

HOLIDAYS AND TRADITIONS



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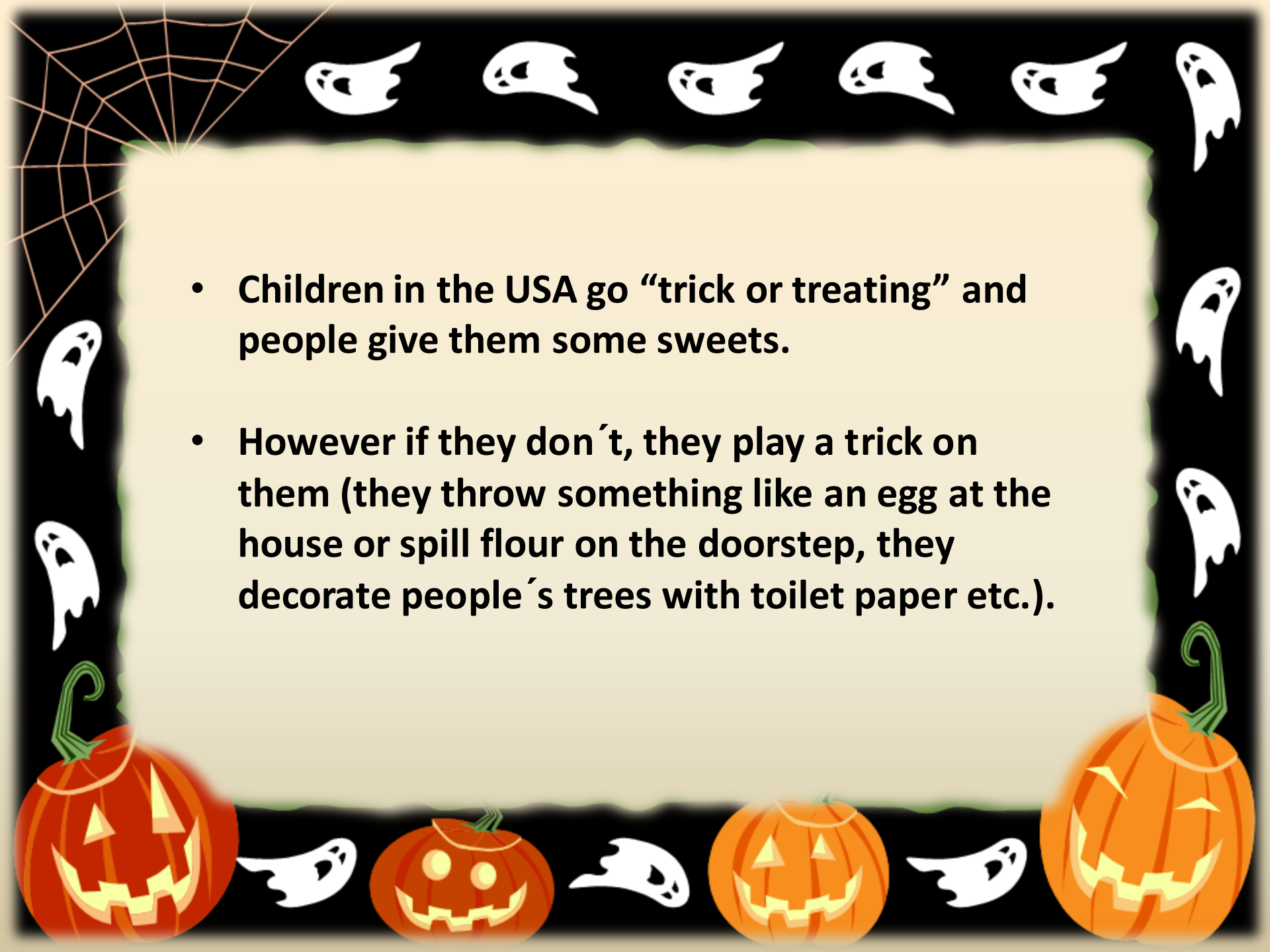


Halloween



- It takes place on the 31st of October.
- It is more important festival in the States than in Britain.
- It is particularly connected with witches and ghosts. In November, winter is near, and hundreds of years ago people believed that bad spirits, like ghosts, come in the winter. They wanted the bad spirits to go away, so they made fires outside and used a big pumpkin to make a Jack o'lantern. They cut horrible faces in the pumpkin and put a candle inside.
- Today people dress up in costumes at parties and play games for fun.



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- Children in the USA go “trick or treating” and people give them some sweets.
 - However if they don’t, they play a trick on them (they throw something like an egg at the house or spill flour on the doorstep, they decorate people’s trees with toilet paper etc.).





Christmas

- There are great traditions – such as carol singing, Christmas decorations and Christmas presents under the tree.

