



PRELUDE

I would like to welcome my newest readers, who have had nothing but warm things to say about this publication. This week's issue is an attempt to deliver the high-quality excellence they—and my older readers—have come to expect. As you know, today is Halloween: the most interesting celebration of the year in my opinion, and one steeped in great and ancient traditions. How few of us actually know why we run about in costumes shouting "trick-or-treat" for armloads of candy! What follows is my attempt to shed light on these curious rituals, and to provide you with even more material for your next cocktail party (which, for you adults, may be tonight).

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

'Tis the night – the night
Of the grave's delight,
And the warlocks are at their play;
Ye think that without
The wild winds shout,
But no, it is they – it is they.
—Arthur Cleveland Coxe

"Men are like pumpkins. It seems like all the good ones are either taken or they've had everything scraped out of their heads with a spoon."
—Anonymous

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble...
By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.
—Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, IV.i.12

"If you're in a war, instead of throwing a hand grenade at the enemy, throw one of those small pumpkins. Maybe it'll make everyone think how stupid war is, and while they are thinking, you can throw a real grenade at them."
—Jack Handy

"An idea, like a ghost, must be spoken to a little before it will explain itself."
—Charles Dickens

4 WORDS

Memorize these by week's end and you shall quickly develop an enviable lexicon.

This week's theme: words on ghouls, ghosts, and other grisly things.

revenant (REV-eh-nah) *n, adj.*

1. one who returns after death or a lengthy absence
2. characteristic of a revenant; recurring

Ex. Every Hallows Eve these grounds are haunted by that revenant specter.

Etym. from the French *revenir*, "to return"

theophany (thee-AW-fan-ee) *n.*

1. the appearance of a deity in a visible form to a person

Ex. I just witnessed a theophany—Jesus himself came and spoke to me.

doppelganger

(DOP-el-GANG-er) *noun*

1. a ghostly counterpart of a living person
2. alter ego

Ex. Each full moon, a doppelganger follows in his steps, driving all traces of sanity from his brain.

Etym. German, meaning "double goer"

eldritch (EL-dritch) *adj.*

1. strange or unearthly
2. eerie

Ex. The eldritch screams froze his bones and sent a chill through his heart.

WELL I'LL BE!
THE ANSWER TO A
QUESTION YOU NEVER
ASKED

Why is a carved pumpkin called a "Jack-o'-Lantern"?

The reason carved pumpkins are called Jack-o'-Lanterns goes back to a well-worn story of an Irish farmer named Jack. Though the story has many variations, the basic elements remain the same through all the tellings.

Jack was known for being both extremely lazy and extremely clever. He used his wit to get out of hard work, and often spent his earnings at the local pub. He was neither good nor bad; he had no friends and no enemies, and he had not once performed a selfless act.

One night, while Jack was enjoying a drink at the local pub, the devil came to take his soul. Jack invited the devil to have a drink with him and, being stingy (and clever) said to the devil, "If you really are the devil, why don't you turn yourself into a shilling?" The devil, quick to show his boundless powers, agreed. Jack, rather than spend the shilling, placed it in his pocket (where he also kept a silver cross). The devil, powerless against such a potent symbol of God, was unable to transform himself. Jack, being as clever as he was, bargained with the devil. He would allow the devil to transform himself if he promised to never let Jack into Hell. The devil agreed.

When Jack died, he found himself before St. Peter and the Pearly Gates. (*continued on pg. 3, column 2*)

ETYMOLOGY 101

The origin of: mausoleum

A mausoleum is an elaborate building, often highly decorated, that houses one or more tombs. The most famous mausoleum on earth is the Taj Mahal, which was built between 1630 and 1653 for Arjumand (a.k.a. Mumtaz Mahal), wife of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. The word owes its origins to Mausolus, a Persian satrap (governor) who ruled the region of Caria (an area that is now in southwestern Turkey) in the 4th century B.C. Sometime before his death, Mausolus decided to immortalize himself by drawing up plans for his own tomb. After his death, Mausolus' wife Artemesia oversaw construction of the monument, which towered 135 feet above a marble base and sported 36 columns and statutes. During its time, Mausolus' tomb was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The Greeks called it the *mausōleion* after its ruler, and from that time onward, this name was associated with any grand and imposing burial site.

