

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY

WHY DO WE WEAR GREEN ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY?

Traditionally, the color green represents Ireland, or the Emerald Isle. However, according to legend the color green also has the magical power to make people invisible to leprechauns or other fairy creatures. That means that wearing green can save you from getting pinched by these mischievous fairies. If you don't wear green on St. Patrick's Day, watch out!



WHY SHAMROCKS?

In ancient Ireland a shamrock was a symbol of the rebirth of spring, and was considered a sacred plant. In the 1600s the shamrock became a symbol of Irish *nationalism*. During the time when the English were invading Irish land, people would wear shamrocks as a symbol of their *heritage*.



WHERE DID THE LEPRECHAUN COME FROM?

The "lobaircin", or leprechaun, most likely originated from Celtic folklore and their belief in fairies—tiny men and women who had magical powers, used for both good and evil. In Celtic tales, leprechauns were the ones who mended shoes for other fairies. They were grumpy and mean-spirited, and best known for their trickery. The leprechaun was never a symbol of St. Patrick's Day, but in 1959 a Disney film was released that transformed the leprechaun's image into that of a cheery, good-hearted soul.

WHO IS SAINT PATRICK?



St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, although he was actually born in England. As a youth he was taken prisoner by the Irish and held in captivity there for six years. During that time he became a *devout* Christian. It is said that he heard God's voice, which helped him escape captivity, and that later he had visions of an angel, who told him to return to Ireland as a missionary. It is widely believed that Patrick was the one who introduced Christianity to Ireland. It is also believed that he died on March 17, which is how St. Patrick's Day was born.

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY - CONTINUED

DID YOU KNOW:

Initially, St. Patrick's Day was observed as a religious holiday. Until the 1970s, all pubs were forced to stay closed for business on March 17th. Then in 1995, the government of Ireland decided to use St. Patrick's Day as a chance to promote tourism.

VOCABULARY:

Nationalism: feeling patriotic toward your home country

Heritage: cultural traditions passed on through the generations

Devout: deep feeling or commitment to a cause or (religious) belief

ACTIVITY:

One of the most famous contributions of traditional Irish culture is their knot designs. They typically consist of one segment of line twisted into an ornate shape or a few geometrical shapes overlapped to create a complex design. Use the cut-out shapes on the following page to create the design pictured below.



CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINES

