

HALLOW-READ AROUND THE WORLD



CHALLENGE DESCRIPTION

Spooky season is upon us! In the U.S., Halloween is a holiday full of merrymaking, magic, and mischief. Many cultures celebrate life and death through rituals and celebrations with their communities. Learn about the origins and practices of various Halloween-like traditions around the world. Read all month long and complete activities to earn badges.

CHALLENGE STRUCTURE

- 1 Registration Badge
- 1 Completion Badge
- 10 Logging Badges (Minutes)
- 10 Activity Badges

ACTIVITY BADGES

Activity Badge Title:

Awuru Odo, Nigeria

Badge Description

The Awuru Odo Festival is celebrated by the Northern Igbo people in Nigeria. It is believed that every two years, the dead return to earth to spend six months with the living, usually sometime between September and April. Spirits are welcomed with feasts and brought back into their family's homes. To honor the spirits returning, traditionally the men prepare shrines and create masks, while women prepare the feast. To celebrate, there are cleansing rituals, parades, and performances.

Activities

- At the end of the festival, there is an Odo masquerade or performance to send off the spirits. Actors will reenact the story of their visit - both the excitement of being reunited and the sadness of their departure. Write a short story about someone who has visited you and what you loved and missed about the experience. *(text box)*
- Music is very important to the Odo festival. It's also known as "Oblienu," which means "that which lies above." People will play xylophones, drums, and rattles during the performance and festivities. Check out the instruments used and listen to traditional music from Igbo masquerades here.
 - [Igbo Masquerade Music](#)

Activity Badge Title:

Day of Dracula, Romania

Badge Description

Vlad the Impaler, a 14th century Wallachian (present-day Romania) ruler, was the inspiration for Bram Stoker's infamous novel and character "Dracula." Each year, visitors travel to Transylvania to celebrate Halloween and explore the castle featured in Stoker's novel. On Saint Andrew's Night on November 30, Romanians believe vampires and "strigoi" (the undead) come out to fight and dance. They place garlic near windows and doors for protection during this time.

Activities

- Check out these vampire-inspired spooky reads for all ages!
 - **Kids**
 - "I Love My Fangs!" by Kelly Leigh Miller

- “Vampire Island” by Adele Griffin
 - “Bunnicula” by James Howe & Deborah Howe
 - **Teens**
 - “Vampires Never Get Old” by Natalie C. Parker and Zoraida Córdova
 - “The Fell of Dark” by Caleb Roehrig
 - “Slayer” by Kiersten White
 - **Adults**
 - “Dracula” by Bram Stoker
 - “The Southern Book Club’s Guide to Slaying Vampires” by Grady Hendrix
 - “Salem’s Lot” by Stephen King
- Vampires are traditionally immortal, meaning they live forever. If you had the power to live forever, would you? Why or why not? *(text box)*

Activity Badge Title:

Día de los Muertos, Mexico

Badge Description

Día de los Muertos, meaning “Day of the Dead,” originated in Mexico and is celebrated November 1-2. It’s a chance to honor the departed so that families can be reunited with their ancestors. Altars are created with offerings (ofrendas) of food, skull decorations are made from sugar or clay (calaveras), and marigolds (cempasúchiles) adorn the graves of those who’ve passed.

Activities

- Día de los Muertos celebrations are full of vibrant, colorful costumes and decorations. Check out these photos of the festival here!
 - [National Geographic: Dia de los Muertos](#)
- Make pan de muerto, or “bread of the dead.” It’s a traditional Mexican sweet bread, sometimes flavored with orange flower water or orange zest. Pan de muerto is offered for the dead to absorb its essence after their journey back to Earth.
- Ofrendas are offerings left for ancestors, usually of things that the person enjoyed while they were alive. What are three objects that would symbolize what you most enjoy in your life? *(text box)*

Activity Badge Title:

Gai Jatra, Nepal

Badge Description

Gai Jatra is a joyous festival, usually observed in late summer during the monsoon season. It began in the 17th century during the Malla dynasty, when the queen was grieving the loss of her son. The king offered to reward anyone who could make his wife feel better. Nepalese people attempted to console the queen until she laughed and smiled, and since then, Gai Jatra has been a time to celebrate and laugh for families who've lost loved ones. Cows, considered sacred by Hindus, are said to help the departed reach the other side. During the festival, they are marched onto the streets in a procession with music, singing, food, comedy, elaborate costumes, and face paint.

