Spooky word origins that go 'bump' in the night

Written by gallupsun
Friday, 13 October 2023 19:15

It's scary how early I get excited about PSL season. Of course, I'm talking about punctuation, syntax and language! Add an extra pump of grammar to mine.

We all know about the origin of the word "Halloween," but what do we know about the etymologies of other spooky season sayings? Today we'll explore these ominous origins.

The word "haunt" comes from the Old English word "hamettan," which means "to bring home." This suggests that the original meaning of "haunt" was to visit a place so frequently that you might as well live there. For instance, I like to haunt my local coffee shop.

"Haunt" in a ghostly sense developed in the 14th century. This is probably because people back then were a lot more superstitious than we are today; they were convinced that ghosts were everywhere, just waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting.

The word "spooky" comes from the Dutch word "spook," which means "ghost" or "specter." So, next time you're feeling scared, just remember that you're not actually scared — you're just being spooked by a silly Dutch word.

"Spooky" originally meant something related to ghosts or spirits, but over time, the meaning has expanded to include anything that is strange, eerie or unsettling. So, if you see a clown at midnight, that's spooky. If you hear a weird noise in the middle of the night, that's spooky. And if you realize that you've been using the same toothbrush for ten years, that's definitely spooky.

The phrase "trick-or-treat" is thought to have originated in the early 20th century in North America as a combination of the words "trick" and "treat." It's basically a way for kids to extort candy from their neighbors. But hey, it's only once a year! Every Halloween, my friend Brenda simply turns off her lights and pretends she's not home.

"Trick-or-treat" is thought to have evolved from a number of earlier customs, including souling, guising and mumming. These customs were all about begging for food or money in exchange

Spooky word origins that go 'bump' in the night

Written by gallupsun
Friday, 13 October 2023 19:15

for prayers or performances. So, trick-or-treating is basically just begging for candy in exchange for a cute costume. Case in point: my daughter will be a ladybug this Halloween, while my oldest son is dressing up as a hot dog.

While I calculate my annual "dad tax" on my kids' Halloween candy, you can now rest assured your eerie etymology questions will haunt you no more.

—Curtis Honeycutt is an award-winning syndicated humor columnist. Connect with him on Twitter (@curtishoneycutt) or at curtishoneycutt.com.