

Halloween may not be everything you think it is

Halloween is a time some people love and others dread, while kids may look forward to it all year. How much do you know about it? Is it an important date for children, and if so, why?

Here's a chance to find out.

1. Halloween began in early Christian times and has always had a kind of innocence that's appealing to children.

TRUE () FALSE ()

2. Regrettably, the main appeal of trick-or-treating to children is the candies and what's going to be given to them.

TRUE () FALSE ()

3. Parents should not always have the final say on what young children wear on this holiday.

TRUE () FALSE ()

4. Monsters, witches and devils are appealing just because it's fun, and that's the primary reason.

TRUE () FALSE ()

5. Parents shouldn't worry about 10-year-old and younger trick-or-treaters as long as they have a teenage sister or brother along.

TRUE () FALSE ()

6. Because adults of all ages are so aware of and concerned about

terrorist attacks in this country, parents don't need to be as scared as they were in previous years about the safety of their little goblins and monsters.

TRUE () FALSE ()

7. Collecting for a cause like UNICEF on this holiday tends to make children more cautious and have less fun.

TRUE () FALSE ()

8. Masks contribute to misbehavior.

TRUE () FALSE ()

ANSWERS:

1. FALSE. Some think this holiday goes back to Baal, the Phoenician fertility god, while others think it started with the druids; but in its early days, it was not a holiday that would appeal to most today because of its extreme brutality, including animal and human sacrifices.

2. FALSE. It's scaring others, including their parents, and turning the tables on them, but also dealing with their own fears.

3. TRUE. This is a time when children's creativity and imagination can be allowed to run free, and parents should try to let them



Dr. Joyce Brothers

- Ask Dr. Brothers

choose their own costume and determine who they want to be that special night, as long as it is not dangerous.

4. FALSE. The costume they select is not only fun, it also can be enlightening for their parents. It can represent a rebellion from the roles their parents want them to play. It's an expression of independence — daring to try out new roles.

5. FALSE. First, teens should not be burdened with the task on this particular night. They don't make responsible chaperones. An adult should generally accompany all children until they're teens.

6. FALSE. Dangers for children still increase on this holiday, not only in terms of what's given to them as a treat but also an adult

is needed to watch when crossing streets. Children get overexcited and can easily be distracted by strangers or speeding cars.

7. FALSE. Trick-or-treating for a purpose such as UNICEF to help needy children throughout the world is a great addition to this holiday. It doesn't diminish the fun, but helps make children aware of others who are less privileged.

8. TRUE. Studies have shown this to be true partly because it increases a person's anonymity, and this reduces restraints on behavior. Children can get away with things they might not otherwise do. The danger for young children is that masks tend to hinder vision.

If you answered six of these eight questions correctly, you're better informed than most on this subject.

Dear Dr. Brothers: After working to make a beautiful pink princess costume for my 5-year-old daughter, she went out for some routine shopping with her dad and came home with a frightening monster mask and a ghastly, ugly costume

that looks like a cross between a dragon and an ape.

She's crazy about it and insists on wearing it on Halloween for trick-or-treating and also to a party for kids on our block.

I'm furious with my husband and secretly wonder if he showed this to her deliberately.

Should I put my foot down, or let her wear it?

Why, why would a pretty little girl choose this thing?

— D.F.

Dear D.F.: By all means, let her enjoy and wear this scary costume. Part of the fun of Halloween is frightening and shocking adults.

It's a time when fantasy comes alive, when imagination can run wild and kids can express their originality without fear of being reprimanded or being told to behave like nice, polite little girls or

boys.

It's a time when children can get even with adults and also deal with their fears by pretending to be what they may fear, taking on their fears or laughing at them. This is a time when kids can feel as if they have more power.

It's good for children to have a choice regarding the costume they wear.

Maybe your little girl is trying to rebel against the role that the pretty pink costume represents.

This might not be the case, and tomorrow she might like the pink dress you made so much that she wants to wear it to school, but she should be given an option. Make certain the mask doesn't block her vision, as this can be a danger. Make sure she can see properly, and enjoy the dragon.

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