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Who are the leprechauns?



Belief in leprechauns probably stems from Celtic belief in fairies, tiny men and women who had magical powers. In Celtic folktales, leprechauns were cranky souls, responsible for mending the shoes of the other fairies. The first known mention of a leprechaun comes from the word *luchorpan*, meaning "little body". Leprechauns are said to be elusive creatures but if captured, they have the power to grant humans three wishes in exchange for their release.

Bonus: Leprechauns love gold coins, and mischievously try to steal treasure.



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Who is St. Patrick?



St. Patrick was born in Britain so he wasn't even Irish. He was captured by Irish pagans and then grew to love them. He converted people to Christianity. He baptized, confirmed, and ordained priests, and he erected schools and monasteries. He accomplished all these activities in less than 30 years, during which time the whole island nation of Ireland was converted. He died on March 17, 461 - which is why we celebrate the day.



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Why four-leaf clovers are a symbol of this day?



The word shamrock means "young clover" – and refers to the regular three-leaf variety. If you believe the legend, St. Patrick used the three-leaf clover to explain the Christian Holy Trinity to the people of Ireland. It was also called the "seamroy" by the Celts, was a sacred plant in ancient Ireland because it symbolized the rebirth of spring. It has since become a symbol of national pride.

Four-leaf clovers have been prized since the time of the Druids because of their rarity (they say only 1 in every 10,000 clovers has that extra appendage). The leaves are commonly thought to represent faith, hope, love, and luck.

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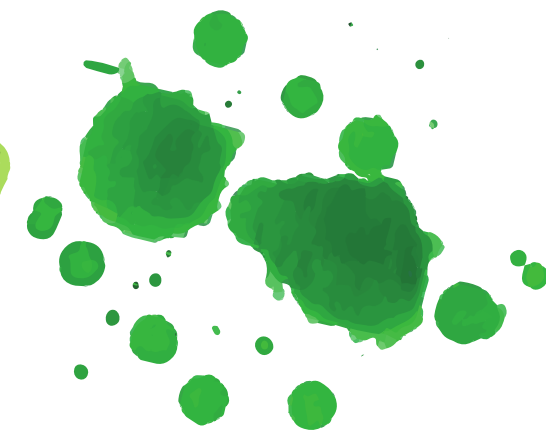
What do snakes mean this day?



It has long been recounted that, during his mission in Ireland, St. Patrick once stood on a hilltop and with only a wooden staff by his side, banished all the snakes from Ireland.

In fact, the island nation was never home to any snakes. The "banishing of the snakes" was really a metaphor for the eradication of pagan ideology from Ireland and the triumph of Christianity.

Why do we wear green?



To make sure we don't get pinched! According to some accounts, people used to wear blue on March 17, but in the 17th century, that started to change. Ireland is known as the "emerald isle" for its lush green landscape, and green is the color of spring. Therefore, it's only fitting that we don the color to celebrate.



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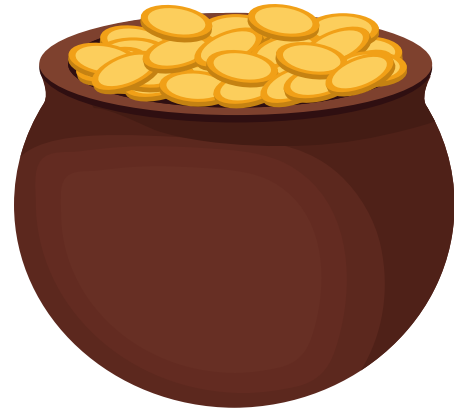
Why do we pinch people who don't wear green?

According to legend, wearing green makes you invisible to leprechauns – and being the fun-loving pranksters they are, they'd take the first opportunity to pinch you if they saw you.



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Sources:



St. Patrick's Day traditions decoded - Shamrocks, leprechauns, and other Irish symbols | ABC7 San Francisco | abc7news.com - ABC7 San Francisco

www.history.com/topics/st-patricks-day/st-patricks-day-symbols-and-traditions



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