



# Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick is the **patron saint** of Ireland, known for introducing Christianity to the country.

## Early Life

### Patrick's Capture and Escape

When Patrick was 16 years old, he was enslaved by a group of Irish pirates.

He was taken to Ireland where he was an enslaved person for six years.



While he was there, Patrick was made to work as a shepherd and it was during this time that he began to pray to God for the first time.



After six years of enslavement, Patrick heard a voice telling him that he would be able to go home soon because a ship was waiting for him. That night, Patrick fled from where he was being kept and made his way to a **port**, which was 200 miles away. He found a ship that was almost ready to set sail and managed to persuade the ship's captain to take him away from Ireland.

Not much is known for certain about Saint Patrick because he lived such a long time ago. He is thought to have been born in the fifth century in a town along the west coast of Britain. His family were thought to be very wealthy because his father Calpornius, held a very important title in ancient Rome. Patrick's grandfather Potitus, was a Catholic **priest** and it is thought that his whole family believed in Christianity. Despite this, Patrick was not religious himself.



## The Wild Boar

When the boat reached Britain three days after setting sail, Patrick and the crew all left the ship. They are said to have walked for 28 days through the forest and began to feel unwell because they were so hungry. Patrick told the ship's crew to put their faith in God and prayed that they would find something to eat soon.



Soon after Patrick had prayed, the crew found a group of wild pigs roaming in the forest. Patrick knew that his prayers had been answered and became stronger in his faith.

### Patrick Returns to Ireland

After spending a long time studying, Patrick became a Christian priest. A few years after returning home, Patrick said that he heard a voice one night telling him to return to Ireland and help the Irish people.



Patrick knew that many of the Irish people were not Christian. They were known as Pagan and they worshipped many different gods.



Patrick knew a lot about Ireland because he was an enslaved person there for so many years. He bravely chose to go back to Ireland and teach the Irish people about Christianity.

With help from God, Patrick converted thousands of Irish people to Christianity and began building churches across the country.



Patrick was well known for using things that Irish people already knew about to explain Christianity to them. One of these examples was a plant with three leaves called a shamrock, which Patrick used to teach people about the Holy Trinity.



After teaching people about Christianity for over 40 years, Patrick died on 17<sup>th</sup> March 461. That is why St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on this day. After his death, Patrick was called a saint because of how holy and religious he had been throughout his life and many people in Ireland have never forgotten how special Patrick was to their country.

### Glossary

**patron saint:**

The saint who protects or guides a person or place.



**port:**

A town or city with a harbour where ships are loaded or unloaded.



**priest:**

A person who is allowed to perform religious ceremonies.

# Questions

1. Who was Potitus?

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2. What was Potitus' job? Tick one.

- a Roman businessman
- a Christian missionary
- a Catholic priest
- an Irish pirate

3. **His family were thought to be very wealthy...**

What does the word 'wealthy' mean? Tick one.

- angry
- tired
- respected
- rich

3. At what age was Saint Patrick enslaved by pirates?

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4. Find and copy a word from the section entitled **The Wild Boar** which means the same as 'wandering'.

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5. Why can't historians be certain about the details of Saint Patrick's life?

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6. Why do you think that Saint Patrick had to persuade the ship's captain to take him?

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7. 'Saint Patrick was brave for returning to Ireland.'  
Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. Who was Potitus?

**Potitus was Saint Patrick's grandfather.**

2. What was Potitus' job? Tick one.

- a Roman businessman
- a Christian missionary
- a Catholic priest**
- an Irish pirate

3. **His family were thought to be very wealthy...**

What does the word 'wealthy' mean? Tick one.

- angry
- tired
- respected
- rich**

3. At what age was Saint Patrick enslaved by pirates?

**Saint Patrick was enslaved by pirates when he was 16.**

4. Find and copy a word from the section entitled **The Wild Boar** which means the same as 'wandering'.

**roaming**

5. Why can't historians be certain about the details of Saint Patrick's life?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Historians cannot be certain about the details of Saint Patrick's life because he lived such a long time ago and there is nobody left alive to ask or verify the details.**

6. Why do you think that Saint Patrick had to persuade the ship's captain to take him?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Saint Patrick had to persuade the ship's captain to take him because Saint Patrick was not a member of the crew and the captain thought that he could get in trouble.**

7. 'Saint Patrick was brave for returning to Ireland.'  
Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I think Saint Patrick was brave for returning to Ireland because he had been an enslaved person there and treated horribly in the past.**



## Enslaved

At the age of 16, Patrick was enslaved by a group of Irish pirates, who transported him to Ireland and forced him to work as a shepherd – herding sheep and pigs on Slemish Mountain in County Antrim.

