IRISH MYTHS AND LEGENDS

EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Learn about the culture and folk history of Ireland. Talk about myths, legends, and storytelling. Review a variety of past tenses.

Activity 1: Introduction

1. Are you interested in Mythology? (Legends from Ancient Rome, Greece, Egypt, Scandinavia)
2. What stories were you told when you were a child?
3. What qualities or characteristics do you associate with typical 'heroes' or 'heroines'?
4. Why do you think storytelling was so important to ancient peoples? What purpose did it serve?
5. Do you think legends and myths should be preserved today? Why?

Activity 2: Review of past tenses commonly used in storytelling.

- **Past simple= I told**

The simple past is a verb tense that is used to talk about things that happened or existed before now.

- **Past Perfect= I had told**

The past perfect, also called the pluperfect, is a verb tense used to talk about actions that were completed before some point in the past.

- **Past continuous= I was telling**

used to show that something continued for some time, for something which happened before and after another action, or for something that happened again and again in the past.

Please create a sentence using each of the above tenses.

Activity 3: Read the legend of the Children Of Lír (the legend that forms the basis of the ballet classic Swan Lake) and fill in the gaps using the correct past tense = Past simple, Past perfect, past continuous



Many years ago in ancient Ireland, lived a King and ruler of the sea called Lir. He had a beautiful wife, called Eva, who gave him four children – eldest son Aodh, a daughter called Fionnula, and twin boys, Fiachra and Conn. When the children were young, their mother Eva ____ (to die). Lir and children were very sad, and King wanted a new mother for his young sons and daughter, so he married Eva's sister Aoife who, it was said, _____ (to possess) magical powers.

Aoife loved the children and Lir at first, but soon she became very jealous of the time that King spent with Aodh, Fionnula, Fiachra, and Conn. She wanted to have all of his attention for herself. One day, she took the children to swim in a lake while the sun was hot in the sky. When they got there and children took to the water, Aoife used her powers to cast a spell over children, which _____ (to turn) them all into beautiful swans.

She knew that if she killed children, their ghosts would haunt her forever, so instead, she cast this spell, forcing them to live as swans for 900 years - three hundred on Lake Derravaragh, three hundred on Straits of Moyle, and three hundred more on Isle of Inish Glora. The spell would only be broken when children heard the ringing of a bell, and the arrival of St. Patrick in Ireland.

But Aoife's spell (to take, negative) _____ away the children's voices, and so it was that these four beautiful swans could sing beautiful songs and were able to tell their father what _____ _____ (to happen) to them. Lir, who _____ _____ (to be) searching for his children, came down to the lake and saw Fionnuala, now a swan, who _____ (to tell) him of the spell cast on them by Aoife. Enraged, he banished Aoife into the mist, and she was never seen again.

Although saddened by his children's fate, Lir remained a good father and spent his days faithfully by the lake listening to their singing. Their three hundred years on Lake Derravaragh were filled with joy, but at end of this first part of their spell, the children had to say goodbye to their father forever. They _____ (to travel) to Straits of Moyle, where they spent three hundred years enduring fierce storms and _____ (to spend) much time separated from each other. But they survived these three hundred years, and eventually traveled, together again, to fulfill the final stage of their spell, on a small saltwater lake on Isle of Inish Glora.

The King by now _____ _____ (to die), and of his once glorious castle, nothing but ruins remained. One day, they heard the distant ringing of a bell – one of the first Christian bells in all of Ireland – and swans followed the sound, knowing that the end of their spell was near. They followed bells to the house of a holy man called Caomhog, just as _____ _____ _____ (to lay) his hands on them, the bell tolled again, and mist of lake came and enveloped swans, and turned them back into humans. But they were now 900 years old. Caomhog listened to their sad story and baptised them, soon after they died of old age. He _____ (to bury) them in one grave. That night, he _____ (to dream) that he saw four children flying up through the clouds. He knew that the children of Lir were now with their father and mother, and that their legend and their names could live on forever- for these were Children of Lir.

Activity 4: Watch the video on the legend of Oisín and the land of eternal youth (Tír Na nÓg)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nFcXcPldzY&ab_channel=TED-Ed



"The myth of Oisín and the land of eternal youth - Iseult Gillespie (Ted Talks) "

Now, summarise the story, based on what you have seen in the video. Use a mixture of your past tenses!

