

Where in the World Is Ireland?

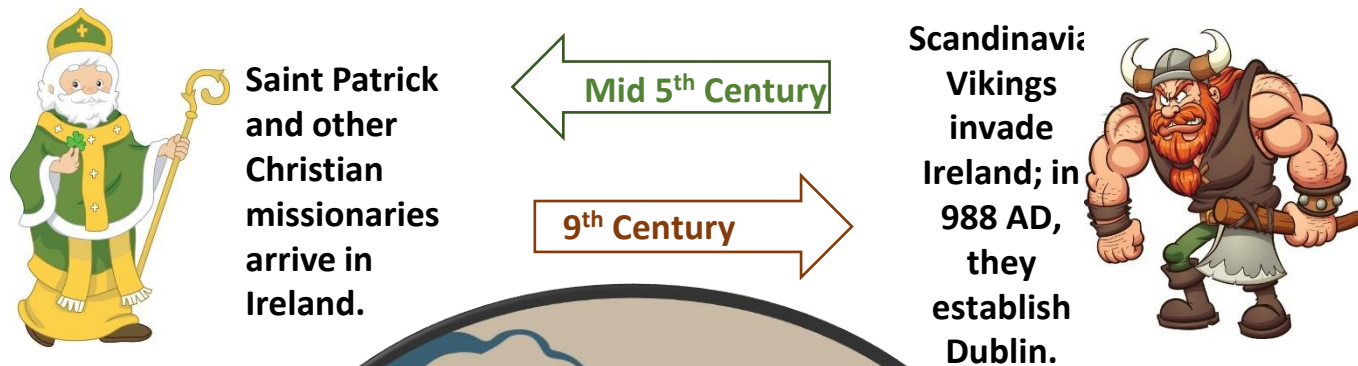
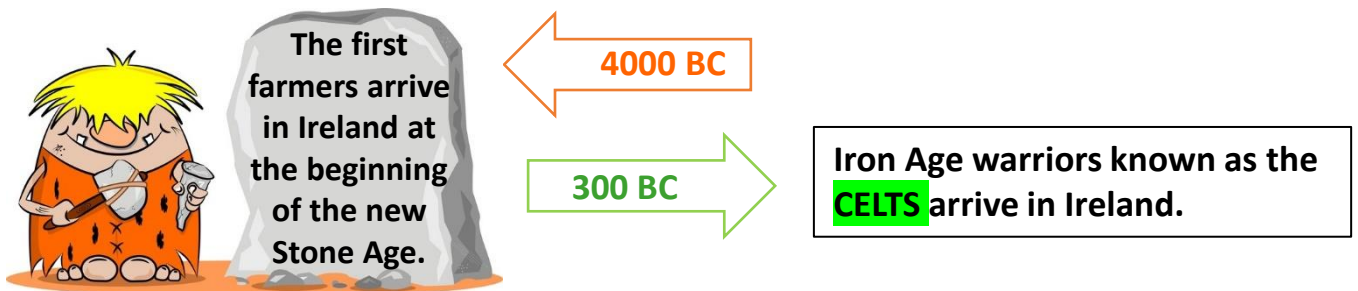


Ireland is both a country and an island in north-western Europe. The island of Ireland is in the North Atlantic Ocean.

The country of Ireland (aka The Republic of Ireland) consists of 26 different counties out of 32 counties on the island. The other six counties make up the territory of Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom.

The country of Ireland occupies almost all of the island of Ireland. It is five times bigger than Northern Ireland.

A Brief History of Ireland



1170: Norman Vikings invade Ireland and make it an English territory. They build walled towns, castles and churches.

1534: King Henry VIII declares himself head of the Church in England; in 1541 the Irish Parliament declares him King of Ireland.