Activities

- Laughter is often the best medicine! What are 3 things that make you laugh or bring a smile to your face? *(text box)*
- Try some traditional Nepalese foods! Popular festival foods include momo (dumplings), sel roti (sweet rice bread), thukpa (noodle soup), and dal bhat (lentils and rice). Prepare to feast and celebrate!
- This festival marks the end of monsoon season and the beginning of harvest season. Endings can also be wonderful beginnings! Write about something that has ended for you, but has also led to the beginning of something else. *(text box)*

Activity Badge Title:

Pchum Ben, Cambodia

Badge Description

Pchum Ben is celebrated during the tenth month of the Khmer calendar, and begins a 15-day festival to honor the cycle of life. Traditionally, it is a time when preta, or "hungry ghosts," walk freely, while living relatives make food offerings so they can begin a peaceful journey to the afterlife. It is a moment to honor ancestors from seven generations, express grief and hope, and

pass on the good deeds of the living to the dead. It is one of the most important holidays in Cambodia.

Activities

- Cambodians view their parents as special gods, and during Pchum Ben, they prepare food for them. Do something special for someone you care about to show them how much they mean to you! Make food, write a letter, or simply tell them how much you appreciate them.
- Pchum means “to gather together” and ben means “a ball of food.” Make bay bens! This is a popular dish to share during the festival. Bay bens are balls of sticky rice cooked in coconut milk.
- Read more about the history and rituals of Pchum Ben here.
 - [How to Celebrate Pchum Ben](#)

Activity Badge Title:

Pitru Paksha, India

Badge Description

In ancient times, people honored the Indian God of Death, Yama, who was known to hold onto souls and trap them. During Pitru Paksha, it is believed that souls can return to Earth, and so people offer prayers, water, and food to their ancestors. It occurs during a 16-lunar day period in the Hindu calendar. There are a variety of dishes prepared, such as kheer (an Indian sweet with sugar, milk, and rice,) lentils, spring beans, and pumpkins. These offerings are made to help those who've passed continue on to Brahmaloaka, or heaven.

Activities

- Help those less fortunate. It's believed that during Pitru Paksha, feeding and caring for anyone in need helps bring peace to those who've passed. Volunteer or donate to a community in need or an organization you'd like to support.
- Express gratitude to those who came before you! Write a letter to a person, group of people, or even an animal. Tell them why you're grateful to them and how they have made your life better.

Activity Badge Title:

Obon Festival, Japan

Badge Description

Obon Festival, or “Festival of Souls,” is celebrated in Japan to honor one’s ancestors. It occurs during the seventh month of the year at the end of Obon, an annual Buddhist tradition where departed souls return to visit family. Festivities include lighting bonfires, lanterns, traditional dancing, and food offerings. In Kyoto, five bonfires are lit in surrounding mountains to bid farewell to spirits who are returning home. The bonfires form Japanese characters on the mountains: Daimonji (large, great), Myoho (excellent/unusual law), Fungata (shape of boat), Toriigata (shape of bird), and Hidari Daimonji (large).

