

Name _____

St. Patrick's Day

Learn about some of the history of St. Patrick's Day and the symbols associated with the holiday. Answer the questions that follow.

St. Patrick's Day is an annual feast day celebrating the patron saint that the day is named after, Saint Patrick. It is a national holiday in Ireland and is celebrated on March 17. It is said that St. Patrick drove out all of the snakes in Ireland, but it is believed that Ireland never had snakes to begin with so that probably isn't true. Irish immigrants began observing the holiday in Boston in 1737 and the first parade was held in New York City in 1766 and gained popularity over the years.

In America, there are many parades and celebrations. The original color associated with St. Patrick's Day was blue, but it became green later to represent the Emerald Isle which is the nickname of Ireland because it is so green there. A popular tradition is that you get pinched if you don't wear green. Ouch!

Corned beef and cabbage is a popular food eaten on St. Patrick's Day in America. Cabbage was a popular food in Ireland and corned beef started being used because it was a cheaper alternative to the traditional meal of Irish bacon.

The shamrock is a popular symbol of St. Patrick's Day. The shamrock was worn as a badge on the lapel to show Irish pride in the 1600s. Three is Ireland's magic number and the three petals that make up the shamrock are supposed to bring good luck.

The leprechaun is another symbol attached with St. Patrick's Day. The leprechaun is a Celtic legend stemming from their belief in fairies. He is dressed like a shoemaker, with pointed shoes and hat. Leprechauns are supposed to be unfriendly little men who live alone in the forest. They spend all of their time making shoes and guarding their treasures. The legend is if someone catches a leprechaun, he will be forced to tell them where he hides all of his gold. However, the leprechaun must be watched at all times. If his captor looks away, the leprechaun will vanish along with his treasure.

St. Patrick's Day is a lively holiday in many parts of the world and for one day out of the year anyone can be Irish and join in the celebration!

1. When and where was the first St. Patrick's Day parade held in America? _____
2. When is St. Patrick's Day? _____
3. What color was originally associated with St. Patrick's Day in Ireland? _____
4. The shamrock was worn to show this, in the 1600's. _____
5. Leprechauns supposedly spend all of their time doing what? _____