Celebrating Saint Patrick's Day


On the 17th March, it is celebrated all around the world Saint Patrick's day, even though it is an Irish national holiday. Students may be familiarised with this festivity because they have seen news referring to the traditional parade in New York, the dying of the river in Chicago or because they have seen a chapter in The Simpsons where a leprechaun might have appeared.

There are thousands of activities on the Internet related to this holiday. The teacher can choose among word search, crosswords, picture matching quiz, picture vocabulary, multiple choice quiz, readings, listening, videos about Saint Patrick and its festivity around the world... They are good tools to be used in an English lesson.

Nevertheless, this article is targeted to older students (Bachillerato) because they can easily enjoy a traditional Saint Patrick's day by entering into an Irish Pub in a near future. Therefore, this article is a short guide to celebrate this Irish festivity.

First of all, they may know who is Saint Patrick. Maewyn Succat was born in a wealthy family in the late fourth century. At the age of 16, he was kidnapped and sold as a slave by the Irish marauders. He worked during six years as a shepherd till he managed to escape to France where he entered in a monastery.

He was a priest and studied during 12 years becoming Saint Patrick. Then he had a vision: He must Christianised Ireland. So, he departed to the Emerald Isle and he spent the following 30 years founding schools, monasteries and churches across the country.

The Celtic Druids were unhappy because Saint Patrick was easily converting the indigenous people, so they tried to arrest him many times but he always managed to run away.

Saint Patrick used the shamrock as a metaphor to explain the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), showing how three individually units could be part of the same body. His parishioners started to wearing shamrocks to his church services. Therefore, shamrocks are also an important element in Saint Patrick's day.

Saint Patrick established in Count Down. He is told to have driven the snakes out from Ireland and even he made miracles like resurrecting dead people. He died on the 17th March AD 461.

After this short introduction about the patron saint of Ireland, students should know that on the 17th March everyone wears something green. It does not matter if they only wear a green tie or they are completely green dressed with typical T-shirts like “Kiss me, I’m Irish”. Green is the colour of Ireland, the colour of the shamrock and the colour of Saint Patrick. If people do not wear green, they might be pinched.

It is quite improbable that students would attend a parade, even though they can see it on the news as the festivity is very important worldwide, especially in Chicago, New York and even in Australia.

However, if students go into an Irish pub, they can enjoy the traditional Irish food on Saint Patrick's day: bread soda and potato pancakes, corned beef and cabbage or Nordic salmon. They also drink the traditional Irish beers or whiskeys.
Finally they could have fun by learning Irish dancing, some Gaelic words like “jeiste”, that means cheers, or singing the most popular Irish songs.

To get students familiarised with them, two traditional songs are included in this article as well as some proposed exercises to work at the classroom before the 17th March, so that students could enjoy this fantastic festivity.

**THE WILD ROVER**

1. Complete the song with the following words

| confess | nay | whiskey | play(x2) | neverdayspoken | landlady’s |

I've been a wild rover for many a year
And I spent all my money on ____________ and beer,
    And now I'm returning with gold in great store
And I never will ____________ the wild rover no more.

Chorus:
And it's no, nay, ____________,
No nay never no more,
Will I play the wild rover
No never no more.

I went to an ale-house I used to frequent
And I told the landlady my money was spent.
I asked her for credit, she answered me "__________
Such a custom as yours I could have any ____________.

Chorus

I took from my pocket ten sovereigns bright
And the ____________ eyes opened wide with delight.
She said "I have whiskey and wines of the best
And the words that I ____________ sure were only in jest."

Chorus

I'll go home to my parents, ____________ what I've done
And I'll ask them to pardon their prodigal son.
When they caress me as oftentimes before
cause I never will ____________ the wild rover no more.

Chorus
Comprehension check

1. What is a rover?
   - a) Someone who likes being at home
   - b) Someone who likes travelling and wandering around
   - c) Someone who sells whiskey and wine

2. What is the first reaction of the landlady’s at the ale-house?
   - a) She serves whiskey immediately to the rover
   - b) She doesn’t serve whiskey to the rover
   - c) She serves whiskey to the rover after seeing the money

3. What whiskey and wines does she offer?
   - a) The best whiskey and wines she has
   - b) The second category in whiskey and wines she has
   - c) None

4. What are the hopes of the wild rover?
   - a) To stay at home forever
   - b) To get the pardon of his parents
   - c) Both a and b

*The Wild Rover* is a funny song because the students claps hands while singing as well as the following song.

**THE WHISKEY IN THE JAR**

As I was a goin’ over the far famed Kerry mountains
I met with captain Farrell and his money he was counting
I first produced my pistol and I then produced my rapier
Saying “Stand and deliver” for he were a bold deceiver

Chorus:
Mush-a ring dum-a do dum-a da (=I made my whiskey for the fool Irish language)
Wack fall the daddy-o, wack fall the daddy-o (=work of the devil-o )
There’s whiskey in the jar

I counted out his money and it made a pretty penny
I put it in me pocket and I took it home to Jenny
She sighed and she swore that she never would deceive me
But the devil take the women for they never can be easy

(Chorus)

I went up to my chamber, all for to take a slumber
I dreamt of gold and jewels and for sure ’t was no wonder
But Jenny blew me charges and she filled them up with water
Then sent for captain Farrell to be ready for the slaughter

(Chorus)

’t was early in the morning, just before I rose to travel
Up comes a band of footmen and likewise captain Farrell
I first produced me pistol for she stole away me rapier
I couldn’t shoot the water, so a prisoner I was taken

(Chorus)

Now there’s some take delight in the carriages a rolling
and others take delight in the hurling and the bowling
but I take delight in the juice of the barley
and courting pretty fair maids in the morning bright and early

(Chorus)

If anyone can aid me ’t is my brother in the army
If I can find his station in Cork or in Killarney
And if he’ll go with me, we’ll go rovin’ through Killkenny
And I’m sure he’ll treat me better than my own a-sporting Jenny

(Chorus)

It is quite possible that students do not understand the song because of the vocabulary, so while they read the song again, they have this useful vocabulary to get to know the meaning of the song.

- Produce: show
- Rapier: a long narrow two-edged sword
- Bold: courageous
- Deceiver: somebody who tricks or misleads
- Swore: (past simple swear) say offensive words
- Chamber: room
- Slumber: light sleep
- Filled up: made full
- Charges: military attack
- Slaughter: killing
- Footmen: male servants
- Likewise: similarly
- Rolling: moving on wheels
- Hurling: Irish game similar to bowls /throw
- Bowling: game
- Barley: grain used to produce beer
- Court: make love to a girl
- Aid: help
- Station: post
- A-sporting: a person who likes to take a risk

Choose one of the following options

a- Retell the story in your own words in a narrative descriptive text using, at least, 100 words

b- Draw pictures telling the story. Under each picture add a caption
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