack. He was so ungenerous that when he died, he couldn't enter Heaven, but he couldn't go to Hell either because he had told jokes about the Devil. As a result, Jack had to walk and walk with a lantern until the Day of Judgment.

Here's what a typical family does at Halloween:

They decorate their home. Americans spend about 5 billion dollars every year.

They buy costumes. A costume is not cheap. It can cost $30 or more.

They buy plenty of candy, and of course, they eat it.

Kids go "trick or treating." In most towns, it's only allowed from 3 pm until 5 pm because it gets dark quickly.

Very well, now you know a bit more about this beautiful holiday. Maybe next time you'll carve your own Halloween pumpkin and celebrate Halloween just like an American!

Now, let's practice.

Mini-Story

Speaking Practice

Answer the questions aloud with short and quick responses. Repeat the Mini-Story several times to improve your speaking and listening.

My name's Jack, and I walk every night in the World of Spirits.

Are you, Jack?
Yes, I'm Jack.

Do you walk every day or every night?
Every night. I walk every night.

When do you walk?
At night. I walk at night in the World of Spirits.

Do you walk in the World of Elves?
No, no. I don't walk in the World of Elves. I walk in the World of Spirits.

What's your name?
Jack. My name's Jack.

Ok Jack, so, you walk in that World of Spirits on Tuesdays and Fridays, right?
No, no. I don't walk on Tuesdays and Fridays. I walk every night.

And where do you walk?
In the World of Spirits. I walk there.

When I died, I couldn't enter Heaven because I was very miserly.

Did you die?
Yes, I did. I died. I'm not alive.

Are you alive or dead?
Dead. I'm dead. I am a soul.

Could you enter Heaven?
No, I couldn't. I couldn't enter Heaven.

Who couldn't enter Heaven?
Me. Myself. I couldn't enter Heaven. I was very miserly.

Why couldn't you enter Heaven?
Because I was **miserly**, I liked having money, and I hated spending it.

Did you enter Heaven?
No, I didn't. I didn't enter Heaven because I was miserly.

Funnily enough, I couldn't enter Hell either because I had made some jokes about the Devil.

You couldn't enter Heaven, but could you enter Hell?
No, neither. I couldn't enter Hell either. I couldn't enter Heaven nor Hell.

Was it "funnily enough" that you couldn't enter Hell?
Yes, it was "**funnily enough**." It was strange or surprising; I couldn't go there.

Didn't you enter Hell because you had made some jokes about the Devil?
Yes. I didn't enter Hell because I had made some jokes about the Devil.

Had you made jokes about yourself?
No, no. I hadn't made jokes about myself. I had made jokes about the Devil.

Had you made stories about the Devil before you died?
Not stories. I had made jokes about the Devil before I died.

Why didn't you enter Hell?
Because I had made jokes about the Devil, that was the reason.

So, my fate is to wander with a lantern until the Day of Judgment.

Is your fate to sell lanterns?
No, no. That's not my **fate**. My fate is to **wander** with a lantern until the Day of Judgment.

Till when do you have to wander?
Till the Day of Judgment. I have to wander till the Day of Judgment.

Do you have to wander with a lantern?
Yes. I have to wander with a lantern.

What do you have to bring with you? A lantern? A torch?
A lantern. Not a torch. I have to bring with me a lantern.

Do you have to wander or run?
Wander. I don't have to run. I am not in a hurry. I have to wander. That's my fate.

And that's the end of the mini-story.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 Dress up
To wear special clothes or a costume.

02 Trick or treat
The phrase children shout at neighborhood doors on Halloween when asking for candy.

03 Treat
In 'trick or treat,' the candy or sweets the children receive.

04 Trick
In 'trick or treat,' the playful consequence threatened if no sweets are given.

05 Hollow out
To remove the inside of a pumpkin before turning it into a Halloween lantern.

06 Jack-o'-lantern
A Halloween pumpkin that has been hollowed out, cut with a face or design, and lit from inside.

07 Miserly
Unwilling to spend money; the mini-story explains it as liking to keep money and hating to spend it.

08 Wander
To walk around without hurrying; Jack's fate is to wander with a lantern.

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