24th December (Christmas Eve) is time for visiting friends and relatives, many people decorate Christmas tree this day.

- Both in the USA and the UK 24th December is not a public holiday. Many people go to work, however many workplaces hold Christmas parties, most schools are closed.
- People may attend church service, often midnight mass.



- In the evening children hang stockings on the fireplace or the end of their bed. They believe that father Christmas (in the UK) or Santa Claus (in the USA) will visit their house during the night by climbing down the chimney and if he thinks that the children have been well behaved the whole year, fills the stockings with presents and sweets.
- People usually leave biscuits, milk or something stronger for him to keep him warm in cold winter weather. Santa Claus lives at the North Pole and he travels in a sleigh pulled by reindeer.



Names of Santa's Reindeer:

Dasher

Dancer

Prancer

Vixen

Comet

Cupid

Donner

Blitzen

Rudolph The Red-nosed Reindeer



- **25th December** (Christmas Day) – in the morning children find their presents in stockings and people open their presents under the Christmas tree.
- Most people prepare a special meal consisting of roast turkey and other festive meals.
- In the UK people also eat traditional Christmas pudding – heavy steamed, dense, cake like desert filled with dried fruit often poured over with burning brandy. It has no expiry date and becomes better with age.
- Christmas dinner is in the UK eaten on Christmas Day usually in the early afternoon, but some Americans prefer to have Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve.



- Christmas dinner in the UK have to come with Christmas crackers, paper tubes that look like sweets.
- People pull the two ends apart, when the cracker breaks, the contents fall out.
- Cracker contains a paper crown or hat, a small gift and a joke written on a piece of paper.
- Quality of the gift depends on how much you have paid for the cracker. The more you pay the better the quality of the gift.
- The traditional way to pull a cracker is crossing your arms and pulling a whole circle of crackers around the table. Some people attend church services on this day.







CHRISTMAS PUDDING

- **26th December** (Boxing Day, Saint Stephen's Day) in the UK – traditionally it was a day when employers gave money and food to their employees usually in Christmas boxes – wooden or clay containers.
- Boxes were also in churches and people put there money for poor people.
- During the age of exploration when great sailing ships were setting off to discover new land, a Christmas box was used as a good luck device. It was put into the ship by a priest and crewmen put there money to ensure safe return. It was kept on board for the entire voyage.

New Year's Eve

- People go to parties, bars or restaurants with their friends in the evening or they meet outside in squares and public places.
- In London people go to Trafalgar Square, in New York thousands of people go to Times Square.
- In the UK at midnight people stand in a circle, join hands and sing an old song called “Auld Lang Syne” (the song is about remembering old friends), originally a poem written by Scottish Robert Burns.
- In Scotland New Year's Eve is called Hogmanay and the celebrations may last for one or two more days, as both 1st and 2nd January are bank holidays there.

- In some parts of the UK, people spend last hours of New Year's Eve preparing for „first footing“.
- The first visitor to enter a house after the start of new year is first-footer.
- They come to bring good luck to the households and they usually take small gifts with them, such as fruit cakes, whiskey or coal.

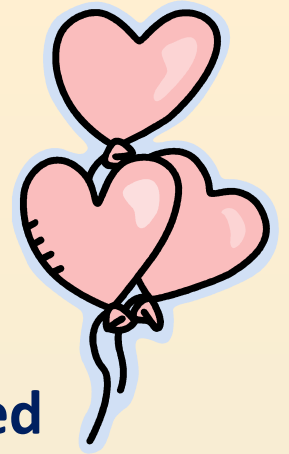


New Year's Day

- Many people make New year's resolutions – they promise themselves that they will lead a better life in some way in the coming year.



Valentine's Day



- celebrated on the 14th of February is a lovers' feast.
- The day is named for an early Christian martyr who lived between the years 200 and 300 AD. The Roman Emperor at the time, Claudius II, was not a Christian. Claudius decided that his soldiers must not marry, because married soldiers do not make good soldiers. Valentine helped a soldier to get married and the Emperor sent him to prison.
- In prison Valentine started to love the daughter of a man who worked in prison and the day he died, he sent a note to this woman with the ending "Your Valentine".
- Today people give gifts or send greeting cards called Valentines to people they like or admire.

Easter

- Christians remember Christ's death and his return to life. It is the most important festival in the church year, even more important than Christmas.
- Eggs are a part of Easter because they mean spring and new life.
- Both in the America egg hunting is very popular. Children try to find eggs hidden by a rabbit. This usually happens on Easter Monday.
- Egg rolling – a traditional game played at Easter in the UK and USA, usually played with hard-boiled, decorated egg . Children push an egg through grass using a long spoon or eggs are rolled down a hill.



EGG HUNTING



EGG ROLLING

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