

Name _____



Shadows Of Samhain

Directions: Read the passage about the origins of Halloween carefully. Then, answer the comprehension questions that follow in complete sentences.

The Ancient Roots of Halloween

Long before carved pumpkins and costumes filled October nights, people in ancient Ireland celebrated **Samhain** (pronounced *SOW-in*), a festival marking the end of harvest and the start of winter. The Celts believed that on the night of October 31, the barrier between the living and the dead grew thin, allowing spirits to cross into the human world. To protect themselves, villagers lit great bonfires and wore animal skins or masks to confuse wandering ghosts.

When Christianity spread through Europe, church leaders wanted to replace pagan traditions with Christian observances. **All Saints' Day**, also known as All Hallows' Day, was placed on November 1, and the night before became **All Hallows' Eve**-eventually shortened to *Halloween*. Over time, these old customs mixed with new ones. People began to carve faces into turnips, later pumpkins, and carry lanterns to keep away evil spirits. They also went door to door offering songs or prayers in exchange for food-a practice that evolved into modern **trick-or-treating**.

Today, Halloween is celebrated with candy, costumes, and laughter, but traces of ancient Samhain still linger in our traditions. Each flickering jack-o'-lantern and eerie story reminds us of a time when people gathered by firelight, honoring the mystery of the changing seasons and the world beyond our own.

1. What did the Celts believe happened on the night of October 31 during Samhain?
2. How did villagers try to protect themselves from spirits during Samhain?
3. What did the Church do to replace pagan festivals?
4. How did All Hallows' Eve transform into modern Halloween?
5. Which old customs are still seen in Halloween celebrations today?
6. What is the overall theme or message of this passage?
7. Based on the passage, what does the word "**barrier**" most likely mean in context?