

Name: _____

Symbols of St. Patrick's Day



By Mikki Sadil

What do shamrocks, leprechauns, and the Blarney Stone have in common? They are all symbols of St. Patrick's Day, which is celebrated on March 17th. The shamrock is the common name for several different kinds of clovers native to Ireland. Legend tells us that when St. Patrick was converting pagans into Christians during the 5th Century A.D., he used the shamrock as a symbol to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity, the idea that God is one entity with three persons: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. The Irish have considered shamrocks as good-luck symbols for centuries, and many other non-Irish people also believe they bring good luck.

The word "blarney" can mean either nonsense or flattering talk. Tradition says that if you kiss the Blarney Stone in Blarney Castle in Ireland, you'll receive the "gift of gab", or eloquence and powers of persuasion in your speech. No one knows exactly how this stone came to have such magical effects, because different legends about it say different things. The stone sits in one of the 18 foot thick walls surrounding the castle, between the parapet and the main castle wall, and ten stories up. To kiss it, you lie down on your back, have someone hold on to your legs, and bend backwards as far down as you can to reach the stone. That's quite a feat!



The name leprechaun comes from an old Irish word "luchorpan" which means "little body." A leprechaun is an Irish fairy who looks like an old man. He is no taller than 2 feet, usually dressed like a shoemaker wearing a cocked hat and a leather apron. Legend says leprechauns are unfriendly, aloof, live alone, and spend their days making shoes. Each one also has a pot of gold. You can track down a leprechaun by the sound of his hammer, and if you catch him and threaten to not let him go, he might tell you where the gold is. But you must keep your eyes on him every second, because leprechauns are very tricky and can easily distract you. When that happens, he vanishes and you'll never find the pot of gold!

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1. St. Patrick used a shamrock to...
 - a. keep track of leprechauns
 - b. guide people to the Blarney Stone
 - c. find pagans in Ireland
 - d. teach people about religion
2. According to Irish legend, a leprechaun is...
 - a. a little man, about two inches tall
 - b. an Irish fairy who makes shoes
 - c. a goldsmith who dresses in green clothes
 - d. a magical creature who collects shamrocks and turns them into gold
3. According to Irish legend, what magical effects does the Blarney Stone have?

4. Explain why it would be difficult for many people to kiss the Blarney Stone.

5. According to the article, how could you find a leprechaun? Also, how do you get a leprechaun to tell you where his gold is?

ANSWER KEY

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3. According to Irish legend, what magical effects does the Blarney Stone have?
It gives you "the gift of gab." If you kiss the Blarney Stone you gain eloquence and powers of persuasion in your speech.
4. Explain why it would be difficult for many people to kiss the Blarney Stone.
It is difficult to reach. You need to lie down on your back, have someone hold your legs, and bend backwards to reach it.
5. According to the article, how could you find a leprechaun? Also, how do you get a leprechaun to tell you where his gold is?
You can find a leprechaun by listening for the sound of his hammer. You can get him to tell you where the gold is by threatening to not let him go.