Halloween

Topic
Halloween, superstitions

Aims
• To review vocabulary related to Halloween
• To practise reading skills
• To practise adjectives for describing clothes
• To practise speaking skills in a discussion
• To practise writing skills with short poems / stories

Age group
Teens

Level
A2 – B2

Time
60 +Minutes

Materials
Internet links: http://www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-halloween
http://www.scaryforkids.com/scary-stories/ - Series of scary Halloween stories online
http://www.dltk-holidays.com/halloween/halloween_songs.htm - Some great simple Halloween poems to use in class
http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/halloween/why.htm - Interesting page on Halloween customs in the UK
http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/category/topics/halloween -Lots of resources from our LearnEnglish Kids page with flashcards etc.
Introduction

Halloween is celebrated on 31st October and is becoming increasingly popular amongst teenagers across Europe. This lesson plan focuses on a series of activities designed to focus on different skills, all related to Halloween. The activities can be adapted, so choose the most suitable for your group, taking into account their language levels and interests.

Procedure

1. Origins of Festivals

Look at the history and origins of the festival in the US and UK and in your students’ country. There are lots of websites dedicated to this (see some of the suggestions above). Begin by reviewing / teaching some Halloween vocabulary (pumpkins, witches, trick or treating etc). Choose a text that is suitable for your students’ level – you could turn this into a webquest. Focus on two or three websites, and write some questions, which your students will need to answer by searching through them.

2. Customs quiz

Make a history and customs quiz for lower levels to avoid using a dense reading text. Write questions with three possible answers and give the answers at the end to confirm the information provided: What do you know about Halloween?

3. Halloween Challenge

Play a Halloween challenge game: An alien rings at the doorbell during your Halloween party. Can you explain what is going on? Get suggestions from the class. If students are very familiar with Halloween and have at least 2 years of English ask them to practise this as a dialogue with the alien asking questions: Why is everyone dressed in witch costumes? Why have you turned off all the lights?

4. Describing costumes

Describe the costumes/pictures: Support your language work with some weird and wonderful pictures from the net / magazines (or your own!) This is good with lower levels and younger learners who can practise basic adjectives and simple sentence structures. Find some colouring pictures for younger learners and do a colour dictation with the whole class: colour the cauldron brown, colour the pumpkin orange, colour the witch’s hair black.

5. Word games

Play word games: There are lots of fun activities which can be used to start a lesson on Halloween or as part of a series of activities.

- How many words can students make with the word HALLOWEEN? (wheel, when, now, lean, owl)

- Halloween associations: students in pairs think of as many words that can be associated with Halloween: October, ghosts, night, haunted houses, lanterns, black cats. Make this fun and collaborative by encouraging the use of dictionaries for higher levels. Keep it brief and class focussed for lower levels.

- Make or use internet word searches: Draw a grid, 8 to 10 squares across and down (for higher levels) or 5-6 squares across and down (for lower levels). Fill some squares with carefully chosen words associated with Halloween. Fill the
6. Beliefs discussion

Use this event to introduce discussion topics around the theme of beliefs. Give out a "Do you believe in ...?" questionnaire which students complete individually. Encourage them to give reasons for their answers to generate more discussion. Then in pairs/small groups or with the whole class they compare answers. Sensitivity may be needed with these discussions.

- Do you believe in ghosts?
- Do you believe in UFOs?
- Do you believe in past life?
- Do you believe in life after death?
- Do you believe in spirits?

Encourage students to give local/regional and national superstitions. For example superstitions and beliefs relating to such things as the moon (when to plant seeds, have a baby, bottle tomatoes depending on the moon). This gives good practice in the first conditional.

e.g. If you plant broccoli at full moon, it will feed you for a month

This can be linked with a vocabulary game or puzzle with a Halloween theme.

Focus on superstition and with even lower level groups give a worksheet with a couple of examples e.g. In my country there are some superstitions. You could use this as an opportunity to review first conditionals.

If you walk under a ladder in the street, it will bring you bad luck.
If you hang a horseshoe on your door, it will bring you good luck.

7. Witches and witchcraft

For higher levels look at a history of witches and witchcraft. Do people in their country believe in magic powers? Is there a history of witchcraft in their country? What about old wives tales? natural herbal remedies and cures? Is there any truth in that?

There is some interesting discussion work on intolerance and diversity in the history of witch hunting (in the UK and US). How being a bit different in a closed community can open you to suspicion and discrimination.

8. Halloween stories

Halloween stories, ghost tales, strange tales of the unexpected can be good for listening practice. You can find suitable stories through the websites above.

- Tell a short simple story (with a beginning, a middle and an end) while students order a list of events in the story. Students then use their list as prompts to retell the story orally round the class or to each other.
### Lesson plan

- Chop up a story in three parts. Three groups each read their bit. The paper is taken away and a member of each group tells their part to each other; or the whole class retell it in sections, deciding who had the beginning, middle or end.

- Take a simple scary tale, remove key verbs and put blanks. Tell the tale and the class fill in the blanks as they listen. Do this with a Halloween poem.

### 9. All Souls

All Souls/the cult of the dead: How important is November 1st in your host country? In some countries students receive presents from their “dead relatives” (Sicilians do this) or visit graves, have picnics in graveyards. Mexico celebrates the day of the dead. This topic could be taboo or very adult, so decide carefully if this is an appropriate area of discussion for the age groups you are teaching. Linked to this is the belief in spirits, ghosts and haunted houses.

### 10. Horror movies and literature

Are students interested in horror movies? What makes a good horror movie? Do they like being scared? What scares them the most? The supernatural was important in the 19th century gothic novel genre in Britain. Use an extract from Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein with higher level groups. If teachers wish you to give some literary background look at the gothic novel.

- Do a biography of Stephen King. Give this in 2 parts and students have to exchange their missing bits of biography by asking questions with Where / When/ What/ Why / Who?
- For lower levels and younger students do a short “Day in the Life of…” someone related to Halloween: Dracula, Frankenstein, a witch, Harry Potter etc. Prepare a text or develop a text with suggestions from the class. Students interview each other, with one student playing the famous character.

### 11. Poems

There are many simple poems (see the links) that are usable and higher levels enjoy performing Edgar Allen Poe’s ‘The Black Cat’. You could also look at some simple poems and then ask students to write their own versions for Halloween practising the vocabulary they have learnt – these could be decorated and displayed around the classroom.

**Contributed by**

Clare Lavery