The origin of: jeepers creepers

This phrase was made popular by a line in a Louis Armstrong song ("jeepers, creepers, where'd ya get them peepers"), but what the heck does it *mean*? It is an example of what happens when people don't want to use an offensive word but still want to send a message—something known as a euphemism. "Jeepers creepers" is simply a euphemism for *Jesus Christ*, much like "heck" is a euphemism for *hell*. This phrase in particular is likely the result of Christianity's taboo on using the Lord's name in vain (see the 3rd Commandment). Other examples are "gosh" and "golly" for *God*, "jeez" for *Jesus*, and "zounds" for *God's wounds*.

The origin of: werewolf

This is the simplest of all. The word has hardly changed from the Old English *wer* "male person" + *wulf* "wolf." For some reason, females were never associated with wolf-transmogrification, but if one had been, she would have been referred to as a *wifwulf*. The transformation of a man into a wolf is called *lycanthropy*, from the Greek *lykos* "wolf" + *anthropos* "man."

Sources: etymonline.com, *The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories*.

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!
—Shakespeare, *Hamlet V.i.220*

Pixie, kobold, elf, and sprite,
All are on their rounds tonight;
In the wan moon's silver ray,
Thrives their helter-skelter play.
—Joel Benton

WELL I'LL BE!

THE ANSWERS TO MORE QUESTIONS YOU NEVER ASKED

Why do leaves change colors in the fall?

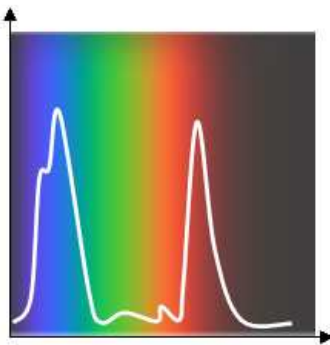
To fully understand the answer to this question, you have to know a bit of science. Plants get their energy from a process known as *photosynthesis*. In this process, molecules within a plant's leaves (called *chlorophylls*) capture light from the sun and combine it with water (drawn up through the plant's roots) and carbon dioxide (from the air) to produce oxygen and glucose (sugar). The oxygen is given off as a waste product and the glucose is transferred from the leaf to the plant, where it is stored until needed.

Leaves get their green color from the tiny chlorophyll molecules, which are contained inside larger *chloroplasts* (about 500,000 per square millimeter). The reason chlorophylls appear green is because they absorb both violet-blue and red light, but not green light. The colors you see appear as such because they *reflect* certain wavelengths of light, not because they absorb them. This is why white—which reflects all light—isn't really a color, while black—which absorbs all light—is really all the colors put together.

While chlorophyll is the major player in photosynthesis and does most of the light-absorption, there are other *photosynthetic pigments* in the leaf which aren't visible most of the year; they are "overpowered" by the more numerous chlorophyll pigments. When the chlorophylls die off in the fall, these other pigments start to show through: carotene (found in carrots) gives leaves an orange color, xanthophyll (found in bananas) gives leaves a yellow color, and anthocyanin (found in apples, cherries, and cranberries) gives leaves a reddish or purplish color. Each pigment captures light more efficiently at different wavelengths, so by having several pigments, a leaf can absorb the most possible light from the sun.

What causes the chlorophylls to die in the fall? As the days grow shorter and the supply of light and water diminishes, the plant's biological clock starts ticking, and it prepares to hibernate for the winter. As the plant begins its hibernation process, *abscission layers* at the base of each leaf begin to swell. This swelling cuts off the "veins" between the leaf and the plant, trapping sugars in the leaf and cutting off water flow to the chlorophylls. The chlorophylls, deprived of water, die off. The abscission layer swells until the leaf is entirely cut off from the plant; the leaf either falls from its own weight or is blown by the wind.

Sources: www.na.fs.fed.us, sciencemadesimple.com, *Biology, 4th Ed.* (Raven & Johnson, 1996)



Spectrogram showing the absorption levels of chlorophyll at violet-blue and red wavelengths

(continued from page 2) St. Peter would not admit Jack, for Jack had not performed a single selfless act in all his life. Crestfallen, Jack made his way to the gates of Hell. The devil, with a terrible grin, reminded Jack of his promise and refused him entry. "But where shall I go? How shall I see in the darkness?" cried Jack. The devil, in reprisal for Jack's trickery, tossed him a coal. "Let this light your way as you forever wander the earth in search of a final resting place," he said.

