

# The Halloween Issue!!!

Every year I try to do some interesting things for the holidays and with this issue, we start off what is going to be the best year yet for being able to relate the various aspects of the season to your classrooms. So... let's get to it then.

## Halloween begins...

"Halloween has its origins in the ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain (Irish pronunciation: saw-rain]; from the Old Irish samain). The festival of Samhain is a celebration of the end of the harvest season in Gaelic culture, and is sometimes regarded as the "Celtic New Year". Traditionally, the festival was a time used by the ancient pagans to take stock of supplies and slaughter livestock for winter stores. The ancient Gaels believed that on October 31, now known as Halloween, the boundary between the living and the deceased dissolved, and the dead become dangerous for the living by causing problems such as sickness or

damaged crops. The festivals would frequently involve bonfires, into which bones of slaughtered



livestock were thrown. Costumes and masks were also worn at the festivals in an attempt to mimic the evil spirits or placate them."

From the Wikipedia article "[Halloween](#)"

For most of us, Halloween is a time when we have parties with costumes and children go "trick or treating". Ghouls and goblins, vampires and werewolves, ghosts and witches are all brought out in books, movies, games and

any other form of the imagination that is encouraged at this time of year. There are many beliefs and traditions that are observed, but the roots of this "holiday" have remained the same for thousands of years.

This issue I'll show you some interesting ideas for integrating some of the traditions and folklore of the time into your lessons. We'll do this in all content areas too. It won't be just in the ELA or Social Studies curriculum either. There are many ways of studying our beliefs and the folklore of the times through the lenses of science, mathematics, foreign language, music, art, not to mention economics and health.

## Stuff To Know

**ALL THE FOLLOWING ARE AVAILABLE IN B155**

- I am available to co-plan, co-teach, and work out just about any other method for the integration of technology in your classroom. I am a good resource for ideas and inspiration when you find yourself in a bind trying to find an activity that will make the most appropriate connection with a lesson.
- Schedule a time to get trained for the use of the laptop carts.

**No training = No laptop cart use.**

- The Springfield Public Schools has a district license for...

### GradeKeeper

Please stop by B155 for details

- E-mail and MassOne accounts are a necessary part of what we do these days. If you don't have either one, please stop by B155 and sign up for them.
- If you're planning on the use of lap top carts, please reserve one as early as you can. Also, please be considerate of the needs of your colleagues when planning the length of time you'll need the cart you'll be using.

## Halloween and Health???

Health??? Halloween??? Yes. More specifically, disease control and the spread of bacterial/viral infection.

In the late 16th century, right around the Southeastern region of Europe, there were many travelers that mentioned having seen vampires. The characteristics that these "observers" often gave in relation to descriptions were:

1. Bloodshot eyes
2. Sensitivity to light
3. Fear of water (Hydrophobia)
4. Great strength

5. Insanity/rage
6. The only way to dispose of a dead vampire was to cut off the head (presumably after having nailed it to the ground by putting a stake through its heart) and burning it to ash

Comparing these descriptions to the symptoms we know about diseases today, a case could be made for the comparison of the 17th century vampire with a rabies victim in the advanced stages of the disease.

1. The eyes of a rabies victim could have this characteristic because of the viral infection.

2. The sensitivity to light is an offshoot of the conjunctivitis.
3. Hydrophobia occurs when the throat and jaw become paralyzed, the person displays agitation or paranoia when presented with water and cannot slake their thirst.
4. Delirium and the rages that sometimes accompany the later stages of the disease can also over stimulate the adrenal gland and mirror the appearance of great strength.
5. While it isn't absolutely necessary, burning the corpse of a rabies victim (or any

## Mary Shelley & Biology...Cross curricular units???

**Frankenstein-The Modern Prometheus** was written in the early 19th century (the first edition was published in 1818 to be precise) and is the gold standard for the gothic novel. Shelley's work has become synonymous with the hubris of mankind and his aspirations toward the creation of life. The commentary that runs throughout the novel is an excellent approach to a moral conundrum that involves man's emotional and spiritual growth versus his scientific knowledge and ability. While some might think that something of an esoteric question best left for scholarly discourse, it is a question that should be asked of our science and ELA classes.

The issues raised in **Frankenstein** that are certainly covered in ELA classes are involved with the critical thinking exercises that we find in the exploration of theme, mood and tone

throughout the novel. Of course, these literary techniques are influenced and driven by Shelley's use of imagery, symbolism, and personification (if such a term is useful in describing Frankenstein's creation).

Where the in depth study of this work might be advanced in terms of scope and understanding would be in the examination of the "real" science (as opposed to the metaphysical applications Shelley alludes to) that might be involved with the process by which the creature is "made". In biology classes

where the study of varied forms of life are routinely covered, a slight detour might be made to investigate the possibilities of the techniques Victor Frankenstein uses in the re-animation of tissue and how we use variants of these techniques in modern medicine today.

