

Rats in the House.

Halloween has become a bigger and more celebrated holiday over the past few years. I suspected that it would. There is something innately fun about being scared, and telling scary stories. Parties and dressing up appeal to the child in all of us, of course. But I've noticed just how the machine of materialism is driving these occasions. There are Halloween cards now in the shops, so the expectation will soon be that you must give your friends and family a 'Happy Halloween' card. The decorations for Halloween have also increased and become extremely varied. It's not just a pumpkin and a skeleton anymore. People are beginning to put up lights, as they do for Christmas. It's not a bad thing in itself; it does get dark early this time of year, so lights are a good thing. It's just that our actions tend to be driven by what is sold in the shops and what is seen on television. For example, if a large shop like Walmart advertises a cute Halloween scene on television in which we see lots of purple and orange lights, children happily dressed up, plastic pumpkins, skeletons, witches, people giving each other cards and presents, then the expectation becomes that of doing the same thing. In a way, we are dictated to. Or you could say that we follow like sheep. Now, don't get me wrong, I love to decorate my house, and to have special occasions to look forward to. However, where does the materialism end? Even Martha Stewart, who is the American guru for home decorating and cooking, has a line of elegant Halloween decorations for the home. I was curious to see what exactly they were when I found them on sale in a craft shop. So, I bought a couple of packets. They are pre-cut shapes of rats, crows, and spiders that you stick around your house. It's actually a good idea if you want to add a little spookiness to your home without overdoing it. The shapes are simple but artistic, they catch the eye, but they aren't overpowering like some other Halloween decorations. So, am I a sheep? Was I dictated to by a big, money making corporation? Maybe. Ah, but these decorations were on sale. Plus, they satisfy my need to decorate the house. And I haven't given in* to the whole* card thing. That's where I draw the line: I won't buy 'Happy Halloween' cards, so there! And you know what's coming next, don't you? Thanksgiving. One of my favorite holidays. It's all about being thankful, and spending time with friends and family. Perfect. No presents, no cards, no stress. My prediction is, however, that that is changing. Last year was the first time that I have ever seen Thanksgiving cards in the shops. I believe the manufacturers' angle* to encourage sales is thankfulness! "I'm thankful for you on this Thanksgiving day," say some of the cards. Mark my words*, next it will be presents. So what's next? Gifts and cards for Bank holidays?

Related vocabulary and expressions: to have an 'angle', mark my words, to give in to, the whole thing.

1. The angle of his argument is that businesses should have more freedom.
2. I know you don't often listen to me, but I was right about him, wasn't I? Mark my words: he's trouble!
3. She gave in to the pressure to shave her head with her friends. The next day she regretted the decision, and wore a paper bag over her head.
4. I just don't have time for the whole "look at my expensive car, aren't I great" attitude. Who cares what kind of car you drive?

