

Spring in Early Christian Ireland

A resource for parents and teachers at post-primary level

Junior Cycle: Strand 2 - The History of Ireland: Exploring people, culture and ideas

Learning outcome 2.6– consider the historical significance of Christianity on the island of Ireland, including its contribution to the culture and society in the Early Christian period.

Introduction:

Find out what the student knows about spring in Early Christian Ireland. For example traditions around St Brigid and St Patrick.

- Gather information orally and use 'Post its' or paper to record information or images.
- Use the Reading and Analysis (RAN) graphic organiser supporting student to work through a topic sheet below.


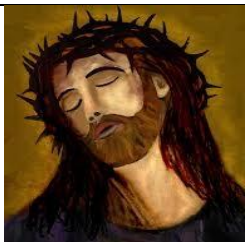
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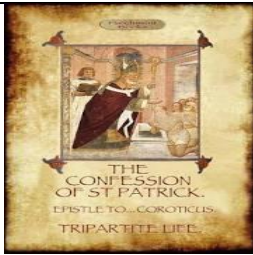


Key Words:

Key words could be printed out or recorded through students own methods.

Green Key words: Words already possible seen related to history

Blue Key Words: New key words

Ancient	Very old. Of or in a time long past		beehive hut.	
Christian	People who follow Christianity, a religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.		oratory.	

Confession	A book that Saint Patrick wrote, a spiritual autobiography.		refectory	
High Cross	A high cross or standing cross is a freestanding Christian cross, made of stone and often richly decorated.		scribe scriptorium	
Round tower	Tall stone towers used to store valuables and as a place of refuge in time of attack.		manuscript Vellum Quill	

Writing exercises to develop comprehension and vocabulary:

- The Vocabulary Journal on the NCSE website could be used to write down, define and draw/find an image of each 'new' word, available on this link;
<https://www.nbss.ie/node/233>
- A graphic organiser could be used to arrange the information available here;
<https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/PDST%20GRAPHIC%20ORGANISER%20ENG%20FINAL.pdf>
- This crossword has questions related to the reading exercise below as well as additional questions. The student will need to find some answers independently. Visual prompts for the crossword are highlighted and in bold in the text below.
<https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Early%20Christian%20Monasteries%20crossword.pdf>

Reading exercise:

The following excerpt contains the key words discussed above:

People in **ancient** Ireland believed in many gods. They believed these gods were in rivers, forests and in sacred wells. Special priests called Druids helped the people understand the gods. The Druids offered sacrifices to the gods to thank them during special festivals. There were four main festivals celebrating the seasons; Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter.

The celebration of Spring welcomed new growth. This is the time of the year in Ireland where we can see the beautiful flowers begin to grow; the daffodils, the snowdrops, the buttercups and many more. The ancient Celtic celebration was called Imbolc and began on the 1st of February. Nowadays the 1st of February is called Saint Brigid's Day. **Saint Brigid** was a **Christian**, she believed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Saint Brigid grew up in a Christian home, her mother was baptised by **Saint Patrick**. Saint Patrick came to Ireland around 432AD to bring Christianity to Ireland. The most important source on St Patrick comes from his own account in a book called the **Confessio**.

Saint Brigid and many other Saints began to set up Monasteries all over Ireland and Europe. Monasteries became places where monks spent their lives praying and working for God. They lived a very simple life usually in very remote areas. An example of this would be **Skellig Michael** off the coast of Kerry. Each monk had his own little hut, called a **beehive hut**. The monks prayed and slept here. They also prayed in a small church called an **Oratory**. Some Monasteries had **seven churches**. They ate their meals in **refectory**.

Some monks had the job of handwriting copies of religious books. These monks were called **scribes** and they produced **manuscripts** in **Latin**. They wrote in a place called the **scriptorium** on **vellum** using a **quill**. **The Book of Kells** is a great example of a Manuscript and you can go and see it in **Trinity** College Dublin. Some other monks worked as stonemasons making **high crosses**. There were scenes from the Bible on these crosses. Some Monasteries had a **round tower**; here the Monks stored valuables and used this as a place of refuge in time of attack from the **Vikings**. There are about 100 round towers in Ireland.

Online resources to support teaching and learning on early Christian Ireland:

- Video from 'An Tairseach' - Celebrating St Brigid, transitions to new beginnings, Spring, Music, Mindfulness, (Gaeilge)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QC_gjRHrbgo&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0oO8rO1YyFE11dt00QOxHWc3K4elicpST-9Im01xHdYmcHvewTd595IW8
- Junior Cycle resources, video's, tweets, articles, exercises
<https://www.juniorcyclehistory.ie/early-christian-ireland.html>
- Information on the Book of Kells - <https://www.tcd.ie/visitors/book-of-kells/history/>
- Gregorian chant-introduction - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmCp0Xovlcg> ()
- Supporting reading comprehensions of St Patrick and St Brigid
<https://www.monasticireland.com/storiesofsaints/patrick.htm>
<https://www.monasticireland.com/storiesofsaints/brigid.htm>