One of the projects that I've actually done with students was the creation of a PowerPoint presentation that covered some of the techniques that we actually have in modern medicine would have to

used in the construction of a "creature" like Frankenstein's. Some of the students wanted to form groups where each of the members presented one of the techniques as part of the process. One of the groups did an excellent presentation where they covered: heart transplants, nerve regeneration/limb reattachment, kidney and liver transplants, tissue/dermal regeneration, blood/plasma transfusions, and even had a nifty explanation of the use of nano-technology for the release of the various hormone and other chemical compounds throughout the body.

In order to complete the project students had to relate the novel to the processes they were using and explain the relevance of the "real" to the fictional. In short, there were two projects that needed to be researched; the first being the examination of the novel and second the processes by which we use modern techniques to "create" (or continue) life.

If you'd like to "create" a unit like this, please see me in B155 and we'll dream something up that will meet/exceed standards and be something your students will enjoy...



***"Fear is the tax that conscience pays to guilt."***

***George Sewell***

## Halloween and Health???

virally infected individual) would be one way of limiting exposure to the disease from spreading.

Many of the symptoms of vampirism and rabies are actually very common and can be compared. Additionally, the symptoms of the werewolf (lycanthropy) are similar in nature as they are described.

Remedies for the werewolf and the rabies victim are certainly interesting to say the least (considering that the vampire is already dead, killing it is the only "remedy"). According to the Wikipedia article **Werewolf**:

***"Various methods have existed for removing the werewolf form. In antiquity,***



German Werewolf  
woodcut, 1722

***the Ancient Greeks and Romans believed in the power of exhaustion in curing people of lycanthropy. In medieval Europe, traditionally, there are three methods one can use to cure a victim of lycanthropy; medicinally, surgically or by exorcism. However, many of the cures advocated by medieval medical practitioners proved fatal to the***

***patients. A Sicilian belief of Arabic origin holds that a werewolf can be cured of its ailment by striking it on the forehead or scalp with a knife."***

There are, of course, the old standbys of beheading and the silver bullet, however whenever we think of "remedies", those might seem to be just a bit extreme.

Understandably, we can say all sorts of things about the relationship of our understanding of diseases to legendary curses in the cases of vampires and werewolves. But in using comparisons like these, are we making our subject matter any more topical during the Halloween season of the year?

# The Economics of Gothic Fiction

## Pop Culture Products

- Probably foremost in the commercialization of the gothic novel is the motion picture. 1992's "*Dracula*" with Gary Oldman and Winona Ryder was one of the biggest movies of the year in terms of both critical acclaim and at the box office. "*Young Frankenstein*" with Gene Wilder, Peter Boyle, and Marty Feldman was perhaps one of the best comedies ever produced as it parodied the horror genre.
- In 1971, someone at General Mills cereal came up with the venerable [Count Chocula](#) as part of the "Monster Cereals" promotion. Since that time, the Count has been the most popular of the original "Monster Cereals" despite their having to undergo a redesign to reflect a more health conscious diet (less sugar and whole grain corn as the main ingredient). To date, the cereal remains one of the bigger selling breakfast cereals.
- Dracula Theme park** created in the foothills of Tirgoviste, Romania. Also,



in the same city where Vlad the Impaler (the basis for the character in Stoker's *Dracula*) ruled, there's a pub, Bed &

Breakfast, and numerous shops that sell products based on either Vlad or Dracula.

4. Halloween costumers generally have plenty of Dracula, Frankenstein, Mummy, Witch, and Werewolf costumes on hand for the period leading up to, and just after, the celebrations.

- Original movie poster art has always been a big seller on college campuses and the biggest seller of those has almost always been...you guessed it horror movie art.
- Music based on horror stories and their protagonists have been some of the biggest sellers in history. "The Monster Mash" by Bobby "Boris" Pickett and the Crypt Kickers in 1962, "Frankenstein" by the Edgar Winter Group in 1973, and let's not forget "Thriller" by Michael Jackson in 1982, have made tens of millions of

dollars ("Thriller" doing the lions share of that) in sales.

## Link to standards and content

The study of sales figures and the contributions of the products that drew inspiration from the characters of folklore, legend, and history are something that can provide classes that study statistical analysis, economics, and Western Civilization (specifically late 20th and early 21st century "pop" culture) with a wealth of data from which conclusions can be drawn.

The creation of questioning techniques (requiring critical thinking and reasoning) to determine relevance to a subject is of significant importance when considering the nature of standardized testing today. As we insist on higher standards for their performance, it is certainly something we need to make sure students are familiar with the concepts and techniques. Using this subject matter would certainly make the job somewhat more interesting and relevant to the students.

