

St. Patrick's Day

Intermediate Level





Reading

ST. PATRICK'S DAY TODAY

1. March 17 is St. Patrick's Day. This is Ireland's most important national holiday, but it is also a special day for Irish people living throughout the world. On St. Patrick's Day, people of Irish **descent** wear the color green. This is the national color of Ireland. It is the color of the **shamrock**, a plant with three leaves on a single stem. The shamrock is a symbol of Ireland and St. Patrick's Day. In many cities, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated with **parades**, dances, and festive dinners. People greet each other with good wishes and often send cards to each other. Many stores are filled with green decorations, and cakes and candies are often decorated with the color green. Some restaurants and pubs even sell green beer!

A HISTORY OF ST. PATRICK'S DAY

2. St. Patrick was born at the end of the 4th century in Britain. When he was 16, he was **kidnapped** from his home by a group of Irish **pirates** and taken to Ireland. In Ireland, he was sold as a **slave** and had to work for the next six years as a **shepherd**. When Patrick was living in Ireland as a slave, he had a very lonely life and he turned to religion for comfort. After six long years of slavery, at the age of 22, he escaped to France and began to study the **bible**. Later he became a **priest** and decided to return to Ireland to **convert** the people to Christianity. Patrick was a very brave man and the people **admired** him. He traveled all over the country setting up schools and churches for the Irish people. He also worked very hard to develop a strong national spirit in the country.
3. There are many stories about St. Patrick. Some people say that he used the shamrock when he was teaching about Christianity. The shamrock, with its three leaves, represented the Trinity (the father, the son, and the holy spirit), which is a basic principle of the Catholic religion. Many people believe that St. Patrick performed **miracles**. The most famous story about St. Patrick is that he drove all the snakes out of Ireland. He put them in a box and threw them into the sea. People say that is why there aren't any snakes in Ireland today.
4. St. Patrick died on March 17, 461. Ever since his death, March 17 has been celebrated as St. Patrick's Day. It is an important day for the Irish because it celebrates the conversion of Ireland to Christianity. Nowadays, it is also a special day to celebrate one's Irish traditions and to have fun.



Comprehension

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner.
Then write the answers in the spaces below.

1. Which country celebrates St. Patrick's Day as a national holiday?

2. When and where was St. Patrick born?

3. What happened to Patrick when he was 16?

4. What kind of work did he do when he was a slave?

5. How long did he live in slavery?

6. What did Patrick do after he escaped to France?

7. Why did Patrick return to Ireland?

8. What did Patrick do to help the people of Ireland?

9. When did Patrick die?

10. How do people celebrate St. Patrick's Day?



Vocabulary Review

A. Matching

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| _____ 1. descent | a) to change |
| _____ 2. shamrock | b) a person who takes care of sheep |
| _____ 3. kidnap | c) a festive march with music and costumes |
| _____ 4. slave | d) to like and respect |
| _____ 5. shepherd | e) a thief or robber who lives on the sea |
| _____ 6. bible | f) a plant which usually has three leaves on each stem |
| _____ 7. priest | g) origin, coming from |
| _____ 8. convert | h) a person who is forced to work for someone and can be bought and sold |
| _____ 9. admire | i) an unbelievable event, an act of God |
| _____ 10. miracle | j) to steal a person |
| _____ 11. pirate | k) a religious man who works for the church |
| _____ 12. parade | l) a book of sacred writings of the church |

B. Complete the Sentences

Choose the correct words from the left column above to complete the following sentences.

- Pierre is of French _____. His grandparents moved to Canada from France 40 years ago.
- In many cartoon movies, a _____ wears a black patch over one eye and a scarf on his head.
- When his mother recovered from cancer, he thought it was a _____.
- The _____ is the national symbol of Ireland.
- There were many clowns, dancers, and marching bands in the _____.
- The _____ will perform the marriage ceremony in the church.
- Before the American Civil War, it was legal to own _____ in the US.
- You can _____ your American dollars to Canadian dollars at the airport.
- He is a very religious person. He reads the _____ every day.
- After they _____ the child, they asked for a million dollars for his safe return.



Pair Work (Student A)

A. Paraphrasing & Sharing Information

You and your partner each have a different reading about an Irish legend. Read your legend and retell it to your partner in your own words. Listen to your partner tell you about his or her legend.

