

READING B2

THE LEGEND OF STINGY JACK

Halloween is one of the most popular holidays in the English-speaking world. Today, it's celebrated with costumes, candy, and spooky decorations, but many of its traditions come from much older stories and customs. One of the most famous Halloween symbols—the glowing jack-o'-lantern—actually comes from an old Irish legend about a man named Stingy Jack.

According to the legend, Stingy Jack lived in a small Irish village many centuries ago. He was known for being clever, but also for being greedy and dishonest. Jack loved playing tricks on people, and he often tried to cheat others out of their money. Because of this, most people avoided him, but one day, Jack's cleverness caught the attention of someone very dangerous—the Devil himself.

The story says that one evening, Jack invited the Devil to join him for a drink. When it came time to pay, Jack didn't want to spend his own money. Instead, he came up with a plan. He convinced the Devil to turn himself into a silver coin that Jack could use to pay for their drinks. The Devil agreed, thinking it was a funny trick, but as soon as he turned into a coin, Jack quickly put him in his pocket next to a small silver cross. The cross prevented the Devil from changing back into his real form.

Trapped and furious, the Devil demanded to be released. Jack agreed, but only after the Devil promised not to take his soul for ten years. The Devil had no choice but to accept. Ten years later, the Devil returned to collect Jack's soul, but Jack was ready with another trick. He asked the Devil to climb a tree to pick one last apple before taking him. When the Devil climbed up, Jack carved a cross into the trunk of the tree, trapping him again. Jack only freed the Devil after he promised never to take his soul—ever.

Eventually, Jack grew old and died. But when he reached the gates of Heaven, God refused to let him in because of his sinful and selfish life. So Jack went to Hell, but the Devil kept his word and refused to let him enter there, either. Instead, the Devil gave Jack a single burning coal to light his way as he wandered through the dark world between Heaven and Hell. Jack placed the coal inside a hollowed-out turnip to make a lantern. Since then, people say he has roamed the earth endlessly, appearing on dark nights with his strange, flickering light.

The Irish began to call him "Jack of the Lantern," or Jack O'Lantern. To keep his spirit away, people started carving their own lanterns out of turnips or potatoes. When Irish immigrants came to America, they discovered that pumpkins were bigger and easier to carve. That's how the modern jack-o'-lantern became a central part of Halloween celebrations.

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A. Multiple Choice (Choose the best answer)

1. Why did people call Jack "Stingy"?

- 2. a) Because he was generous with money.
- 3. b) Because he didn't like to spend money.
- 4. c) Because he was kind to others.
- 5. d) Because he was a poor man.

1. How did Jack trap the Devil the first time?

- 2. a) By locking him in a box.
- 3. b) By using holy water.
- 4. c) By putting him in his pocket with a silver cross.
- 5. d) By tricking him into a cave.

1. What deal did Jack make with the Devil the second time?

- 2. a) The Devil would make Jack rich.
- 3. b) The Devil would never take his soul.
- 4. c) The Devil would give him gold.
- 5. d) The Devil would take him to Heaven.

1. Why was Jack not allowed into Heaven?

- 2. a) He was too greedy and dishonest.
- 3. b) The Devil stopped him.
- 4. c) He had no lantern.
- 5. d) He was still alive.

1. What did people originally use before pumpkins to make lanterns?

- 2. a) Apples
- 3. b) Potatoes and turnips
- 4. c) Wooden boxes
- 5. d) Coconuts

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B. Short Answer Questions

1. Describe Jack's personality in your own words.
2. Why did Jack make a deal with the Devil?
3. How did Jack trick the Devil twice?
4. What was Jack's punishment after he died?
5. How did the legend of Stingy Jack lead to the tradition of carving pumpkins?

Vocabulary

Word	Meaning
1. Greedy	a) To walk without a clear direction
2. Dishonest	b) Intelligent, smart
3. Wander	c) Not telling the truth; not fair
4. Clever	d) Wanting more money or possessions than needed
5. Hollowed-out	e) Having the inside removed; empty inside

Discussion / Writing Task

Write a short paragraph (8–10 sentences):

If you met Stingy Jack wandering with his lantern on Halloween night, what would you say or do?

Would you help him find peace, or would you run away? Explain why.