

Saint Patrick's Day

For Irish communities all over the world 17th March each year is the perfect excuse to get together and have a party to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day.

1. How much do you know about Ireland and the Irish? Discuss this in small groups.
2. Before you read the article, think of how the items in the box might be connected with Ireland. Then read the text below and on worksheet B to find out.

English/Irish marriages 1949 four million Dracula blue forty shades of green
 six counties shepherd snakes shamrock Holy Trinity leprechaun
 pot of gold James Bond U2 seventeen US presidents 1759

A brief history

- 6000BC** Earliest settlers arrive from Scotland.
- 1170** English invade and begin 750 years of rule.
- 1366** As a consequence of English settlers increasingly adopting Irish customs and ideologies, English/Irish marriages are banned.
- 1845-9** The potato famine results in mass emigration. By 1900, almost five million people have left Ireland, mostly to Britain or the United States.
- 1920** The British set up different parliaments in southern and northern Ireland in an attempt to suppress the movement for independence.
- 1922** British rule ends and the country becomes known as the Irish Free State.
- 1949** Ireland becomes a fully independent republic, also known by its original name Eire, with Dublin as its capital. The six counties of the northern part of Ireland, first partitioned in 1920, remain part of the UK.
- Today** Has a population of almost four million, predominately Catholic. The main political issue is Northern Ireland: should it be reunited with the south or remain part of the United Kingdom?

Saint Patrick's Day

St Patrick, the shamrock and other symbols

Born in Britain at the end of the 4th century, Saint Patrick was sold into slavery in Ireland when he was 16 and forced to work as a shepherd. After escaping captivity, he spent twelve years at a monastery in France before returning to Ireland as a missionary, determined to convert the largely pagan population to Christianity. Saint Patrick is reputed to have been able to raise the dead and it is said that it was he who drove all the snakes from the country. He was ordained Bishop of Ireland in 431 and died on 17th March 461.

Even though the harp is the oldest official symbol of Ireland, the shamrock is perhaps the best known. When Saint Patrick, then a bishop, first came to Ireland he used the three leaves of the shamrock to explain how the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit could all exist as the same entity. The shamrock has been revered and considered a good-luck symbol ever since.

Ireland is also known as the Emerald Isle because of its expanses of open green fields. It is said that there are forty shades of green in the Irish countryside. Surprisingly, the official colour of Ireland is blue.

The legend of the leprechaun

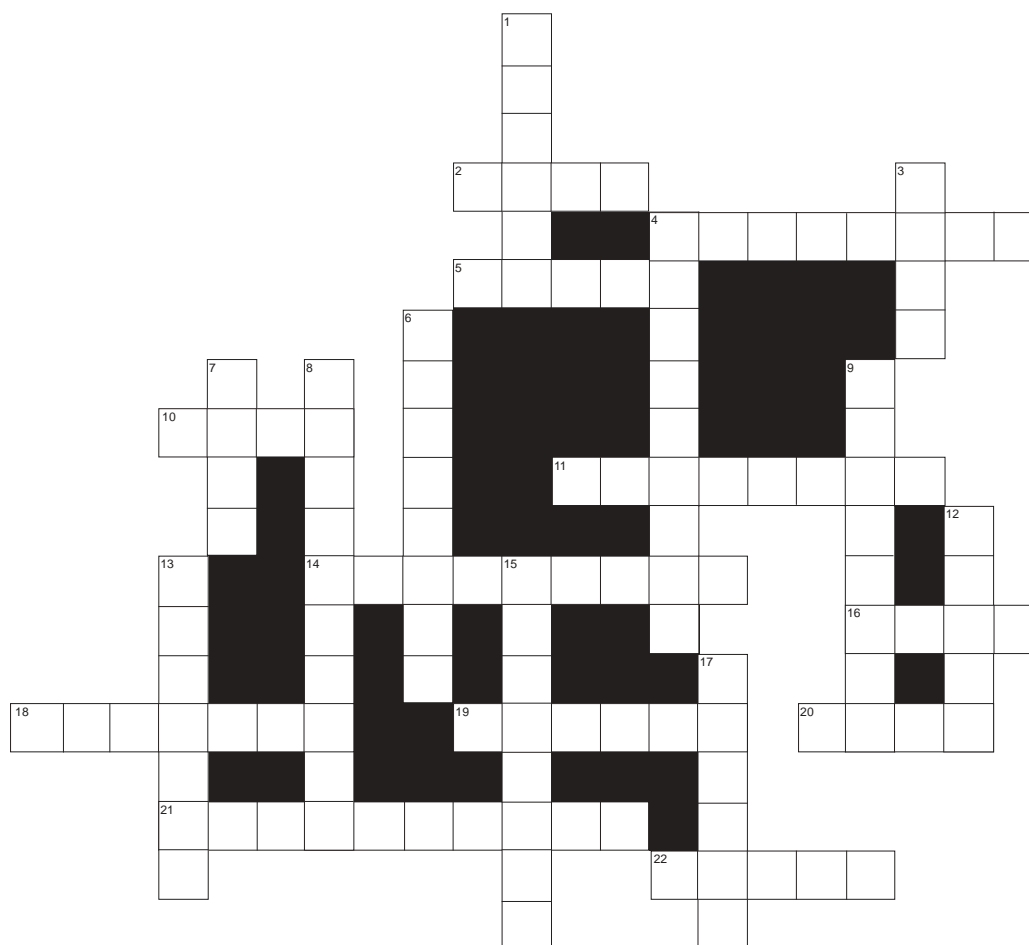
If you are walking along a wooded path and should happen to hear the faint tapping of a tiny hammer, you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of one of the little elf-like shoemakers who inhabit the woodlands of the Emerald Isle. According to legend, each leprechaun has a pot of gold hidden somewhere and he must give up his treasure to any human who catches him. You'll have to have your wits about you and think quickly to capture a leprechaun's gold, though, because the clever little fellow will fool you into looking the other way for an instant while he escapes into the forest. It is thought that the name leprechaun is derived from the Irish *leath brogan*, meaning shoemaker.