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While he was enslaved by the Irish raiders, Patrick began to pray to God for the first time, believing that God had mercy on his ignorance and would forgive his sins if he converted to Christianity.

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After six years of enslavement, Patrick believed that he heard a voice telling him that he would be able to go home soon and that his 'ship was ready'. That night, Patrick fled from enslavement and made his way to a port, which was 200 miles away from where he had been kept.

# Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, known for introducing Christianity to the country during the second half of the fifth century. Saint Patrick's importance to many people in Ireland does not come from the historical details of his life but from the inspiration of his experiences which led to his return to Ireland in order to spread the message of Jesus.

## Early Life

Not much about Saint Patrick's childhood can be said with certainty due to the time that has passed since he was alive. However, it is broadly agreed that Patrick was born during the fifth century in the village of Bannavem Taburniae – which, although it cannot be placed on any modern map, is believed to have been along the west coast of Britain.

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Patrick's family were thought to be very wealthy. His father, Calpornius, was both a **deacon** and a decurion – a member of the **Roman Senate** – while Patrick's grandfather, Potitus, was a Catholic priest. Despite the religious links within his family, Patrick himself was not a religious man.



There, he found a ship that was almost ready to set sail; with difficulty, he managed to persuade the ship's reluctant captain to take him away from Ireland.

**Patrick's Brave Return**

After spending many years studying, Patrick became a Christian priest.



One night, almost ten years after returning home, Patrick heard a voice urging him to return to Ireland and help the Irish people.



From his years as an enslaved person, Patrick was aware that many of the Irish people were not Christian. Known as Pagans, many Irish people worshipped numerous gods and fiercely opposed Christianity. Despite this, Patrick felt that it was his duty to spread God's word and bravely chose to return to Ireland.

**Glossary**

**deacon:**

A member of the church. Holds a lower ranking than that of a priest.



**Roman Senate:**

A place where laws were created and voted on in ancient Rome.

**The Wild Boar**

Three days after setting sail, Patrick and the ship's crew reached the stormy shores of Britain. After leaving the boat, they are said to have walked for 28 days through the wilderness, beginning to feel faint from the lack of food. Patrick told the ship's crew to put their faith in God and prayed that they would find something to eat soon.



Soon after Patrick had prayed, the crew found a group of wild pigs roaming in the forest. Patrick knew that his prayers had been answered and became stronger in his faith.

**Conversions to Christianity**

With help from God, Patrick converted thousands of Irish people to Christianity and began building churches across the country.



Using knowledge about Irish culture and customs which he had gained while an enslaved person, Patrick used well-known Irish symbols to explain new Christian concepts to those he met. One example of this was that Patrick used the leaves of a shamrock – a plant with three leaves – to represent God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit when teaching about the Holy Trinity.



After spreading the word of Christianity for over 40 years, Patrick died on 17<sup>th</sup> March 461: the date we now commemorate with a feast named in his honour. After his death, Patrick was declared a saint because of how holy and religious he had been throughout his life. Many people in Ireland have never forgotten how special Patrick was to their country.

# Questions

1. Which of these Irish symbols did Saint Patrick use to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity? Tick one.

- Celtic Cross
- leprechaun
- shamrock
- harp

2. **Patrick heard a voice urging him to return to Ireland.**

What does the word 'urging' mean? Tick one.

- preventing
- encouraging
- whispering
- humouring

3. What job did Saint Patrick's grandfather do?

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4. Find and copy one word which means the same as 'ran away'.

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5. Find and copy one word which shows that the captain was hesitant to take Saint Patrick on board his ship.

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6. Why can't Saint Patrick's childhood be discussed with certainty?

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7. Why aren't the exact historical details of Saint Patrick's life important?

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8. Why can't Saint Patrick's place of birth be placed on any modern map?

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9. Explain why Saint Patrick is so special to many Irish people.

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# Answers

1. Which of these Irish symbols did Saint Patrick use to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity? Tick one.

- Celtic Cross
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What does the word 'urging' mean? Tick one.