Jack placed the coal in a hollowed-out turnip and trudged off into the darkness, and ever since that day he has wandered the earth as a homeless spirit. His native people called him "Jack of the lantern." The name was shortened to "Jack-o'-the-lantern" and, finally, "Jack-o'-Lantern."

The Celtic people originally carved images into hollowed-out turnips and beets and placed them outside to scare away wandering Jack and other spirits. When this practice was brought to America, the pumpkin, which is native to the western hemisphere, was adopted as a more suitable "lantern."

Sources: jackolantern.com, americancatholic.org, wikipedia.org.

TRIVIAL TIDBIT

Baseball season wrapped up just last week, with the Chicago White Sox clinching their first World Series title in 88 years—a longer curse than that suffered by the Red Sox (who, before last fall, hadn't clinched a title since 1918). It wasn't a very exciting series, but it got me thinking: why do we call the baseball championship the *World Series* if it only involves teams from North America?

A quick search yielded a common myth and a repudiation. The myth is that the Series was named after the *New York World* newspaper, which allegedly sponsored the series at its birth. The truth is that the Series is so named because the winner is considered the world's champion. "World Series" is therefore a shortened form of "world's championship series."

I can only speculate on why this Americentric appellation made sense in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but it might have had to do with baseball's limited popularity outside of the U.S. at the time.

QUICK FACTS

✦ The first World Series in 1903 was won by the Boston Red Sox, who bested the Pittsburg Pirates 5 games to 3.

✦ Of the 101 World Series played so far, 19 have been sweeps (won 4 games to 0) and 35 have gone to a game 7.

✦ The Yankees have the most World Series titles at 26.

Source: snopes.com

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

OCTOBER 31, 1517: Martin Luther nails his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The theses, whose formal title is *The Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, challenged the views of the Catholic Church on the authority of the pope and on the nature of penance and indulgences.

To understand an indulgence, one must first understand how the church treated sins. In Luther's day, when a man committed a mortal or venial sin, he did penance and asked forgiveness for his wrongs, typically by confessing to a priest. While the sin was forgiven, it was not completely "erased," since a punishment (called a *temporal* punishment) was still due to God. To erase this sin, one had two options: die and go to purgatory—where the soul would be purged of the temporal punishment—or get an indulgence from the church. An indulgence was typically granted to an individual who did certain acts, such as praying; however, certain unscrupulous men of the cloth decided to sell them to finance their grand schemes. Among these men was Johann Tetzel, a Dominican priest who sold indulgences to finance the construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Luther's theses provided the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation, which resulted in the creation of Lutheran and Anabaptist "subdivisions" within the Catholic church.

Source: wikipedia.org



*An indulgence granted by Johann Tetzel in 1517.
It reads: "By the authority of all the saints, and in mercy
towards you, I absolve you from all sins and misdeeds
and remit all punishments for ten days."*

THE ORIGINS OF... HALLOWEEN

Like many other holidays celebrated today, Halloween has its roots in ancient pagan traditions. Halloween got its start thousands of years ago in the Celtic regions of Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern Europe. Back then, when life was short and brutish, people dreaded the coming of winter, for it meant less sunlight and food. On the Celtic calendar, the new year began November 1, for this was the end of summer and the beginning of a period often associated with human death. The Celts believed that on the eve of winter, the lines between the spirit world and the real world were blurred, and ghosts and spirits of the dead came to possess living spirits and wreak havoc. To discourage the spirits from possessing them, the living would extinguish the hearth fires in their homes to make them cold and uninviting. They would also dress up in costumes, typically of animal skins and masks, in order to fool wandering spirits. The Celts also believed the presence of spirits made it easier for the Druids to make predictions about the future.

The Celts built great bonfires and made sacrifices to their deities, in the hope that they would be blessed throughout the coming months. At the end of the festival, the Celts relit their hearth fires from the sacred bonfire to help protect them from the winter chill.

In the 8th century, Pope Gregory III moved All Saint's Day—a day to honor saints and martyrs—to November 1. The day was known as "All Hallows Day," from the idea that the souls of saints were "hallowed," or holy. Consequently, the evening prior to this day became known as All Hallows Eve. In the 11th century, the church added another festival to its calendar to honor *all* dead souls: All Souls' Day, which is celebrated November 2. Together, the events of October 31 to November 2 are known as *Hallowmas*.