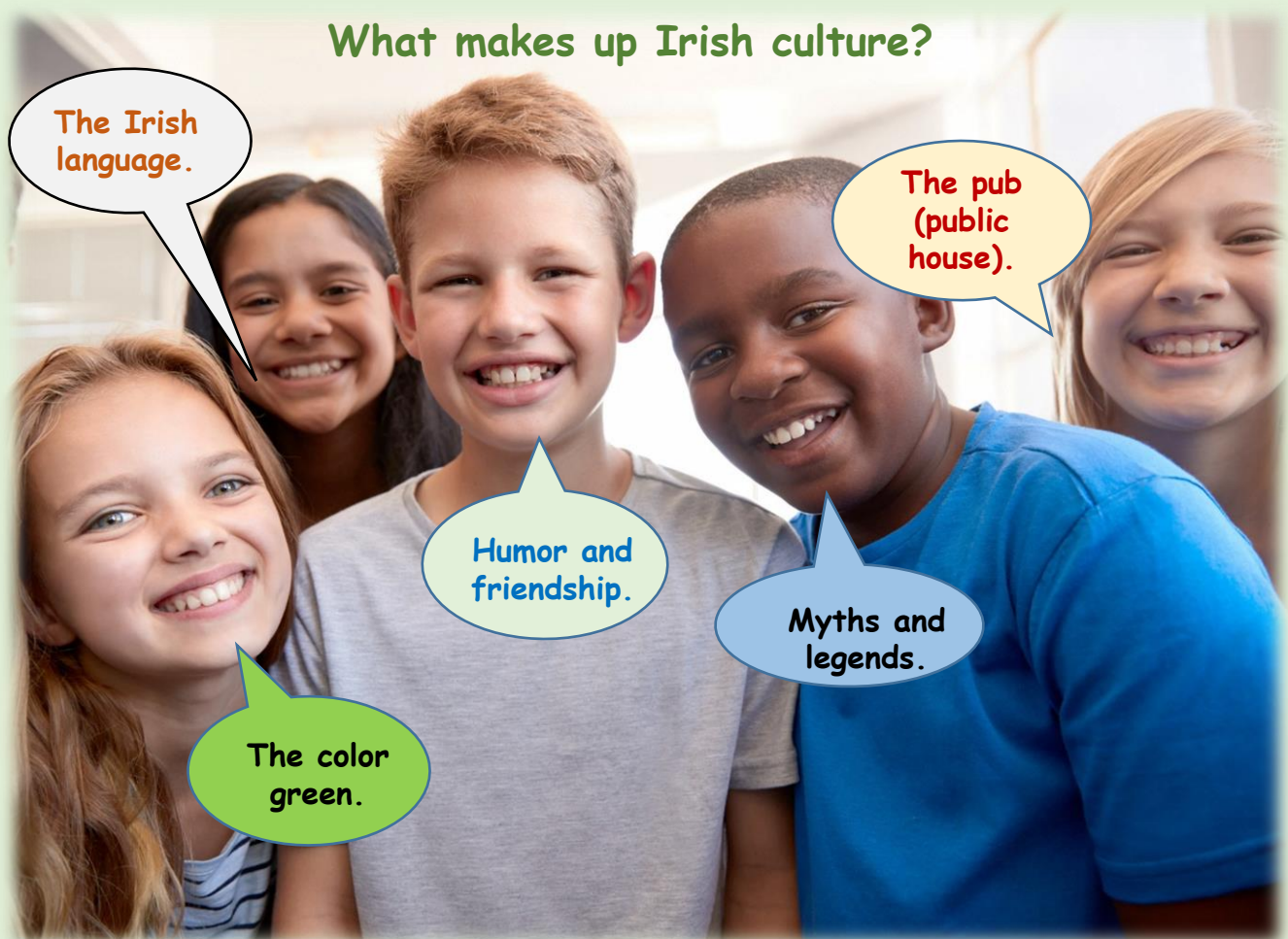
Chapter 2

People, Customs, and Traditions

For many people, the first thing that comes to mind when they think about Ireland is the leprechaun. And they wouldn't be too wrong. Ireland's ancient folklore—its myths and legends—is a big part of Irish customs and traditions.

But the legend of leprechauns is only a small part of the rich and varied culture of Ireland. Patriotism, the Gaelic Games, love of dancing, even the Irish potato are also a part of the customs and traditions that make up Irish culture.

On the next few pages, you can read about some of the things that make up the Emerald Isle's national identity.





The Irish Leprechaun And Other Irish Myths

It's hard to imagine Ireland without leprechauns.

The leprechaun myth has been part of Ireland since medieval times. Back then, Leprechauns were portrayed as old men.

But over hundreds of years, the image of the leprechaun has evolved (or changed) to what we have today.



Through the years, though, the story (or myth) of the leprechaun hasn't changed. According to Irish legends, the leprechaun hides his pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. Anyone lucky enough to catch a leprechaun (not an easy thing to do) can negotiate his release in exchange for his pot of gold. The leprechaun must also grant his captor three wishes in order to be freed.

Irish Slang

“MY BAD!”

It may make perfectly good sense to you to say when you make a mistake. But would a kid in another country know what you mean?

Maybe not.

Every country has its own slang—funny words or expressions, which kids from another country may be clueless to understand.

Ireland is no different. How much do you know about Irish slang? Take this quiz to find out. Circle the correct definition of each slang word in these five questions. Then, check how much you know about Irish slang on page 47.

1. Can you tell me where the **jacks** is?

- (a) Bathroom
- (b) bus station

2. The food in this pub is **manky**.

- (a) The best
- (b) Awful

3. My friends are really **craic** (pronounced crack).

- (a) Boring
- (b) Fun



4. My little sister is a **melter**.

- (a) Cutie
- (b) Pest

5. If it's **lashing** after the movie, we can get a **jo maxi**.

- (a) Raining/taxi
- (b) Hot/iced tea

An Imaginary Interview with Bram Stoker

Author of **DRACULA**

If you're a vampire fan, you've probably read Dracula—the book about one of the most sinister and scary vampires of them all. Here's an imaginary conversation with Bram Stoker, the author of (shudder) DRACULA.



Where were you born?

People are always surprised to learn that I was born in Ireland, Dublin to be exact. They think I must have been born in Transylvania.



What did you like to do as a boy growing up?