Challenge

Do you know a legend from your own country? Share it with your partner too.

The Blarney Stone

The Blarney Stone is a stone located in a wall of the Blarney Castle in the small village of Blarney in Ireland. People believe that the Blarney Stone has magical powers. According to the legend, an old woman made the stone magical in order to reward the king after he had saved her from drowning. The stone gave the king the ability to speak very beautifully. People believe that anyone who kisses the Blarney Stone will receive "the gift of the gab", a special ability to talk sweetly and convincingly. It is not easy to reach the Blarney Stone. You have to climb many stairs in the castle and then lie on your back, bend downward, and hold onto iron bars for support.

B. Facts about Ireland

You and your partner each have some information about Ireland. Complete the sentences below by asking your partner for the missing information.

1. Ireland is also called the Emerald Island.
2. The capital of Ireland is _____ .
3. The official languages of Ireland are English and Gaelic.
4. Ireland is located _____ of Great Britain.
5. The shamrock is the national flower of Ireland.
6. The longest river in Ireland is the _____ .
7. The flag of Ireland has three vertical stripes.
8. The stripes on the flag of Ireland are _____ , _____ , and _____ .
9. The size of Ireland is 27,136 square miles (about 43,671 square kilometers).
10. The population of Ireland is _____ .
11. Ireland became self-governing in 1922.
12. St. Patrick's Day was first celebrated in North America in _____ (city) in 1737.



Pair Work (Student B)

A. Paraphrasing & Sharing Information

You and your partner each have a different reading about an Irish legend. Read your legend and retell it to your partner in your own words. Listen to your partner tell you about his or her legend.

Leprechauns (Irish Fairies)

According to legend, leprechauns are little Irish fairies who look like old men. They are only about two feet tall and they dress like shoemakers. They are not very friendly. They live alone and spend their time making shoes. They are very special because they possess a hidden pot of gold. You can try to find a leprechaun by listening for the sound of his hammer when he is making shoes. If you find one, you can try to force him to tell you where he has hidden his gold.

Challenge

Do you know a legend from your own country? Share it with your partner too.

B. Facts about Ireland

You and your partner each have some information about Ireland. Complete the sentences below by asking your partner for the missing information.

1. Ireland is also called _____ .
2. The capital of Ireland is Dublin.
3. The official languages of Ireland are _____ and _____ .
4. Ireland is located west of Great Britain.
5. The _____ is the national flower of Ireland.
6. The longest river in Ireland is the Shannon River.
7. The flag of Ireland has three _____ stripes.
8. The stripes on the flag of Ireland are green, white, and orange.
9. The size of Ireland is _____ square miles (about 43,671 square kilometers).
10. The population of Ireland is about four million.
11. Ireland became self-governing in _____ (date).
12. St. Patrick's Day was first celebrated in North America in Boston in _____ (date).



Vocabulary, Idioms, and Expressions

A. Reference

VOCABULARY, IDIOM OR EXPRESSION	DEFINITION
be green with envy – <i>idiom</i>	to be very jealous of what somebody else has
get (or give) the green light – <i>idiom</i>	to get (or give) permission to start something
be green – <i>idiom</i>	to have no experience
have a green thumb – <i>idiom</i>	to be a good gardener or have a natural ability with plants and flowers
the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence – <i>expression</i>	we always think that what other people have is better than what we have or that somebody else's situation is better than ours
the luck of the Irish – <i>expression</i>	to have the good luck of Irish people
the gift of the gab – <i>expression</i>	the ability to speak very well, to have a good way with words

B. Practice

Choose the correct idiom or expression from the list above to complete the following exercise.

- All my plants die. I don't have _____. Maybe I should buy some artificial plants.
- The new president of our club is a wonderful speaker. He is very persuasive. He really has _____.
- My friend is going to Hawaii for a three-week vacation. I wish I could go, but I have to work. I am _____.
- Sarah has won the lottery three times this month. She must have _____.
- Frank is thinking of quitting his job and moving to another company. He always thinks that _____.
- If Robert gets the job, the company will have to spend a lot of time training him. He is really _____. He knows nothing about sales.
- The government has finally given _____ to start building a new hospital.



