



George and the Dragon

St. George's Day – 23rd April

DIFFICULTY: 

What is a Patron Saint?

The countries within our nation (England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland) have their own patron saint – a person they believe is a protector for a specific area of life. Each of these countries has their own named patron saint and a separate day (named after the saint) is given to celebrate their life and achievements each year.

Saint (St.) George is the patron saint of England and Saint George's day is celebrated annually on 23rd April nationally. The colour red and English red roses are popular choices of décor for the celebrations as they link to the legend as well as the English flag and the flag of Great Britain. Scotland has St. Andrew as their patron saint, Wales has St. David and Ireland has St. Patrick.

The legend of St. George

When St. George arrived in Libya as part of his travels, he found it had a large pond, almost as big as a lake, where it was believed a terrifying dragon lay. The dragon was frightening everyone in the country by killing all of the young girls. St. George soon discovered that all the young girls had now been killed and the only girl left was the King's daughter. Unless a way could be found of slaying the dragon, the princess would be killed the next day. Saint George was determined to be victorious, and the next day he rode out to the lake. When the dragon heard him approaching, he came out of his cave and roared at him – George was not afraid! He struck the monster with his spear, but the dragon's scales were so hard that the spear just shattered. He did not give up though. Instead, he raced at the dragon and used his sword to slay it under its wing where there were no scales and it was easier to pierce. The dragon fell dead at Saint George's feet – he was victorious!

The Truth

Saint George has long been associated with England, bravery and honour, however the real Saint George wasn't English at all! The truth is that he was born in Turkey in the 3rd Century and because this was so long ago, not much is known about him. It is thought that he was a soldier and part of a Christian family. At the age of just 17 he joined the Roman Army and it is said he was a very brave soldier. History tells us that around that time the emperor wanted to kill all Christian people and Saint George being the brave person that he was, begged and pleaded with him to stop. For his efforts to protect his people, he was severely tortured, but well respected by his faith for what he stood for and believed in. He was sadly beheaded on 23rd April AD303 which is why the English national day is celebrated on this date. It became a national feast and day of celebration only in the year 1415.





How do we celebrate St. George's Day?

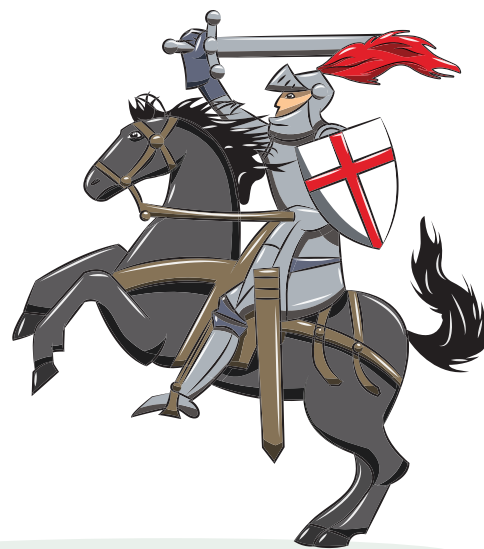
A red rose has always been the national flower of England and is seen on heritage and tourist signs around the country. On St. George's Day, many people wear a red rose or have red roses as decorations in their home.

At some venues across the country, there are more elaborate celebrations including re-enactments, dressing up and even 'dragon-slaying'!

Street parties, with decorative bunting and flags lining the kerbs have become a more recent way of celebrating as the event is becoming more popular.

The Future

Even though it is a national celebration, it is not an event that is celebrated by all in England. This is the case for various reasons. However, there are many people campaigning to have St. George's day become a national holiday and treated like a Bank Holiday, much like the Irish pull out all the stops when it is St. Patrick's day!



Questions

1. What is a patron saint?

2. When is St. George's day celebrated in England?

3. Name the 3 other patron saints:

Ireland	
Wales	
Scotland	

4. What is the national flower of England?

5. Why is 23rd April the day St. George's Day is celebrated?

6. From which year did St. George's day become a celebration?

7. Why was St. George considered to be a brave man?

8. Why do you think some people don't celebrate St. George's Day?

9. Name 2 ways St. George's Day is celebrated.

10. Where on the body did St. George manage to slay the dragon – why?



Questions – ANSWERS

1. What is a patron saint? **A person who is well respected and a protector for a certain aspect of life.**
2. When is St. George's day celebrated in England? **23rd April**
3. Name the 3 other patron saints:

Ireland	St Patrick
Wales	St David
Scotland	St Andrew

4. What is the national flower of England? **Red Rose**
5. Why is 23rd April the day St. George's Day is celebrated? **It was the day St. George was beheaded**
6. From which year did St. George's day become a celebration? **1415**
7. Why was St. George considered to be a brave man? **He was just 17 when he joined the army. Stood up for his faith and beliefs against the Emperor.**
8. Why do you think some people don't celebrate St. George's Day? **Various reasons**
9. Name 2 ways St. George's Day is celebrated. **Wear red roses, red rose decorations, organised events across the country**
10. Where on the body did St. George manage to slay the dragon – why? **Under the wing – skin was thinner for his spear to attack.**

