

BEFORE YOU READ

Look at the pictures. Which ones are typically connected to Ireland and the Irish? Tick (✓) them.



A shamrock



B leprechaun



F rose



D Father Christmas



E wine



C whiskey



G the Tricolour flag



H the Union Jack



St Patrick's Day

St Patrick's Day on 17 March is the most important Irish festival. Because of terrible conditions in Ireland during the 1800s many Irish went to America, so the Irish community in the United States is very big. They went to live all over the country and took their traditions with them. There are also many Irish in Britain, and all over the world.

Who was St Patrick?

St Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. He was probably born in Wales, in about AD 389; his father was a Christian. When Patrick was sixteen years old some pirates¹ took him to Ireland, where he became a slave. After six years he escaped² to France. He became a priest there.

1. pirates : these people attack ships at sea and take things from them.
 2. escaped : ran away (because he wanted to be free).

GLOSSARY CHECK

You can find definitions of the following words in the glossary on pages 4-5. Check any words that are new or that you do not understand.

- a slave
- a parade
- a priest
- to march/marching bands
- a flag
- a bishop
- Romans
- fireworks

British and American Festivities

He returned to Ireland as a bishop in about 432. He converted a lot of Irish people to Christianity, and he introduced the Roman alphabet to Ireland. He wrote his autobiography in Latin about his life and work in Ireland. He died in about 461.

There are legends about St Patrick. One legend says he took all the snakes in Ireland to the top of a mountain and pushed them into the sea. Another legend says he used the shamrock to teach the Irish about Christianity: he used the three leaves of this plant to explain that for Christians God is three beings at the same time.

Celebrating St Patrick's Day

In Ireland St Patrick's Day is an important religious holiday. Businesses are closed and people go to church. In 1995 the Irish government started the St Patrick's Day Festival, a four-day festival in the capital city, Dublin. On St Patrick's Day there are a lot of tricolour flags in the streets. Irish people created this flag in 1848 with a special meaning. The green represents Irish Catholics (mostly from the south of Ireland) and the orange represents Irish Protestants (mostly from the north of Ireland). The white rectangle in the middle represents the hope for peace between



The Chicago River becomes green for St Patrick's Day.

Catholics and Protestants.

In the United States, the first celebration of St Patrick's Day was in Boston in 1737. Today on 17 March the Irish community in America organizes parades with marching bands and Irish music in many towns and cities. The parade in New York City is the biggest in the world: more than 150,000 people take part in the marching. And in the city of Chicago, the Chicago River is coloured green on St Patrick's Day!

The Irish believe that green is a lucky colour, and a lot of people wear green clothes on St Patrick's Day. The green shamrock is a symbol of Ireland, and another symbol is a leprechaun, a kind of Irish fairy. ¹ This little old man usually wears green.

1. fairy : a fantasy character, not real. A fairy has magical powers.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Are the following sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false ones.

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. St Patrick's Day is on 17 March. | T | F |
| b. The Irish community in America is very small. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. St Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. St Patrick became a priest in Ireland. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. St Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. A legend says that St Patrick pushed the leprechauns in Ireland into the sea. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. The orange part of the Tricolour represents the Irish Catholics. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Americans celebrated St Patrick's Day for the first time in 1737 in Boston. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Green is a lucky colour for the Irish. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. On St Patrick's Day the river in Chicago becomes orange and green. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Odd one out!

Circle the word that doesn't belong.

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------|---------|
| a. orange | green | colour | purple |
| b. snake | bishop | fish | horse |
| c. shamrock | leprechaun | rose | whiskey |
| d. legend | tale | story | music |
| e. France | Ireland | American | Britain |

Now use the odd words to complete the sentences.

- The band played traditional is green.
- My favourite is green.
- Patrick became a
- The is not a traditional symbol of Ireland.
- The community in the United States is very big.

What nationality are people that come from the countries in the box? Look at the endings of the nationalities in the table below. Write each nationality in the correct column.

America	Australia	Canada	China	Denmark
England	France	Germany	Greece	Holland
Ireland	Italy	Japan	Norway	Poland
Portugal	Scotland	South Africa	Spain	Wales

-an	-ish	-ese	others
American	English	Chinese	Welsh
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Read about what these people do for some of the festivities you know about. From the information guess what nationality they are.



a



b



c



d



e

- New Year's Eve is one of the biggest celebrations of the year in Lisa's country. She likes to spend Hogmanay in her home town with her friends.
- Sean celebrates his country's patron saint's day on March 17. Last year he spent a few days in the capital city because every year they organize special events.
- James and Mark have a special dinner with their family in November. They love their grandma's pumpkin pie.
- New Year is Chen's favourite time of year. It is a tradition in his country for relatives to give you little envelopes of money. His parents buy him new clothes.
- Sarah and Lucy usually have a traditional dinner at home on Christmas Day. Their favourite part of Christmas is reading jokes from the Christmas crackers and watching old films.