- preventing
- encouraging**
- whispering
- humouring

3. What job did Saint Patrick's grandfather do?

**Saint Patrick's grandfather was a Catholic priest.**

4. Find and copy one word which means the same as 'ran away'.

**fled**

5. Find and copy one word which shows that the captain was hesitant to take Saint Patrick on board his ship.

**reluctant**

6. Why can't Saint Patrick's childhood be discussed with certainty?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Saint Patrick's childhood cannot be discussed with certainty due to the time that has passed since he was alive and the lack of surviving evidence, text or witnesses.**

7. Why aren't the exact historical details of Saint Patrick's life important?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The exact details of Saint Patrick's life aren't important because Saint Patrick's importance to Ireland does not come from the historical details of his life but from the inspiration of his experiences which led to his return to Ireland in order to spread the message of Jesus.**

8. Why can't Saint Patrick's place of birth be placed on any modern map?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Saint Patrick's place of birth (Bannavem Taburniae) cannot be placed on any modern map as it had a Roman name which is no longer used in Britain and no one knows where the modern equivalent of the place would be due to a lack of evidence.**

9. Explain why Saint Patrick is so special to many Irish people.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: He is so special because he introduced a new religion to Ireland which changed the lives of many Irish people; He is special because he put himself in a dangerous situation to help to introduce God into the lives of many Irish people; He is so special because many Irish people remember the risks that Saint Patrick took in order to help them in God's name.**



# Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, known for introducing Christianity to the country during the latter half of the fifth century. Saint Patrick's significance in history does not come from the accuracy of the details of his life. It comes from the inspiration gained when listening to his experiences and his return to Ireland in order to spread the message of Jesus.

## An Enslaved Person

At the age of 16, Patrick was enslaved by a group of Irish pirates, who transported him to Ireland and forced him to work as a shepherd – herding sheep and pigs on Slemish Mountain in County Antrim.



Patrick believed that he had been taken as punishment for his lack of belief in God.

Therefore, while enslaved, Patrick began to pray to God for the first time; he believed that God would have mercy on his ignorance and would forgive his sins if he converted to Christianity.

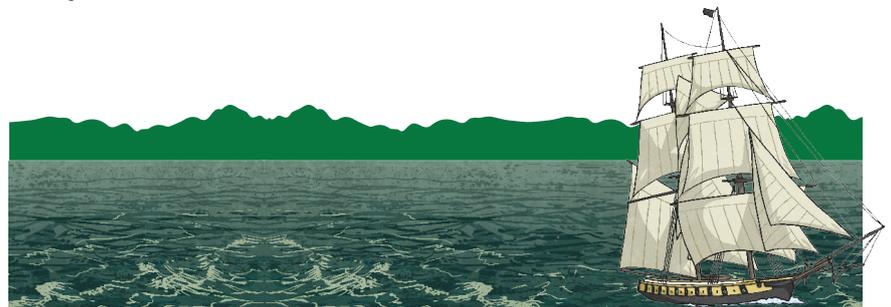


After six years of enslavement, Patrick believed that he heard a voice telling him that he would soon be able to go home and that his 'ship was ready'.

## Early Life

There is not much about Saint Patrick's childhood which can be said with any certainty. However, it is broadly agreed that Patrick was born during the fifth century in the village of Bannavem Taburniae – which, although it cannot be placed on any modern map, is believed to have been along the west coast of Britain.

Patrick's family were thought to be very wealthy. His father, Calpornius, was both a deacon (a member of the church ranking below a priest) and a decurion (a powerful political figure in ancient Rome). Patrick's grandfather, Potitus, was a Catholic priest. Despite the religious links within his family, Patrick himself was not a religious man, stating in his book 'Confessio' that he 'did not, indeed, know the true God'.



That night, Patrick fled his enslavers and travelled to a port over 200 miles away from where he had been kept. There he found a ship that was almost ready to set sail and, with difficulty, managed to persuade the ship's reluctant captain to take him away from Ireland.

Patrick's Courageous Return

After many studious years, Patrick became a Christian priest and, almost a decade after returning home, he heard a voice urging him to return to Ireland.



The voice said,

**"We beg you, holy boy, to come and walk again among us."**

Patrick was deeply touched and felt compelled to return to the land which had held him as an enslaved person for so long.



