



Looking for a Leprechaun



photo courtesy Cliffs of Moher Visitors' Centre

Mini Fact:

The famous Cliffs of Moher are on the western edge of Ireland.



Mini Page map

St. Patrick's Day, March 17, is a national holiday in Ireland. It celebrates one of that country's special saints.

It is not a national holiday in the United States, but many Americans celebrate anyway. Even people who have no Irish ancestors like to pretend they're Irish for a day!



St. Patrick

St. Patrick was a missionary in Ireland during the fifth century. He was taken there as a slave when he was a teenager.

After he returned to his home in Britain, he believed he was called to go back to Ireland and spread Christianity.

Irish folklore

Ireland is famous for its folklore, or traditional stories that are passed down from generation to generation.

A favorite symbol of Ireland is the leprechaun (LEP-ruh-kawn). To celebrate St. Patrick's Day, The Mini Page learned about this crafty little fairy.

Meet a leprechaun

A leprechaun is a mysterious or magical being. According to Irish legend, leprechauns live in the countryside with humans. But they're rarely seen by people.

Most pictures of leprechauns show jolly little elves with pink cheeks and smiles. You might see these on items for sale around St. Patrick's Day, or on cereal boxes.

Folklore experts say leprechauns are indeed small, but their clothing is usually untidy and old. They might wear an old blue or green coat, short pants, woolen stockings and a wide-brimmed hat or stocking cap.



Illustration by Jean-Noël Lafargue

Instead of being happy, leprechauns are more likely to play tricks on humans. In fact, Irish people used to leave milk, cheese, bread or other foods on their doorsteps at night to keep the local leprechaun from making mischief, or trouble, at their homes.

Leprechauns are also thought to be miserly, or greedy for money. They make their homes in abandoned barns or churches, or in the woods or in caves.

Leprechauns at work

Leprechauns are thought to be shoemakers. They make and repair shoes for other fairies, who wear out their shoes quickly with all the dancing they do. Some people believe that you can tell when you're close to a leprechaun's home because you can hear the tapping of his little hammer as he works on shoes.

Other legends tell of leprechauns being builders and stonemasons, metalworkers and even bankers.

Leprechauns also love music and can remember old tunes that have been forgotten by humans. They like to play the harp, fiddle and Irish pipes.

More about Ireland

The Republic of Ireland is an island country in Europe. It shares the island with Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom.

Ireland is also known as the Emerald Isle because of its lush green hills and fields.

A long history

Experts believe Ireland has been inhabited by people for more than 8,000 years. Many of the traditions that are still honored in Ireland began with some of these early people.

The Celtic harp

In the 1500s, King Henry VIII added the image of a harp to the currency, or money, of Ireland. Since then, the Celtic harp has been a symbol of that country.



Image courtesy European Central Bank

Today, all Irish currency has the Celtic harp on it. "Eire" (AIR-uh) is the Irish word for "Ireland."

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPleprechauns

At the library:

- "Leprechauns and Irish Folklore" by Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce

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Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of leprechauns are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



CELEBRATE,
CURRENCY, ELF,
FAIRY, FOLKLORE,
LEPRECHAUN, MAGIC,
MISCHIEF, MISERLY,
MISSIONARY, MUSIC,
MYSTERY, PATRICK,
SAINT, SHOEMAKERS,
SYMBOL, TRADITION.

C E T A R B E L E C F A I R Y
I M Y S T E R Y K C I R T A P
G W Q F O L K L O R E L L V M
A S H O E M A K E R S V H G F
M I S S I O N A R Y M U S I C
T O J F P T R A D I T I O N K
N R L N O H F E I H C S I M P
I E C W Z N U A H C E R P E L
A Y C N E R R U C S Y M B O L
S W D B M I S E R L Y K D L J

Cook's Corner

Easy Irish Stew

You'll need:

- 2 pounds beef stew meat, cubed
- 1 medium onion, peeled and sliced
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and sliced
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 4 carrots, sliced

- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 cups beef broth
- salt and pepper
- water



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Place all ingredients except water in a slow cooker.
2. Cover and cook on HIGH for 4 hours. Stir every hour. Check during cooking to see if water is needed. Serves 6.

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Mini Jokes



- Patrick:** Why do leprechauns like dollar bills better than coins?
Patricia: Because they're green!

Eco Note



Without any greenhouse gases, Earth would be an icy wasteland. Greenhouse gases keep our planet livable by holding on to some of Earth's heat energy. This heat trapping is known as the **greenhouse effect**. But too much greenhouse gas makes Earth too warm. Burning fossil fuels for energy produces carbon dioxide (CO₂), a greenhouse gas, as a waste product. Putting so much new CO₂ into the air has made Earth warmer. If we continue on our current path, we will cause even more warming.

adapted from climatekids.nasa.gov

For later:

Look in your newspaper for notices about St. Patrick's Day events.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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1. Of the color that is between blue and yellow (5 letter adj)
□ □ □ □ □

2. A small plant with large flower leaflets (6 letter noun)
□ □ □ □ □ □

3. Something believed to bring good luck (5 letter noun)
□ □ □ □ □

4. An arc of colors that appears in the sky (7 letter noun)
□ □ □ □ □ □ □

1. Vicky loves to be outdoors when the trees have _____ leaves.
2. When Manuel sat on the grass, he saw a patch of _____.
3. Delores says her rabbit's foot is a _____ that brings her luck.
4. Of all the colors in a _____, Henri prefers purple and red.

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ROOTONYM®

by Jan and Carey Orr Cook

DIRECTIONS: Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blank.

Answers: Green, Clover, Charm, Rainbow