As a young boy, I had an illness. I wasn't able to stand or walk until I was about seven years old. Later, though, I became a really good athlete.



How old were you when you wrote Dracula?

Well, let's see. I was born in 1847 and I started writing Dracula in 1890, so I was about 43 years old.

Castles of Ireland

IF YOU LOVE CASTLES, YOU'LL LOVE IRELAND!

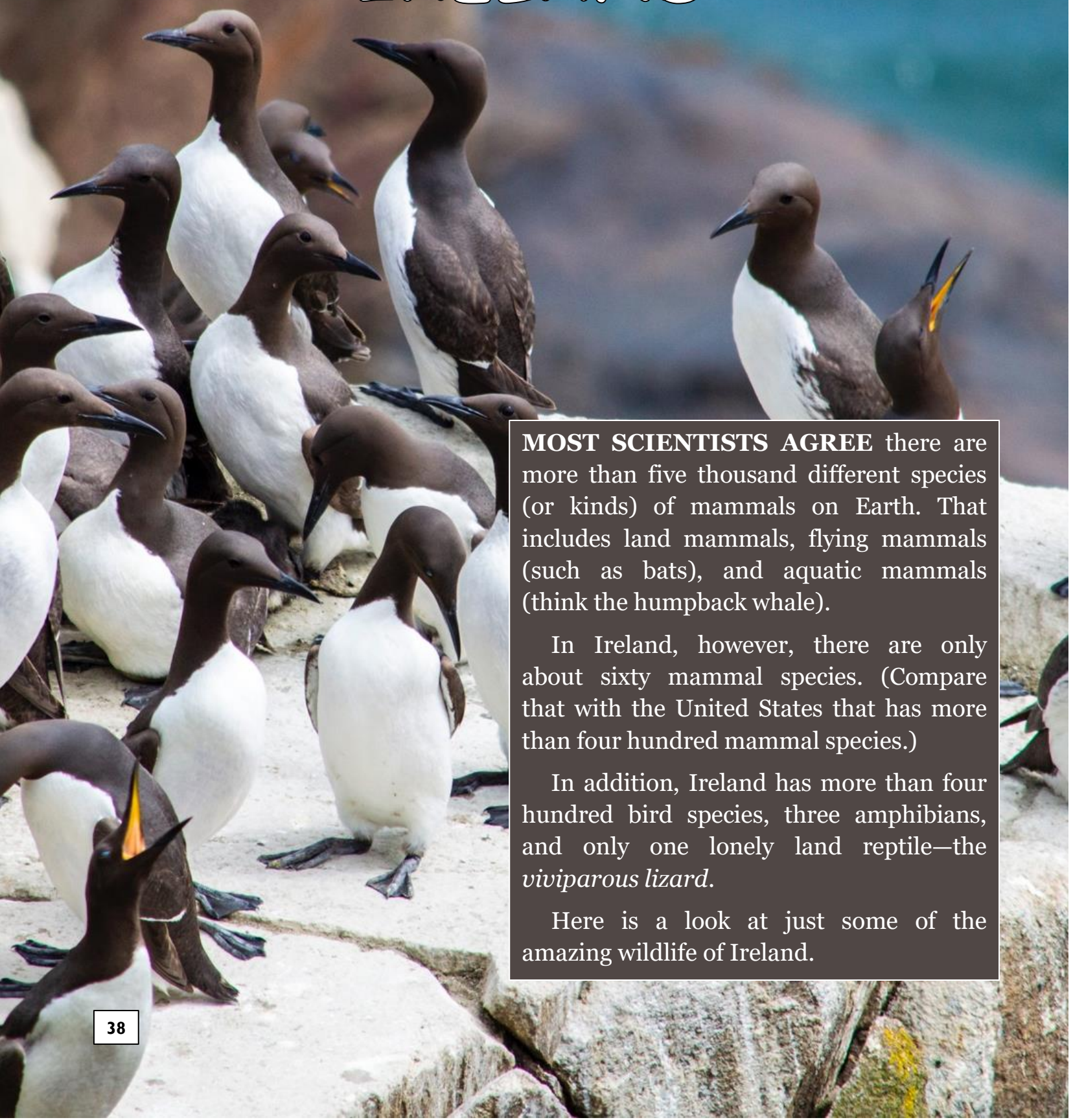
Ireland has more than one thousand castles. Some are in ruins. But others are in pretty good condition, considering they are hundreds of years old.

Here are just a few of the most famous ones.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many of the original Medieval castles were made from timber and dirt, not stones. It wasn't until the late 1100s that magnificent stone castles were built.

The Wildlife of IRELAND



MOST SCIENTISTS AGREE there are more than five thousand different species (or kinds) of mammals on Earth. That includes land mammals, flying mammals (such as bats), and aquatic mammals (think the humpback whale).

In Ireland, however, there are only about sixty mammal species. (Compare that with the United States that has more than four hundred mammal species.)

In addition, Ireland has more than four hundred bird species, three amphibians, and only one lonely land reptile—the *viviparous lizard*.

Here is a look at just some of the amazing wildlife of Ireland.