

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS



HOW MANY
CAN YOU ANSWER?

A GAME OF

TRIVIA

MARCH IS IRISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH AND TIME TO CELEBRATE SAINT PATRICK'S DAY!

IN HONOR OF BOTH WE CHALLENGE YOU TO A GAME OF IRISH TRIVIA –

HOW MANY QUESTIONS CAN YOU ANSWER?

1 "KISS ME I'M IRISH" HOW MANY US CITIZENS ACTUALLY ARE?

Roughly 38 million US citizens are Irish. That's more than seven times the population of Ireland itself which is around 4.6 million. With that many Irish Americans it's no wonder St. Patrick's Day is popular in the US. Irish is the nation's second most frequently reported ancestry. German is the first.

2 WHY DOES THE US HAVE SO MANY IRISH AMERICAN CITIZENS?

The potato famine of 1845-1849 played a big role in the immigration to the United States. At that time Ireland was an agricultural nation with more than 8 million farmers who were among the poorest people in the western world, a quarter of which were never taught to read or write. This mass population was reliant on potato crops and after 5 consecutive failed years of crops, more than 1 million men, woman and children died of famine causing another million to flee to the US for a better life.

3 HOW CAN YOU SPOT AN IRISH LAST NAME?

Very easily until some families chose to edit their names to avoid discrimination. Yes, Irish immigrants in the 1800's who came to the US were discriminated against for their poor living conditions and their willingness to work for low wages. Many chose to drop the tell-tale Irish prefix of their last name to sound less Irish for that reason. Two common Irish prefixes that were a dead giveaway were "Mac" as in MacMurphy and "O" as in O'Connor. The prefix "Mac" means "the son of" so MacMurphy would be the son of Murphy whereas "O" means the "grandson of" so O'Connor would be the grandson of Connor. If you want to sound Irish just add an "O" or a "Mac" to your last name on St. Patrick's Day. Irish pride is everywhere now.

4 LEPRECHAUNS – WHERE DO WE CATCH ONE AND HOW CAN WE GET THEIR POT OF GOLD?

The pot of gold is located at the end of a rainbow of course, but Irish folklore warns that they are trickster fairies and cannot be trusted. This is why you might get pinched if you don't wear green.

5 "LUCK OF THE IRISH" WHERE DID THAT SAYING COME FROM?

The phrase luck of the Irish is commonly thought to mean "extreme good fortune." However, according to Edward T. O'Donnell, an Associate Professor of History at Holy Cross College and author of 1001 Things Everyone Should Know About Irish American History, the term has not an Irish origin but "a happier, if not altogether positive," American one.

"During the gold and silver rush years in the second half of the 19th century, a number of the most famous and successful miners were of Irish and Irish American birth. . . . Over time this association of the Irish with mining fortunes led to the expression 'luck of the Irish.' Of course, it carried with it a certain tone of derision, as if to say, only by sheer luck, as opposed to brains, could these fools succeed."

6 WHO WAS SAINT PATRICK AND WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF ST. PATRICK'S DAY?

St. Patrick is one of the world's most popular saints. His path to that role is quite incredible and it did not start in Ireland. He was born in England in the year 387 A.D. to a wealthy Christian family. At age 15 he was kidnapped by Irish pirates from his home in Britain, and sold into slavery by way of ship to Ireland where he spent six years in captivity. It's said prayers and his faith sustained him until his escape. Once free, he studied to become a priest and went on to become a bishop. His years were spent as a missionary converting many of the Irish people from paganism to Christianity. He died March 17, 461 A.D. and as Ireland's beloved bishop, many villagers across Ireland mourned his death on that day. From that, the tradition of celebrating him every March 17th has followed.

7 GINGER ROOTS – ARE ALL RED HEADS IRISH?

While Ireland is home to the annual *Irish Redhead Convention*, (redheadconvention.com) it cannot claim to be the sole origin of every redhead, which is the rarest human hair color. Ireland does have the genetic lead based on these stats: Scotland, 10% of the population has red hair and approximately 35% carry the recessive redhead gene. In Ireland as many as 10% of the population have red, auburn, or strawberry blond hair and it is thought that up to 46% of the Irish population carry the recessive redhead gene.

8 HOW DID THE SHAMROCK BECOME AN IRISH SYMBOL?

The shamrock or the clover leaf was used as an example by St. Patrick as a missionary to teach the holy trinity, the Father, son and Holy Spirit. A four leaf clover is rare and thought to be lucky if found.

9 WHAT ARE THE ODDS OF FINDING A FOUR LEAF CLOVER?

1 in 10,000 – better than finding a Leprechaun.

10 WHAT IS A BLARNEY STONE AND WHY DO PEOPLE KISS IT?

The Blarney stone is a stone at the site of a demolished castle that is actually a 330 million year old piece of limestone. People travel to kiss the stone because it's supposed to give a person the gift of eloquence and persuasiveness through speech. Winston Churchill is one notable figure who kissed the Blarney stone in 1912 and he went on to be a pretty masterful speaker. It might be worth puckering up?

11 HOW DID ST. PATRICK'S DAY BECOME SUCH A BOOZY/DRINKING DAY?

Believe it or not, don't blame it on the Guinness - The date falls during the Catholic fasting season of Lent, but on Saint Patrick's Day the prohibitions against eating meat were lifted so that the Irish could celebrate their patron saint with dancing, drinking, and feasting. That's how it became a day to indulge.

12 AS WITH ALL CULTURES, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAVE ENDURED HARDSHIPS, GREAT WISDOM IS PASSED DOWN IN SAYINGS OR "PROVERBS." CAN YOU QUOTE ONE IRISH PROVERB, SAYING OR BLESSING?

This is one of my favorites - "A good laugh and a long sleep are the two best cures for anything"

13 WHAT'S THE TRUE COLOR OF ST. PATRICK'S DAY?

A particular blue hue (which we would describe today as royal blue) was known as St. Patrick blue and for hundreds of years it was this blue that was associated with the holiday. However, green became the dominant color of St Patrick's Day over time as the holiday was used to highlight Irish nationalism against British rule in the 1790s.

HOW'D YOU SCORE? Your Irish level:

- 13 Shamrocks – Pot of gold
- 9-12 Shamrocks - Leprechaun
- 6-9 Shamrocks – Blarney kisser
- 4-6 Shamrocks – Lucky charms cereal box pro
- 1-3 Shamrocks – Malarkey MacLackin'



Slainte! (Good Health) to everyone this March and safe UBER travels if enjoying a pint or two.

By Devon Gibney Hocker -Irish-American descendant of James Thomas O'Gibney and Margaret MacMahon



Above: 1918 - my great grandfather James O'Gibney sr. with my grandfather James Gibney Jr. (the O was dropped)



Right: 1951 my father, Terence Joseph Gibney (white robe, far right) a picture of Irish Catholic roots