Class Activity

Walk around the classroom and ask your classmates questions. Write the questions in the spaces provided below, and write your classmate's name on the right if he/she answers "yes."

#	Find someone...	Question	Classmate
1	who has seen green beer.		
2	who has felt green with envy.		
3	whose favorite color is green.		
4	who has a green thumb.		
5	who has been to the capital of Ireland.		
6	who has seen a parade in the past few months.		
7	who is afraid of snakes.		
8	who can describe a leprechaun.		
9	who can draw the flag of Ireland.		
10	who is planning to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.		



Answer Key

NOTE:

These activities are designed for intermediate-level adult ESL learners, but they may also be suitable for junior and senior high school ESL students.

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about the history associated with St. Patrick's Day. Includes a comprehension check, a vocabulary review, and an information gap activity to do in group, and a class survey. Fun idioms are introduced.

LEVEL: Intermediate

TIME: 2-3 hours

TAGS: St. Patrick's Day, shamrock, green, Ireland, history, luck, idioms, holiday, St. Patrick

Warm-Up and Introduction to St. Patrick's Day

You can begin by bringing pictures of shamrocks, leprechauns, pots of gold, an Irish map, an Irish flag, cookies or candies decorated in green, or any other symbols of St. Patrick's Day to class. Ask the students if they know why they have been seeing so much "green" in the stores lately. Then ask them to share any information they may already have about this celebration or about Ireland.

Reading

Begin by introducing any vocabulary you feel the students may have difficulty with. You may choose to have the students read the passage silently, or have the students take turns reading aloud in order to monitor pronunciation.

Comprehension

After reading the passage, break the students into pairs and have them practice asking and answering the comprehension questions. At the end of the oral practice, have the students write the answers. Review again orally with the whole class.

1. Ireland celebrates St. Patrick's Day as a national holiday.
2. St. Patrick was born at the end of the 4th century in Britain.
3. When he was 16, he was kidnapped from his home by a group of Irish pirates and taken to Ireland.
4. He worked as a shepherd while he was a slave.
5. He lived in slavery for six years.
6. After he escaped to France, he began to study the bible.

7. He returned to Ireland to convert people there to Christianity.
8. He traveled all over the country setting up schools and churches for the Irish people. He also worked very hard to develop a strong national spirit in the country.
9. St. Patrick died on March 17, 461.
10. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated with parades, dances, and festive dinners. Many people wear green, drink green beer, and send cards.

Vocabulary Review

A. MATCHING

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. g | 3. j | 5. b | 7. k | 9. d | 11. e |
| 2. f | 4. h | 6. l | 8. a | 10. i | 12. c |

B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. descent | 6. priest |
| 2. pirate | 7. slaves |
| 3. miracle | 8. convert |
| 4. shamrock | 9. bible |
| 5. parade | 10. kidnapped |

(continued on the next page...)



Answer Key cont.

Pair Work

Break the class into pairs. One student is given a reading on leprechauns and the other a legend about the Blarney Stone. Have the students read their own legend silently and then share the information orally with their partner. You may then have a few students retell the legends to the whole class. The students also have some information about Ireland. Each student has half the information. Have them complete the information sheets by asking their partner questions. You can also follow up this activity with a review of question formation. The students can write the questions for each of the underlined words.

Vocabulary, Idioms, and Expressions

A. REFERENCE

Teach expressions related to the color green and St. Patrick's Day. Explain the meanings, use them in context, have the students complete the sentences, and then have them write their own sentences using the idioms.

B. PRACTICE

1. a green thumb
2. the gift of the gab
3. green with envy
4. the luck of the Irish
5. the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence
6. green
7. the green light

Class Activity

Distribute the worksheet. Have the students circulate around the class asking the questions on the sheet. When a student finds a classmate who can answer the question, he/she will then write the student's name on the line and follow up with one more question of his/her own. Ex. *Have you ever been green with envy?* If the student answers "yes", the second question might be: *Who did you envy?* Try to encourage the students to engage in real conversation during this activity. Follow up by sharing the information with the class.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Color, Traveled, Kilometers, and Favorite*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Colours, Travellers, Kilometres, and Favourite*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.