Activity 5: Famous Irish storytellers - a case study.



Oscar Wilde, in full Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, (born October 16, 1854, Dublin, Ireland—died November 30, 1900, Paris, France), was an Irish writer, poet, and dramatist, most known for writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), amidst many essays. In the early 1880s, when Aestheticism was the rage and despair of literary London, Wilde established himself in social and artistic circles by his wit and flamboyance, and also, his love of partying. He was the object of several civil and criminal suits involving homosexuality involving a lords son, which ended in his imprisonment from 1895–97. After he was released from Prison, he fled to France, and died penniless.

Look at the quotes below from him. Which is your favourite, and why?

I can resist everything except temptation.

Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.

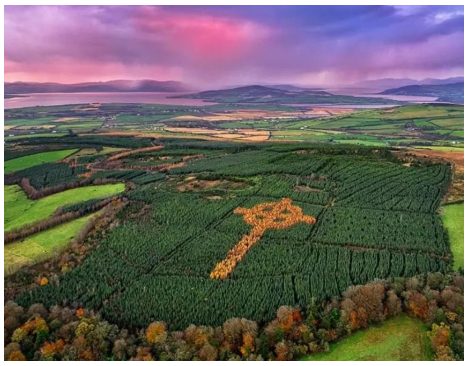
Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go.

To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.

The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.

Always forgive your enemies - nothing annoys them so much.

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.





Activity 6= **Symbols of Ireland, and the stories attached to them.**



The Dara Knot is derived from this word and the symbol represents the root system of an ancient oak. Celts and Druids revered nature, particularly ancient oak trees, and considered them sacred. They saw the oak tree as a symbol of strength, power, wisdom, and endurance.



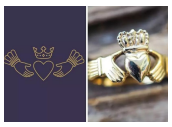
The harp is the official symbol of Ireland. The meaning of the Irish harp symbol embodies the spirit and essence of the Irish people and is said to represent the immortality of the soul. In fact, it was so revered that the British banned all harps (and harpists!) in the 16th century in an effort to break the symbolic tie.



If you find a clover with four separate leaves it's said to be lucky (read more about the luck of the Irish). It is the national flower of Ireland and its symbolism is deeply rooted in the past. According to legend, St Patrick used the trefoil leaves to explain the unity of the Holy Trinity (father, son, and the holy spirit) –three parts yet one whole– to the pagans during his Christian teachings.



The Celtic spiral is A symbol that represents progres, and one of the oldest and most primitive decorations on earth. It is believed to represent the sun or ethereal radiation energy. Celtic spirals that are clockwise are believed to have a meaning connected to harmony or earth; if they are anti-clockwise they are thought to be pagan symbols that manipulate nature.The meaning of the Celtic Triskelion is seen as a symbol of strength and progress. As it appears to be moving, the Triskelion also represents the will to move forward and overcome adversity.



A Celtic symbol for love, Claddagh rings are widely exchanged in Ireland and elsewhere as a symbol of loyalty and unity. The word Claddagh is the name of the coastal village where the design was invented by Richard Joyce. The Claddagh ring is often used as a wedding ring and tradition says that you should never buy a Claddagh for yourself; it should be given as a gift.

Activity 7. Video comprehension.

Watch the video describing the celtic goddess 'Morrigan' and answer the comprehension questions below. *'Morrigan- Animated Short'*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vrQIS0C5Xw&ab_channel=EmilyClarkson



1. What was Morrigan a goddess of?
2. What animal was she said to be forever in the company of?
3. What did she intervene in?
4. What did she receive visions of?
5. What happened in the end, between her and her love?
6. What do you think is meant by the term 'shapeshifter'?



Activity 8: Tell your own Irish story!

A leprechaun is a diminutive supernatural being in Irish folklore, classed by some as a type of solitary fairy. They are usually depicted as little bearded men, wearing a coat and hat, who partake in mischief. Often seen as a symbol of luck, the Leprechaun collects gold and hides it at the end of a rainbow. If you see him, he must grant you three wishes before he can be released. However, use these wisely! He may try to trick you.

Now, Write your own story using a variety of past tenses. It must include;

- A leprechaun
- A child
- A dog
- Mischief
- A rainbow
- A pot of gold
- A household object (a plate, a cup, a spoon, a book, a vase, a chair)