From his years as an enslaved person, Patrick was aware that many of the Irish people were not Christian. Known as Pagans, they worshipped numerous gods and fiercely opposed Christianity.



To return as a Christian missionary would be incredibly dangerous yet, despite this, Patrick felt that it was his duty to spread God's word and bravely chose to return to Ireland.

The Wild Boar

Three days after setting sail, Patrick and the ship's crew reached the stormy shores of Britain. After disembarking, they are said to have walked for 28 days through the wilderness. Beginning to feel faint from the lack of nourishment, Patrick told the ship's crew to put their faith in God and prayed that they would find something to eat soon.



Soon after Patrick had prayed, the crew happened upon a herd of wild boar roaming in the undergrowth. Patrick knew that his prayers had been answered and became stronger in his faith.

After spreading the word of Christianity for over 40 years, Patrick died on 17<sup>th</sup> March 461: the date we now commemorate with a feast named in his honour.



During his time in Ireland, Patrick had converted thousands of Irish people to Christianity and built churches across the land. Using his knowledge of Irish culture and customs, which he had gained while an enslaved person, Patrick used well-known Irish symbols to explain new Christian concepts to those he met.



One example of this was that Patrick used the leaves of a shamrock – a plant with three leaves – to represent God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit when teaching about the Holy Trinity. Many people in Ireland have never forgotten how special Patrick was to their country and continue to commemorate his memory with fondness to this day.



# Questions

1. What is 'Confessio'? Tick one.

- the name of a place in Ireland
- the name of the ship on which Saint Patrick escaped
- the name of Saint Patrick's grandfather
- the name of the book written by Saint Patrick

2. **...during the latter half of the fifth century.**

In this sentence, which word could the author have used instead of 'latter'? Tick one.

- beginning
- middle
- second
- whole

3. Find and copy one phrase which shows that many scholars believe the same ideas about Saint Patrick's childhood.

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4. **After many studious years...** How else could the author have written this phrase?

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5. Where did Saint Patrick happen upon the herd of boar?

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6. 'Saint Patrick would have reached the port easily.' Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

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7. If you were the captain, would you have agreed to let Saint Patrick on board? Explain why.

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8. Explain why Saint Patrick may have used the shamrock to symbolise the Holy Trinity.

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9. Explain why Saint Patrick's return to Ireland was courageous.

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10. Explain the impact that Saint Patrick had on many people in Ireland.

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# Answers

1. What is 'Confessio'? Tick one.

- the name of a place in Ireland
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- the name of the book written by Saint Patrick**

2. **...during the latter half of the fifth century.**

In this sentence, which word could the author have used instead of 'latter'? Tick one.

- beginning
- middle
- second**
- whole

3. Find and copy one phrase which shows that many scholars believe the same ideas about Saint Patrick's childhood.

**it is broadly agreed that**

4. **After many studious years...** How else could the author have written this phrase?

**Accept any suitable alternative to the above phrase, such as: after studying for many years; after learning for a long time.**

5. Where did Saint Patrick happen upon the herd of boar?

**Saint Patrick happened upon the herd of boar in the undergrowth.**

6. 'Saint Patrick would have reached the port easily.' Do you agree with this statement?

Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: No, I don't think Saint Patrick would have reached the port easily because he would have had to travel 200 miles on foot and that is a long way.**

7. If you were the captain, would you have agreed to let Saint Patrick on board? Explain why.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I would have let Saint Patrick on board because it would have been clear that he had been poorly treated and needed to escape.**

8. Explain why Saint Patrick may have used the shamrock to symbolise the Holy Trinity.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Saint Patrick may have used the shamrock because it had three leaves and there were three parts of the Holy Trinity and he wanted to use something the Irish people were already familiar with as a basis for his teaching.**

9. Explain why Saint Patrick's return to Ireland was courageous.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Saint Patrick was brave to return to Ireland because he was an enslaved person while there and treated horribly in the past; because he had faced a lot of hardship in his life and turned down a peaceful life to endure more trouble; because he knew that pagans fiercely opposed Christianity and he was putting himself in danger.**

10. Explain the impact that Saint Patrick had on many people in Ireland.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: He introduced a new religion to Ireland which changed the lives of many Irish people; He put himself in a dangerous situation to help to introduce God into the lives of many Irish people; He changed many lives by spreading the word of God; He established many churches which provided shelter and charity to many Irish people.**