

Name: _____

Saint Patrick's Day— March 17

Saint Patrick's Day

March 17, is the feast of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. St. Patrick's Day is both a national and a religious holiday in Ireland. It is also a day when people the world over celebrate not only St. Patrick, but all things Irish.



Patrick himself wasn't Irish. He was born in Britain during the fourth century when Britain was part of the Roman Empire. At the age of 16, he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and brought to Ireland as a slave. There, he served as a shepherd for 6 years before escaping and eventually making his way back home.

Back in Britain, Patrick became a Christian and was eventually made a Catholic Bishop. One night, he had a dream telling him that the people in Ireland needed his help. So Patrick returned to Ireland.

Legend says that when Patrick arrived back in Ireland, he found the country overrun by snakes. Patrick managed to get rid of all the snakes by driving them into the sea. According to one story, he did this by beating on a drum (or ringing a bell) so loudly and so rapidly that the snakes couldn't stand the noise; they threw themselves into the sea where they turned into eels and sea serpents. In another story, Patrick charmed the snakes into a box which he then tossed out to sea. People say that the Irish Sea is rough and wavy because the snakes are stirring up the water as they try to get out of the box.

Patrick remained in Ireland for the next 40 years, teaching the Irish people about Christianity. Ireland then was a very different country from what it is today. The people living there were known as Celts. The Celts were pagans who worshiped "Nature". They were guided by religious leaders called Druids. These were wise and learned men who prayed to sacred trees like the oak tree. It was Patrick who converted the Celts from paganism to Christianity.

Patrick died in Northern Ireland on the 17th of March 461 C.E. The day has been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day ever since.

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1. When is St. Patrick's Day?

2. What do people celebrate on St. Patrick's Day?



3. When did Patrick live?

4. Where was he born?

5. What happened to Patrick when he was 16?

6. Why did Patrick go to Ireland a 2nd time?

7. There are snakes almost everywhere, but there are no snakes at all in Ireland. Why is this so according to Irish legend?

8. How does Irish legend explain the fact that the Irish Sea is especially rough?

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9. Who were the people living in Ireland during Patrick's time?



10. What did they worship?

11. Who were their religious leaders?

12. A patron is someone who supports or protects. What does it mean that Patrick is the patron Saint of Ireland?

13. Patrick was kidnapped, but he escaped and *eventually* made his way home to England. What does *eventually* mean?

14. When Patrick arrived back in Ireland, he found the country *overrun* by snakes. What does *overrun* mean here?

15. Patrick *converted* the Celts from paganism to Christianity. What does *converted* mean?

16. March 17th, the day Patrick died, is *commemorated* as St. Patrick's Day. What does *commemorated* mean?