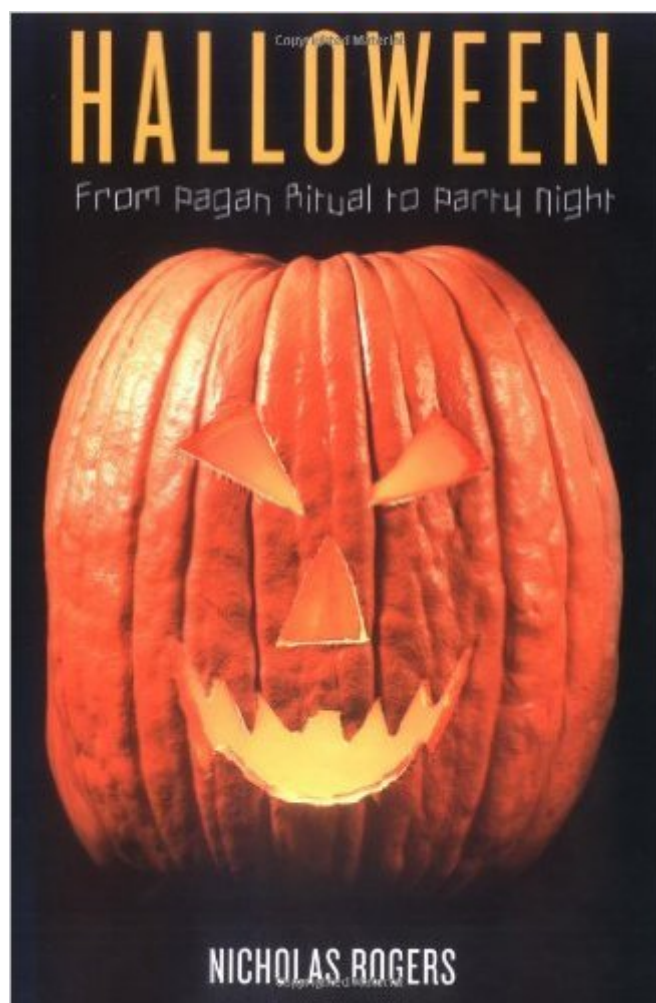# Halloween: From Pagan Ritual To Party Night

Synopsis

Boasting a rich, complex history rooted in Celtic and Christian ritual, Halloween has evolved from ethnic celebration to a blend of street festival, fright night, and vast commercial enterprise. In this colorful history, Nicholas Rogers takes a lively, entertaining look at the cultural origins and development of one of the most popular holidays of the year. Drawing on a fascinating array of sources, from classical history to Hollywood films, Rogers traces Halloween as it emerged from the Celtic festival of Samhain (summer's end), picked up elements of the Christian Hallowtide (All Saint's Day and All Soul's Day), arrived in North America as an Irish and Scottish festival, and evolved into an unofficial but large-scale holiday by the early 20th century. He examines the 1970s and '80s phenomena of Halloween sadism (razor blades in apples) and inner-city violence (arson in Detroit), as well as the immense influence of the horror film genre on the reinvention of Halloween as a terror-fest. Throughout his vivid account, Rogers shows how Halloween remains, at its core, a night of inversion, when social norms are turned upside down, and a temporary freedom of expression reigns supreme. He examines how this very license has prompted censure by the religious Right, occasional outrage from law enforcement officials, and appropriation by Left-leaning political groups. Engagingly written and based on extensive research, Halloween is the definitive history of the most bewitching day of the year, illuminating the intricate history and shifting cultural forces behind this enduring trick-or-treat holiday.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have been doing some research trying to find out how Halloween would have been celebrated by children in the 1920s in a small town in the American South, and also what Halloween was like in 1929 when it came so soon after the Stock Market Crash. This book isnâ ™t much help. But then none of the other books Iâ ™ve read have been any help either. Maybe the information I am looking for is too specific in time and place.But the specifics I am seeking are more appropriate for a book on Halloweenâ ™s history than this book is. It starts off with a story of how the gay author and his lover once celebrated Halloween in Toronto. Thatâ ™s way more information than is necessary or appropriate for a book meant to explain thousands of yearsâ ™ worth of history.But, then the author compounds his error when in a chapter that the index says explains Halloween and American culture he talks about Mexicoâ ™s Day of the Dead celebration and the impact NAFTA is having on Mexican culture. Is this a book of history, or a socio-political polemic?Thereâ ™s no real book here. Instead of serious scholarship the book is essentially a string of anecdotes that purport to explain the various aspects of Halloween (costumes, pranks, begging etcetera, etcetera). That makes the book too piecemeal. You canâ ™t see the overall forest because the author keeps felling trees across your pathway.And I have to agree with the other critical reviews when Hollywood is concerned. Horror movies have been around for as long as there have been movies. We donâ ™t have horror movies because we have Halloween. But the 22 pages this book spends on horror movies give the impression that we wouldnâ ™t have Halloween if we didnâ ™t have horror movies.

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