



Students Should Know Who Saint Patrick Was

March 17, 2022 by Educator Barnes

During my second year in the classroom, I studied popular holidays with my students. During my undergraduate studies at Purdue University, I learned the importance of students having a say in what they learn. I gave a survey to ask for student input. Many students expressed their enjoyment learning about holidays in elementary school, and they wanted to continue learning about them.

At the time, I was teaching 6th grade English in a middle school. We narrowed down the suggestions and holidays made the final list. Then, we identified the holidays we would study. St. Patrick's Day made that final list. Before someone slides in the comments asking why I would teach this, I assure you I tied this to academic standards. Furthermore, students were engaged in this lesson because they had input on the topic. I assert it is important for students to help pick the topics. Then, the teachers can use their professional expertise to assign standards to the topic. This is not hard for competent educators.

Below are the facts about St. Patrick's Day that my students found surprising or really enjoyed learning.

1. Saint Patrick was not Irish.

Although Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, he was not Irish. St. Patrick was born in Britain.

2. Saint Patrick was kidnapped and was enslaved.

St. Patrick grew up in a wealthy family in Ireland. One day his family's property was breached. He was taken to Ireland and spent some years being enslaved.

3. Saint Patrick escaped slavery but returned to Ireland

Although St. Patrick managed to escape from being in slavery and made it back home, he chose to eventually return to Ireland to teach others about Christianity.

4. Saint Patrick did not use a shamrock to explain the trinity.

Legend has it that St. Patrick used a shamrock to explain the Christian concept of the trinity which is the God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, there is no proof that this occurred.

5. The original color associated with Saint Patrick was blue, not green.

People used to wear a color called St. Patrick's blue. When Ireland sought independence, the color associated with St. Patrick's Day and Ireland changed to green.

6. March 17 is when Saint Patrick died.

Although holidays can commemorate a person's birthday, March 17 is the date on which historians believe St. Patrick died.

7. Saint Patrick's Day started as a solemn religious holiday.

Since the holiday occurs on the day of death of the patron saint of Ireland, this started as a solemn occasion in Ireland. However, Irish immigrants in America evolved the holiday and changed it to a celebration of all facets of Ireland.

8. Saint Patrick did not drive the snakes from Ireland.

Folklore says that St. Patrick drove snakes from Ireland. However, the more likely conclusion is the geographic location and conditions of Ireland during the time period when Saint Patrick lived.

While it is okay to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day by wearing green, it is important to know the facts surrounding this holiday.

Resources

[Britannica: Saint Patrick – Bishop and Patron Saint of Ireland](#)

[History Channel: St. Patrick Legends and Myths Debunked](#)

[History Channel: Who Was St. Patrick?](#)

[National Geographic: St. Patrick's Day Facts: Shamrocks, Snakes, and a Saint](#)

[Time Magazine: Shamrocks Are Everywhere on St. Patrick's Day. Here's How the Three-Leaf Clover Became a Symbol of All Things Irish](#)

[The Washington Post: Did Saint Patrick get rid of the snakes in Ireland?](#)