Famous Irish people

Ireland has a distinguished literary and arts tradition. Jonathan Swift, writer of *Gulliver's Travels*, James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, *Dracula* creator Bram Stoker, Samuel Beckett and George Bernard Shaw are but a few of the great Irish writers. The country has given the acting world the likes of Peter O'Toole, Maureen O'Hara, Liam Neeson and the current James Bond, Pierce Brosnan. Pop stars U2, Boyzone and Enya – one of the world's biggest selling female singers – all come from Ireland. As testimony to Ireland's influence in the world, no fewer than seventeen US presidents can trace Irish ancestry. And finally, let's not forget the man who has probably done more than anyone to help millions enjoy Saint Patrick's Day: Arthur Guinness, who, in 1759, gave the world one of its most famous drinks.

3. Does your country have a patron saint? What is his/her name? What did he/she do? Do you have a special day when you celebrate him/her? How is this day celebrated?

Saint Patrick's Day Crossword



Across

2. Official colour of Ireland. (4)
4. Where Ireland's original settlers came from. (8)
5. Animal driven out of Ireland by Saint Patrick. (5)
10. Population of Ireland, in millions. (4)
11. Predominant religion in Ireland. (8)
14. Profession of 21 across. (9)
16. Original name for Ireland. (4)
18. Patron saint of Ireland. (7)
19. Country where 18 across spent 12 years. (6)
20. See 13 down.
21. Little person who lives in the woodlands of Ireland. (10)
22. Number of shades of green in the Irish countryside. (5)

Down

1. Capital city of Ireland. (6)
3. Oldest official symbol of Ireland. (4)
4. Number of US presidents with Irish ancestry. (9)
6. Good-luck symbol of Ireland. (8)
7. Every 21 across has a pot of this. (4)
8. Irish author whose most famous work is *Dracula*. (4,6)
9. Famous Irish drink. (8)
12. Number of leaves on a shamrock. (5)
13. and 20 across. Ireland is also known as this. (7,4)
15. This was once banned between the English and Irish.
17. Family name of actor Liam. (6)

Teacher's Notes

Task

To find out information about Ireland by reading a text.

To discuss the patron saint of the student's own country.

To use the information contained in the text to complete a crossword.

Preparation

Make one copy of the three worksheets for each student.

Procedure

1. Tell the students that today (or whatever day it was/is) is Saint Patrick's Day. Explain that Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. Give each student a copy of worksheets A and B and ask one student to read out the introductory sentence.
2. Divide the class into pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss question (1). Ask the students to tell the class anything interesting from their discussions.
3. Ask the students, working in pairs or small groups, to look at the items in the box and guess what their connection is with Ireland. Then ask them to read the text to check their answers. (Alternatively, ask the students to work in groups of three and read one extract each. The students then pool the information to answer the questions.) Check the answers with the whole class.
4. Ask the students to discuss the questions in (3) about the patron saint of their country.
5. Give each student a copy of worksheet C and ask them to do the crossword (or set as homework).

Follow up

The students could prepare a presentation or poster about the patron saint of their country, doing research as necessary.

You might also like to show your students a few phrases in Irish:

Dia duit (pron. *dee-a huitch*) = Hello (lit. 'May God be with you.')

Dia is Muire duit (pron. *dee-a shmura huitch*) = Hello (to answer someone who says Dia duit) (lit. 'May God and Mary be with you.')

Conas atá tú? (pron. *konas atA too*) = How are you?

Tá mé go maith (pron. *taw may gumA*) = I'm fine

Go neiri an bothar leat (pron. *gu ny-eye-ri un voehur lat*) = Good luck (lit. 'May the road rise up to meet you.')

Websites

For more information about Ireland and Saint Patrick, visit the following sites:

www.historychannel.com/exhibits/stpatricksday/main.html

www.wilstar.com/holidays/patrick.htm

Answers