The name Halloween comes from a Scottish shortening of *All hallow-even* (eve of all saints); it was eventually shortened to *hallowe'en* and then combined in the 18th century to form the word we use today.

The practice of trick-or-treating is well over a thousand years old. It is descended from an old English tradition called *souling*, in which the poor went from door to door asking for "soul cakes," which were square hunks of bread filled with currants. In return for a soul cake, the beggars would promise to say a prayer for the donor's dead relatives, to ease their passage into heaven. Souling was encouraged by the church, which preferred it to the old tradition of leaving out food and wine to appease wandering spirits. To this day, children in some parts of Scotland are required to perform certain tricks—often just a simple poem or riddle—in order to receive treats. In America, trick-or-treating has mostly become a goody-grab for kids, who don't need to do any "tricks" at all to get their candy.

Halloween was brought to America by Irish and northern European immigrants. Until the mid-19th century, it was celebrated mainly by Catholics, who made up a small portion of the population. An influx of Irish immigrants in the 1840s brought many traditions, including the use of Jack-o'-lanterns, and helped popularize Halloween. By the latter half of the 19th century, the day became widely celebrated,

often as a social event including seasonal foods, festive costumes, and games. Today, Halloween attracts an older crowd, which typically sees it as another excuse to imbibe.

HALLOWEEN TIDBITS

✦ Orange and black are the official colors of Halloween because the former is associated with fall and the harvest, while the latter is associated with darkness and death.

✦ Today, Halloween is a \$7 billion event, making it the second most commercially successful holiday of the year.

✦ More candy is sold for Halloween than any other holiday. In fact, 25% of all candy sold each year is purchased between September 15 and November 10.

✦ Costume sales totaled \$1.5 billion in 2004; decorations and other paraphernalia totaled \$2.5 billion.

✦ Mexico has its own version of Halloween, called *Día de los Muertos*, or "Day of the Dead." Between November 1 and 2, Mexicans celebrate by placing flowers and *ofrendas* (offerings) on the graves of their dead ancestors. In contrast to Hallowmas, this is a lighter, happier celebration that honors (rather than fears) the dead.

Sources: historychannel.com,
wikipedia.org, Halloween-website.com

LITERARY GENIUS

What could be more fitting for All Hallows Eve than a story about a headless ghost? Everyone should be familiar with Washington Irving's "Headless Horseman," which was popularized by a Disney short in 1949 and has undoubtedly been told at bedtime to countless frightened youngsters. The story, first published in 1819, tells the story of Ichabod Crane, a priggish schoolmaster who fails in his attempt to woo a lovely young woman at a town gathering. On his way back from the party, Ichabod is chased by the Galloping Hessian of the Hollow, a Hessian soldier who lost his head in "some nameless battle" of the American Revolution. What follows is an all too-short excerpt from this timeless ghost tale.



FROM *THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW*

by Washington Irving

IT WAS THE very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crest-fallen, pursued his travel homewards, along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was dismal as himself. Far below him, the Tappan Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop, riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight, he could even hear the barking of the watch dog from the opposite shore of the Hudson; but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. Now and then, too, the long-drawn crowing of a cock, accidentally awakened, would sound far, far off from some farmhouse away among the hills—but it was like a dreaming sound in his ear. No signs of life occurred near him, but occasionally the melancholy chirp of a cricket, or perhaps the guttural twang of a bull-frog, from a neighboring marsh, as if sleeping uncomfortably, and turning suddenly in his bed.

All the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon, now came crowding upon his recollection. The night grew darker and darker; the stars seemed to sink deeper in the sky, and driving clouds occasionally hid them from his sight. He had never felt so lonely and dismal. He was, moreover, approaching the very place where many of the scenes of the ghost stories had been laid. In the centre of the road stood an enormous tulip-tree, which towered like a giant above all the other trees of the neighborhood, and formed a kind of landmark. Its limbs were gnarled, and fantastic, large enough to form trunks for ordinary trees, twisting down almost to the earth, and rising again into the air...

