

# personal english



## Character #29 Stingy Jack

One of the most iconic symbols of Halloween is the so-called **jack-o'-lantern**, that is, a carved pumpkin (or turnip) serving as a lantern in the shape of a monstrous face. This tradition originated from an **Irish legend** about a man nicknamed '**Stingy Jack**.'

As the legend has it, Stingy Jack invited the **Devil** to have a drink with him, but then he didn't want to pay for his own drink, and so he convinced the Devil to turn himself into a **coin** that Jack could use. Once the Devil had done so, Jack decided to keep the money and put it into his pocket next to a silver cross, which prevented the Devil from changing back into his original form. Jack eventually freed the Devil, under the condition that he would not bother Jack for one year and that, should Jack die, he would not claim his soul. The following year, Jack tricked the Devil again – this time, into **climbing a tree to pick a fruit**. While he was up in the tree, Jack carved a sign of the cross into the tree's bark so that the Devil could not come down until he promised Jack not to bother him for ten more years. Soon after, however, Jack died. God would not allow such a despicable person into heaven, and the Devil – keeping his word not to claim his soul – would not allow Jack into hell. So, the Devil sent Jack off into the dark night with only a burning coal to light his way. Jack put the coal into a **carved-out turnip** and has been roaming the Earth with it ever since.

In Ireland and Scotland, people have been making Jack-o'-lanterns and placing them into windows or near doors for centuries with a view to warding off Stingy Jack and other wandering evil spirits. This **Celtic practice** connected to the festival of **Samhain** (a liminal time when the boundaries between this world and the netherworld could more easily be crossed) was later introduced to the **USA** by immigrants from these countries, who soon found that **pumpkins** (a fruit native to America) would make perfect jack-o'-lanterns instead of turnips.



Click on the Picture for two **VIDEOS** on Stingy Jack