

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. What do you know about Saint Patrick, Ireland and the Irish?

2. Try to answer these questions.

- a. When did Ireland become a fully independent republic?
a) 1909 b) 1949 c) 1989
- b. What is the capital city of Ireland?
a) Dublin b) Belfast c) Cork
- c. What is the main religion in Ireland
a) Catholicism b) Protestantism c) Buddhism
- d. What was Saint Patrick before he turned to religion?
a) a king b) a slave c) a warrior
- e. Which animal did he banish from Ireland?
a) the snake b) the spider c) the eagle
- f. Which of the following is a symbol of Ireland?
a) the thistle b) the rose c) the shamrock
- g. What is another name for Ireland
a) the Diamond Isle b) the Golden Isle c) the Emerald Isle
- h. What is a leprechaun?
a) a drink b) a dance c) a little person
- i. Which of the following pop groups is from Ireland?
a) Bon Jovi b) U2 c) Queen

3. Read the text on worksheet B and check your answers.

Saint Patrick's Day

St Patrick

Born in Britain at the end of the 4th century, Saint Patrick was sold as a slave 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 to convert people to Christianity. It is said that Saint Patrick was able to raise the dead and that he banished all the snakes from the country. He became Bishop of Ireland in 431 and died on 17th March 461.

Irish symbols

The harp is the oldest official symbol of Ireland, but the shamrock is perhaps the best known. When Saint Patrick first came to Ireland he used the three leaves of the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The shamrock has been considered a good-luck symbol ever since. Ireland is also known as the Emerald Isle and it is said that the Irish countryside contains forty shades of green. Surprisingly, the official colour of Ireland is blue.

The legend of the leprechaun

If you are walking along a wooded path, you might be lucky enough to see 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 his treasure to any human who catches him. You'll have to be quick though because he will trick you into looking the other way while he escapes into the forest.

Famous people

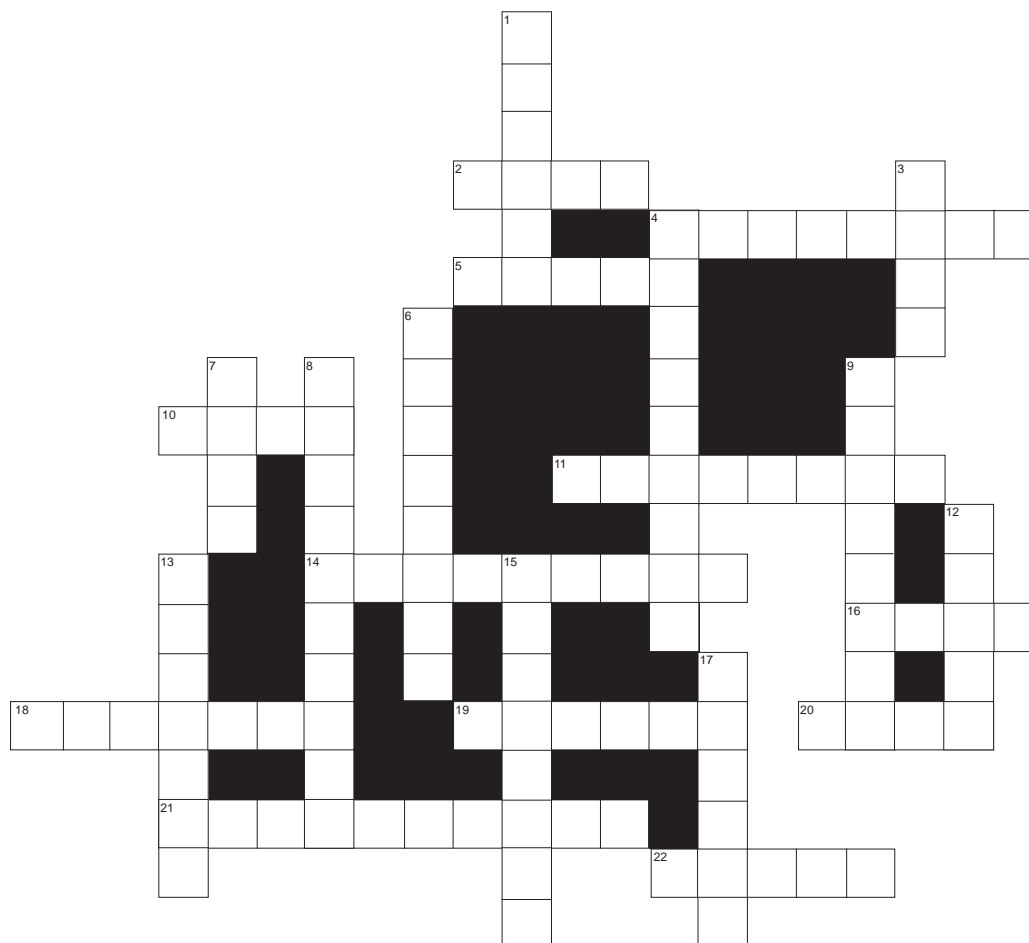
Ireland has produced many famous figures from the literary world. Jonathan Swift, who wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, Bram Stoker, creator of *Dracula*, James Joyce and Oscar Wilde are just a few of the great Irish writers. The country has given us such actors as Peter O'Toole, Liam Neeson and the current James Bond, Pierce Brosnan. Pop stars U2, Boyzone and Enya all come from Ireland and seventeen US presidents can trace Irish ancestry. Finally, we mustn't 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.

A brief history

- 6000BC** Earliest settlers arrive from Scotland.
- 1170** English colonise and begin 750 years of rule.
- 1366** English settlers increasingly begin to adopt Irish customs and ideologies. As a consequence 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.
- 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 separated 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?

4. 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. (8)
17. Family name of actor Liam. (6)

Teacher's Notes

Task

- To read a text about Ireland and find answers to questions.
- To discuss the patron saint of the student's own country.
- To consolidate the reading by doing a crossword.

Preparation

Make one copy of the three worksheets for each student.

Procedure

- 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 worksheet A and ask one student to read out the introductory sentence.
- 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.
- Ask the students to discuss the questions in (2) in pairs or small groups. Then ask them to read the text on worksheet B to check their answers.
- Check the answers with the whole class. You could then ask a few more questions to check understanding and to give further reading practice. For example, What was Saint Patrick forced to do when he was a slave? Why is the shamrock an official symbol of Ireland?
- Ask the students to discuss the questions in (4) about their own country's patron saint.
- Give each student a copy of worksheet C and ask them to do the crossword (or set as home work).

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/stpatricksdays/main.html

www.wilstar.com/holidays/patrick.htm

Answers

(a)b, (b)a, (c)a, (d)b, (e)a, (f)c, (g)c, (h)c, (i)b