## And so gentle readers...

Even though I was born in the windy month of March (on Saint Patrick's Day no less), my favorite season of the year is Autumn. The changing of the foliage, apple picking, and, the big day of the season, Halloween, are all things I enjoy immensely at this time of the year.

Maybe it's the cool stories with the fantastical elements that catches me. It could be the food (oh... there's a real stretch) with all the flavors of the harvest as it were. The transition from the activities of the warmer times to those of the oncoming winter certainly could be a factor in what attracts me to this season.

Having said all that, the real reason is that it's the season of the year for reflection and thought. A time when we recognize our mortality through Nature (all that stuff I mentioned in the first couple of paragraphs), a time when we recognize those things that have been special and of great import to us through-

out the year and...

### GOOD GRIEF!!!!

I'm getting maudlin... I can't stand it!!!

I like this season because of football and scary stories. "*It's the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown*" is one of my all time favorite T.V. specials. Even though there are only a few types of candy I actually like (Jolly Ranchers-sugar free, Reese's PB Pumpkins, and stuff with chocolate and nuts), I can always break into Terry's stash of Peanut M & M's

Of course, there are those who might spoil the fun you might have by being complete knotheds and doing things like poisoning candy, stealing, vandalizing, and generally creating mayhem. Those are the people to be wary of. That's the one thing that I have to mention to you here folks...please be aware of what's going on around you this weekend. Be safe. Have fun of course, but be safe.

*"One need not be a chamber to be haunted;  
One need not be a house;  
The brain has corridors surpassing  
Material place."*

*Emily Dickinson*

From the WWI Flying Ace,  
And me....

Happy Halloween...



*Ed Musiak*



# Life Lessons in Imagery



**George Orson Welles** (May 6, 1915 – October 10, 1985) was an Academy Award-winning director, writer, actor and producer for film, stage, radio and television.

Welles first gained wide notoriety for his October 30, 1938, radio broadcast of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. Adapted to sound like a contemporary news broadcast, it caused a number of listeners to panic. The first two thirds of the 60-minute broadcast was presented as a series of simulated news bulletins, which suggested to many listeners that an actual Martian invasion was in progress. Compounding the issue was the fact that the Mercury Theatre on the Air was a 'sustaining show' (i.e., it ran without commercial breaks), thus adding to the dramatic effect.

In every issue of the "Tech Tips" from the past several years we've had comics here on the last page to help us learn about our lives through humor. In keeping with our changes here at Commerce (and throughout the district), I thought it would be time for something a bit more topical we could actually use in our classrooms.

From this issue on, we will be using iconic images that reside in the public domain to demonstrate the extent to which we are all members of a global society that is linked by a commonality of shared experience. Using demonstration media, whether conventional overhead displays, LCD projectors, TV displays, or SMART Board technology, please feel free to use these images of our triumphs and tragedies to inform students of those qualities that really do make us one world.

*Ed Musiak*



**Harry Houdini** (March 24, 1874 – October 31, 1926) whose birth name in Hungary was Erik Weisz[1] (which was changed to Ehrich Weiss[2] when he immigrated to the United States), was a Jewish Hungarian American magician, escapologist (widely regarded as one of the greatest ever) and stunt performer, as well as a skeptic and investigator of spiritualists, film producer and actor. Harry Houdini forever changed the world of magic and escapes.



## *The Faces of Dracula*

(clockwise from top left)

1. **Béla Lugosi** (October 20, 1882 – August 16, 1956)
2. **Jack Palance** (born Volodymyr Palahniuk; February 18, 1919 – November 10, 2006)
3. **Gary Leonard Oldman** (born 21 March 1958)
4. **Frank A. Langella, Jr.** (born January 1, 1938)

While there have been many different actors that have played the role, these four are perhaps the best known interpreters of the Count and his idiosyncrasies.



## "It's The Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown"

It was the third Peanuts special (and first Halloween special) to be produced and animated by Bill Meléndez. Its initial broadcast took place on October 27th, 1966 on the CBS network, preempting *My Three Sons*; CBS re-aired the special annually through 2000, with ABC picking up the rights beginning in 2001. The program was nominated for an Emmy award.

Linus writes a letter to The Great Pumpkin, to Charlie Brown's disbelief, Snoopy's laughter, Patty's assurance that the Great Pumpkin is a fake, and even to Lucy's violent threat to make Linus stop ("You better cut it out right now or I'll pound you!"). Linus laments in the letter that "more people believe in Santa Claus than in [The Great Pumpkin], but let's face it; Santa Claus has had more publicity. But being number two, perhaps you try harder" (a tongue-in-cheek jab at Avis Rent-A-Car's popular slogan of the day