

Saint Colmcille Reading Comprehension:

Early Years:

Saint Colmcille was born in Gartan, Co. Donegal in AD521. He was christened Crimhthann, but was known as Colmcille later in his life. His mother was Princess Eithne of Leinster. His father, Fedelmídh, was the great grandson of King Niall of the Nine Hostages. However, Colmcille was sent to be fostered by another family when he was young. This was normal for princes back in this time. He was sent to the house of Cruithnechan, a holy man. Here, Colmcille spent a lot of his time in church, praying and meditating.



St. Colmcille's Cross and Abbey, Gartan, Co. Donegal

Education:

Colmcille was a well-educated scholar. He attended many different schools around Ireland. He first attended St. Finnian's monastic school in Derry. After this, he travelled down to Clonard Monastery, Co. Meath. His last place of study was St. Mobhi's, Glasnevin, Co. Dublin. Interestingly, he only stayed a short time in Dublin because there was a breakout of the plague. He returned to Donegal at this point.

Monasteries:

In AD545, he founded his first monastery in Co. Derry. He went on and found over 60 monasteries and churches in Ireland, including ones in Swords, Co. Dublin and in the Burren, Co. Clare.

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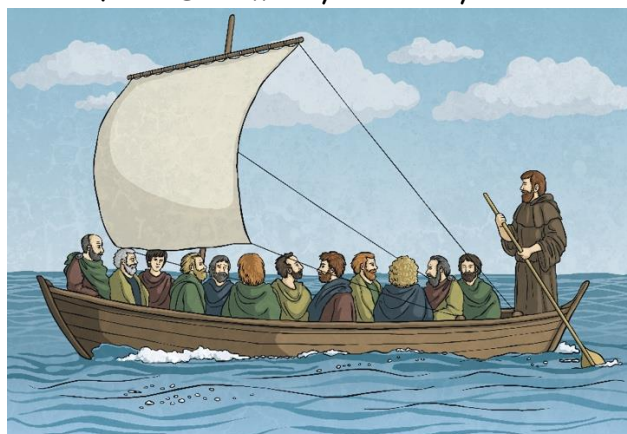
In 563, Colmcille and twelve monks sailed from Derry to the island of Iona. Iona is situated off the west coast of Scotland. Colmcille was going into exile. The cause is said to have been due to his involvement in the Battle of Cúl Dreimhne in County Sligo. The story is that Colmcille secretly copied a psalter belonging to St Finnian at Moville. King Diarmaid was asked to determine the owner of the copy. King Diarmaid ruled as follows: 'To every cow her calf and to every book its copy.'



A Page from The Cathach of Colmcille

Pilgrimage to Iona:

In AD563, Saint Colmcille travelled to the island of Iona off the western coast of Scotland. He set sail with 12 clansmen and sailed to Iona. He founded a monastery here and spread the word of God to local people and to the people of the Picts tribe. In Iona he went into exile. The pilgrimage was a kind of repentance for his involvement in the Battle of Cúl Dreimhne, where 3,000 warriors died.



The monastery at Iona was originally very small and built in timber. It soon began to thrive. The land was very fertile and there was plenty of timber available to build a large community. Over time, the monastery was rebuilt in stone and in AD1200, it was taken over by the Augustinian monks.

St. Colmcille's Legacy:

Saint Colmcille died in AD597 at the age of 76. Saint Colmcille died in the church, on the altar, in Iona. His monks buried him in the grounds of his monastery on Iona and many years later, his bones were disinterred and are thought to be buried in Downpatrick, County Down, with Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid. Saint Colmcille is one of Ireland's patron saints, along with Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid. He is famous for his prophecies and sayings. He performed many miracles. One of Colmcille's miracles is said to have involved the Loch Ness Monster. This story is the first recorded sighting in history of the legendary creature.



St. Colmcille Overpowers the Loch Ness Monster

The story explains that Colmcille saved a man who was swimming from being killed by the monster. He made the sign of the cross and said to the monster, 'You will go no further.' At this, the monster fled in fear. All the Picts who witnessed this act were amazed and converted to Christianity.

After Reading Questions:

1. Where was St. Colmcille born?
_____.
2. What was St. Colmcille's childhood like?
_____.
3. St. Colmcille was a well educated man. Name the places where he was educated?
_____.
4. What was the first monastery that St. Colmcille founded?
_____.
5. Why was St. Colmcille accused of copyright in his life?
_____.
6. What happened in Iona in AD563?
_____.
7. How many warriors died in the Battle of Cúl Dreimhne?
_____.
8. Is the monastery in Iona the same building today as it was in the time of St. Colmcille?
_____.
9. Where is St. Colmcille buried? Who buried him?
_____.
10. St Colmcille is renowned for a miracle that he performed. What was the miracle that he performed?
_____.