

One day, Pierre was sitting at home watching television when he heard a knock at the door. He was not expecting anyone and was startled when he opened the door. There was a tiny figure covered in a white sheet. "Trick or treat, trick or treat, give me something good to eat" the white sheet barked at him. "Trick or treat", repeated Pierre, puzzled. "Well? Don't you know," asked the strange little figure, "it's Halloween?"



PIERRE: Halloween?
 BOY: Hey, are you from Mars or *are you pulling my leg?*
 PIERRE: Neither, but *what's this Halloween all about?*
 BOY: You are supposed to give us candy or something when kids knock on your door and say "trick or treat".
 PIERRE: Oh, O. K. I've got this Hershey bar.
 BOY: Thanks, bye now.

That evening, Pierre wanted to know more about Halloween and other American holidays and *Michael filled him in.*

MICHAEL: Well, it's an old Celtic festival. It's always the last day in October and it symbolizes the coming of winter, which the Celts associated with evil spirits. Halloween customs were brought to America by Irish immigrants in the 19th century.
 PIERRE: What are those customs?
 MICHAEL: First of all, the jack-o'-lantern. That's a pumpkin which you hollow out, then you cut holes for the mouth, the nose, and the eyes. Then you put a candle inside and place it in the window to frighten away the evil spirits.
 The second custom is for children to dress up in scary costumes, as ghosts or skeletons and then they go trick-or-treating. If an adult refuses to give them a treat, for instance, candy or fruit, the *children can play a trick on them.*
 PIERRE: What kind of a trick?
 MICHAEL: Oh, they have a great deal of imagination. For example they can smear toothpaste or shaving cream all over your windows or wrap your bushes and trees in toilet paper.
 PIERRE: Any other American holiday I should be ready for?
 MICHAEL: Yes, in a few weeks, at the end of November, there is Thanksgiving. It is in honor of the first Pilgrims who came to America on the Mayflower in 1620. After surviving the first harsh winter *they came across the Algonquin Indians*, who taught them how to hunt and grow food and in general how to endure in the new environment. They had a good harvest and invited the Indians to a Thanksgiving feast.
 PIERRE: That's a nice holiday. How is it celebrated?
 MICHAEL: Well, it's a family holiday, so families get together and have a traditional dinner of turkey with cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie for dessert.
 PIERRE: What about Christmas? I suppose it's the same all over the world.
 MICHAEL: Yeah, you are right, except that the American Santa Claus wears pants and in California you are more likely to see him in a bathing suit.