

## The Scariest Day of the Year.

Posted by Peter on 31 October 2011



Some very scary Halloween pumpkins. Photo by [Pedro J Ferreira/flickr](#)

Today is 31 October, and it is the scariest day of the year. Do you know the verb “to scare”? If you scare someone, you frighten them, you make them afraid. So, “scary” means “frightening” and today is a special, scary sort of day, as I shall explain.

Today is Halloween. “Halloween” means “the evening of (that is, the day before) All Hallows Day”, and “All Hallows Day” is an old Christian festival which takes place on 1 November, when special prayers are said for people who have recently died. But Halloween is not a Christian festival. Its origin lies in pre-Christian Ireland. It was a festival to mark the end of the summer and the start of the cold days of winter. It was a time when the world of the spirits and the [fairies](#) and the [ghosts](#) touched our world, and special magical things might happen. And magical things are frightening. So Halloween is a special scary day!

Kevin and Joanne have invited all their friends to a Halloween party. They have put orange and black decorations in their sitting room. They have bought some pumpkins and [scraped](#) the flesh and the seeds out of them. They have cut scary faces on the pumpkins and put candles inside. The pumpkins now look like the picture which you can see on the website, or on your iPod screens. I am sure that you think that they are very frightening!

Of course, their friends will come to the party in [fancy dress](#). That means that they will all dress like evil witches, or like ghosts, or like spiders or other scary things. They will paint their faces, or wear [masks](#), to make themselves look even more scary. To add to the scary atmosphere, Kevin has borrowed a DVD of an old film called [Dracula](#). The film was made in 1931, and is about Count Dracula, who is a scary man who drinks human blood at breakfast time instead of coffee. Some of the guests at the party will come dressed as Count Dracula, with long teeth so that they can bite

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the necks of other guests and drink their blood. Joanne has made a special drink, made out of red wine and blackcurrant juice, so that the guests at the party can look as if they are drinking human blood even if they aren't!

Everyone will have great fun at the party. They will laugh at each other's fancy dress. They will turn the lights out and pretend to be ghosts. They will watch the Dracula film and pretend to be scared. The men will do what they always do at parties - they will drink beer and talk about football. And the women will do what they always do at parties - they will sit in the kitchen and discuss each other's husbands and boy-friends. (I find that bit really scary!) They will even find time to play some games, like [ducking for apples](#). This is a traditional game at this time of year. You get a large tub of water and float some apples on the top. Each guest has to kneel in front of the tub of water, with a blindfold so that they cannot see, and with their hands behind their backs, and try to get one of the apples out of the water with their teeth. Everyone will get very wet, and their special scary makeup will run.

Unfortunately, Kevin and Joanne have not invited me to their party. I shall have to stay at home and try to be scared by myself. During the evening, the doorbell will ring. I will open the door and see a group of rather small witches and ghosts standing outside. I will of course be very scared, until I see that they are actually some of the children who live nearby. They are "trick-or-treating" (or "guising" as people say in Scotland). They go from house to house asking for "treats" such as sweets or biscuits. If you don't give them any, they will do evil magic to hurt you. And if you do give them some sweets or biscuits, the witches and ghosts will shout "Thanks, mister" and run off to ring the doorbell next door.

Now you know all about the crazy festival called Halloween. I hope you have a really scary time tonight.

This is the text of the podcast at <http://www.listen-to-english.com/index.php?id=567>.