About two hundred yards from the tree a small brook crossed the road, and ran into a marshy and thickly-wooded glen, known by the name of Wiley's swamp. A few rough logs, laid side by side, served for a bridge over this stream. On that side of the road where the brook entered the wood, a group of oaks and chestnuts, matted thick with wild grapevines, threw a cavernous gloom over it. To pass this bridge was the severest trial...

As he approached the stream his heart began to thump; he summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge; but instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral movement, and ran broadside against the fence. Ichabod, whose fears increased with the delay, jerked the reins on the other side, and kicked lustily with the contrary foot: it was all in vain; his steed started, it is true, but it was only to plunge to the opposite side of the road into a thicket of brambles and alder bushes. The schoolmaster now bestowed both whip and heel upon the starveling ribs of old Gunpowder, who dashed forward, snuffling and snorting, but came to a stand just by the bridge, with a suddenness that had nearly sent his rider sprawling over his head. Just at this moment a plashy tramp by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen, black and towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveller.

The hair of the affrighted pedagogue rose upon his head with terror. What was to be done? To turn and fly was now too late; and besides, what chance was there of escaping ghost or goblin, if such it was, which could ride upon the wings of the wind? Summoning up, therefore, a show of courage, he demanded in stammering

accents—"Who are you?" He received no reply. He repeated his demand in a still more agitated voice. Still there was no answer. Once more he cudgelled the sides of the inflexible Gunpowder, and, shutting his eyes, broke forth with involuntary fervor into a psalm tune. Just then the shadowy object of alarm put itself in motion, and, with a scramble and a bound, stood at once in the middle of the road. Though the night was dark and dismal, yet the form of the unknown might now in some degree be ascertained. He appeared to be a horseman of large dimensions, and mounted on a black horse of powerful frame. He made no offer of molestation or sociability, but kept aloof on one side of the road, jogging along on the blind side of old Gunpowder, who had now got over his fright and waywardness.

Ichabod, who had no relish for this strange midnight companion, and bethought himself of the adventure of Brom Bones with the Galloping Hessian, now quickened his steed, in hopes of leaving him behind. The stranger, however, quickened his horse to an equal pace. Ichabod pulled up, and fell into a walk, thinking to lag behind—the other did the same. His heart began to sink within him; he endeavored to resume his psalm tune, but his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not utter a stave. There was something in the moody and dogged silence of this pertinacious companion, that was mysterious and appalling. It was soon fearfully accounted for. On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow-traveller in relief against the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck, on perceiving that he was headless!—but his horror was still more increased, on observing that the head, which should have rested on his shoulders, was carried before him on the pommel of the saddle; his terror rose to desperation; he rained a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder; hoping, by a sudden movement, to give his companion the slip—but the spectre started full jump with him. Away then they dashed, through thick and thin; stones flying, and sparks flashing at every bound. Ichabod's flimsy garments fluttered in the air, as he stretched his long lanky body away over his horse's head, in the eagerness of his flight...

An opening in the trees now cheered him with the hopes that the church bridge was at hand. The wavering reflection of a silver star in the bosom of the brook told him that he was not mistaken. He saw the walls of the church dimly glaring under the trees beyond. He recollected the place where Brom Bones's ghostly competitor had disappeared. "If I can but reach that bridge," thought Ichabod, "I am safe." Just then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind him; he even fancied that he felt his hot breath. Another convulsive kick in the ribs, and old Gunpowder sprang upon the bridge; he thundered over the resounding planks; he gained the opposite side; and now Ichabod cast a look behind to see if his pursuer should vanish, according to rule, in a flash of fire and brimstone. Just then he saw the goblin rising in his stirrups, and in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash—he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider, passed by like a whirlwind.

The next morning the old horse was found without his saddle, and with the bridle under his feet, soberly cropping the grass at his master's gate. Ichabod did not make his appearance at breakfast—dinner-hour came, but no Ichabod... An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt; the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

The brook was searched, but the body of the school-master was not to be discovered...

The old country wives...maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means; and it is a favorite story often told about the neighborhood round the winter evening fire. The bridge became more than ever an object of superstitious awe, and that may be the reason why the road has been altered of late years, so as to approach the church by the border of the mill-pond. The school-house being deserted, soon fell to decay, and was reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate pedagogue; and the ploughboy, loitering homeward of a still summer evening, has often fancied his voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy psalm tune among the tranquil solitudes of Sleepy Hollow.