Activities

- Manto (ten thousand lights) and Sento (one thousand lights) are memorial ceremonies. Lanterns are hung to guide spirits back home. Create your own lantern! Follow the instructions below.
 - [Obon Festival - Paper Lantern](#)
- Bon Odori is a traditional Obon dance to welcome the spirits of the dead. Each region has a local dance and unique music. Learn about the dance here!
 - [Japanese Bon Odori Dance](#)
- It is traditional to leave food offerings for ancestors like fruit and vegetables. Try a traditional recipe! Street foods like okonomiyaki (savory pancakes), takoyaki (octopus), and yakitori (chicken skewers) are popular. For something sweet, try uji-kintoki (sweetened shaved ice) or dango (sweet dumplings.)

Activity Badge Title:

Samhain Festival, Ireland and Scotland

Badge Description

Samhain is a Celtic festival that began 2,000 years ago, with origins in Ireland and Scotland. It is celebrated October 31 to November 1, and led to the modern-day celebration of Halloween. Samhain marks the transition between summer and winter, where it is believed the veil between the living and dead is the thinnest. Traditionally, the living would summon their deceased ancestors, leave offerings outside villages for sidhs (fairies), and hide from evil spirits

by wearing masks and costumes. Samghanagans, or bonfires, are fire festival celebrations meant to protect families from fairies and witches. Today, festivities include costume parades, fire-dancing, drumming, and acrobatics.

Activities

- Dress up and explore a different side of yourself! Originally, people wore costumes to disguise themselves from spirits. Nowadays, people celebrate by wearing costumes for fun festivities.
- To protect themselves from witches and fairies, people used to carry lit candles in carved turnips, which later led to the tradition of carving pumpkins. Create your own jack o' lantern! If you can't use a real pumpkin, create one out of paper instead. Check out the instructions below.
 - [Paper Jack O' Lantern Craft](#)
- Go on a nature walk or a walk in your neighborhood. Appreciate the nature around you and the cycles of life that are always happening.

Activity Badge Title:

Walpurgis Night (Walpurgisnacht), Germany

Badge Description

Walpurgis Night is a European and Scandinavian festival with Celtic and Germanic origins. Walpurgisnacht is held on April 30, to commemorate the gathering of witches as they fly on brooms to Brocken, the highest peak in the Harz Mountains. It celebrates the end of a long winter and the coming of spring. In villages and towns, people make noise to scare the witches away by banging pots, chatting, and making music. The legend of Walpurgisnacht can be found in the play "Faust" by the German poet Goethe. Today's festivities include costume parades, bonfires, music, comedy, performances, foods, and crafts.

Activities

- Traditionally, people hang up sprigs of foliage as protection during Walpurgisnacht. Create your own wreath or garland to hang with paper, fallen leaves, stems, branches, or other craft supplies you may have!

- Try some traditional German food! During Walpurgisnacht, people will leave offerings of ankenschnitt (bread with butter and honey). Eintopf (stew), bratwurst (sausage), flammkuchen (pizza flatbread), or brezeln (pretzels) are all great dishes to try.

Activity Badge Title:

Yulanpen, China

Badge Description

Yulanpen, or “Hungry Ghost,” festival is a traditional Buddhist and Taoist celebration. It occurs during the seventh month of the lunar year, around the end of August or early September. It’s a time to help restless spirits find peace and distract troublesome spirits with paper money, food, and entertainment. Flags and bright lamps are placed throughout neighborhoods to guide ghosts to the festival. Offerings are made intentionally outside of the home, so as not to invite spirits inside. The evening before the festival, there is Fangshuideng, or “Release of the Water Lanterns,” where paper boats and lanterns are sent downstream to light a pathway for wandering spirits.

Activities

- As part of the festival, people often burn fake money, clothes, and small paper sculptures of things from the human world so the ghosts can share in the experiences of the living. What is one object you think would be important to share from your life? *(text box)*
- Traditionally, the color red should not be worn during this time, as it is believed to attract ghosts. Why do you think the color red is so significant? Brainstorm ideas here! *(text box)*
- During Yulanpen, it’s important to offer plates of food to nourish ancestors, such as uncooked rice, peanuts, raw noodles, fruit, and meat. What types of food would you offer your ancestors? *(text box)*