

Name: _____ Date: _____

THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Off the west coast of Great Britain lies the home of the leprechauns. The Irish island is separated into two parts. The Republic of Ireland makes up about 80% of the island. The northern 20% belongs to Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. The land area of the Republic of Ireland is about 69,000 square km, and is home to almost four million people. That seems like a lot, but it is less than half of the population of New York City!



Ireland has a very long and often bloody history. The first people in Ireland were the Celts, who arrived in about 300 BC. The Celts were pagan—or non-Christian—and the Irish people remained pagan until Christianity came to Ireland across the Channel from Europe in the 5th century AD. St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, came across to convert the pagan Irish people. He built many monasteries and churches, and spent approximately thirty years traveling around Ireland. Then, in the 8th century, the Vikings began raiding the Irish monasteries and churches. After the raids, the Vikings settled in Ireland, and founded such cities as Dublin, Cork and Limerick. The Vikings remained in Ireland until they were driven out in the middle of the 11th century. However, the Irish people weren't left alone for very long. In 1169 the English arrived. The English would spend the next 750 years in Ireland, but those years were not peaceful. The final war between the Irish and English was the Anglo-Irish war from 1919 to 1921. The *Anglo-Irish Treaty*, drafted and signed in 1921, gave independence to twenty-six Irish counties. Six counties in the North were given the option of remaining with England. Twenty-seven years later, in 1948, the southern part of Ireland was declared a republic.

The capital city of Ireland is Dublin, located on the east coast of Ireland. Almost a third of the Irish population lives in Dublin. The Republic of Ireland is also part of the European Union, and so uses the Euro, the currency of the EU. The language most commonly spoken in Ireland is English, but Gaelic is also spoken in some towns, mainly along the west coast. In fact, Irish Gaelic and English are both official languages of Ireland. Gaelic, the Irish language, uses only 18 letters! Five vowels and 13 consonants are used, and the other letters are only used in science, math and foreign words. Irish Gaelic is one of the oldest European languages.

Ireland doesn't have many public holidays, but there are festivals throughout the year. Like many other countries, the first public holiday of the year in Ireland is New Year's Day on January 1st. In February is the Dublin International Film Festival. The second public holiday of the year is St. Patrick's Day on March 17th. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated all over the world, but only in Ireland is it a public holiday. Easter is also celebrated in March or April. In May, June, and August, Ireland has bank holidays. On these days the banks are closed, and so many people have this day off as well. There are several other festivals in the summer, including the Dublin Horse Show. At the end of summer, in September, there is the Cork Film Festival and the Belfast Folk Festival. Christmas on December 25th and St. Stephen's Day on December 26th are the last public holidays of the year.



Irish people are known throughout the world as being friendly, warm, welcoming, and always up for a good time. So next time St. Patrick's Day comes around, wear green, pin a shamrock to your shirt, celebrate the green hills of Ireland, and just for one day, BE IRISH!

Answer the following questions on the Republic of Ireland.

1. What is the only country that the Republic of Ireland shares a border with?

2. What is the capital city of the Republic of Ireland?

3. Throughout Irish history there were three major groups of people that came across to the island. What were the groups and about when did they start moving to Ireland?

4. How long were the Celts in Ireland before Christianity came across to Ireland?

5. Who is the patron saint of Ireland?

6. What Irish cities were founded by Vikings?

7. What happened after the Anglo-Irish war ended in 1921?

8. What are the two official languages of Ireland?

9. Ireland has 8 public holidays per year. In what months are the Irish public holidays?

10. In what month does Ireland have a public holiday dedicated to its patron saint?

11. What color is commonly worn on St. Patrick's Day?

Answers to Ireland.

1. The Republic of Ireland shares a border with Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK.
2. The capital city is Dublin.
3. The first group of people to come to Ireland were the Celts in about 300 BC. The Celts were followed by the Vikings in the 8th Century and then in 1169 the English came to Ireland.
4. The Celts were for about 700 years before Christianity came across to Ireland.
5. The patron saint of Ireland is St. Patrick.
6. The Irish cities of Cork, Limerick and Dublin were founded by the Irish.
7. After the Anglo-Irish war finished in 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was drawn up and 26 Irish counties were given independence. Then, twenty-seven years later, in 1948, Ireland was declared a Republic.
8. The two official languages of Ireland are Gaelic and English.
9. The months of the Irish public holidays are January, March, (maybe April depending on when Easter is), May, June, August and December.
10. March
11. Green