

ST. PATRICK UNIT STUDY GUIDE



*A multi-discipline study based
on Confessio & Letter to the
Soldiers of Coroticus*

MRS. HOLMAN'S CLASSROOM, LLC

How to Use this Guide

Each day has six sections — Devotion, Vocabulary, History & Geography, Math, Language Arts, and (on Days 2 and 4) Science. Some sections have several activities. You do not have to do all of the activities! Just do the ones that excite you, that you have time for, or that fit your child’s level.

Every section is tiered for **Preschool, Elementary, Middle School, and High School**. Read the primary source passages together as a family, then let each student work at their level. Discussion questions are for everyone!

Use this guide as a jumping off point - feel free to explore aspects of St. Patrick that interest you and your students. Have a different math concept you’ve been learning? Plug it in! Learning something specific in grammar? Look for examples of it in the text. Don’t like the writing prompt? Substitute your own! Unit studies are all about giving you the foundation to branch off from. Have fun with it!

Schedule

Day 1	A Boy, a Raid, and a God He Didn’t Know	Confessio 1-6	History · Math · Language Arts
Day 2	The Dream, the Ship, and a Voice that Wouldn’t Quit	Confessio 7 -23	History · Math · Language Arts · Science
Day 3	Preaching, Persecution, and Obedience	Confessio 24 -43	History · Math · Language Arts
Day 4	Legacy, Gratitude, and a Life Well-Spent	Confession 44 -62	History · Math · Language Arts · Science
Day 5	When the Gospel Costs Something	Letter to Coroticus	History · Math · Language Arts

Day 1

A Boy, a Raid, and a God He Didn't Know

Theme: God uses suffering to awaken faith

Primary Source

Confessio, Sections 1–6

Patrick opens his autobiography by admitting he was spiritually lazy as a teenager. Then, at sixteen, Irish raiders crossed the sea and kidnapped him. Taken from Roman Britain and sold as a slave in Ireland, it was in that loneliness and hardship that he began to pray — really pray — for the first time.

Devotion

Awakened by Affliction

Read aloud:

Psalm 119:71 *"It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."*

Reflect together:

Patrick did not know God well before his captivity. Suffering became the door to learning more about God. Joseph, Moses, David, Paul — hardship precedes purpose again and again in Scripture.

Discussion:

- Have you ever learned something important because of something hard?
- Why do you think comfort can sometimes make us spiritually lazy?
- What does it mean that God can use something evil, like a kidnapping, for something good?

Vocabulary

Words from Patrick's World

captivity

the state of being held prisoner; being owned by another person

pagan

a person who does not follow the God of the Bible; in Patrick's time, most Irish people

deacon

a servant-leader role in the early church; Patrick's father held this role

decurion

a local Roman government official; Patrick's grandfather's title

province

a region governed as part of a larger empire

sinful

Patrick's own word for himself in his youth; morally wrong before God

Vocabulary Activities

Preschool

Point to pictures of a house, a boat, and a field. Say: "Patrick lived in a house. Bad men came on a boat. They took him far away to work in a field." Act it out with toys.

Elementary

- Match each word to its definition.
- Write one sentence using the word captivity.
- Draw what you think Patrick's life as a shepherd in Ireland looked like.

Middle

- Choose three words. For each, write the word, its definition in your own words, and a sentence connecting it to Patrick's story.
- Answer the following question: Based on these words, what can you tell about Patrick's family before the kidnapping?

High School

Patrick describes himself as a sinner who didn't take his faith seriously. Read Sections 1–3.

How does his vocabulary (the specific words he chooses) establish both his humility and his credibility? Write a paragraph analyzing his rhetorical self-presentation in the opening sections.

History

Roman Britain vs. Celtic Ireland

In the early 400s AD, Roman Britain was a civilized, partially Christianized province of the Roman Empire. Ireland was outside the Empire entirely and was unconquered, Celtic, and pagan. The Irish Sea separates them by about 50 miles at the narrowest point.

Locate on a map:

- Roman Britain
- Ireland
- The Irish Sea
- Dalriada (northeastern Ireland, where Patrick may have been taken)

Discuss:

What would it feel like to be taken from a Roman city, with things like roads, markets, and a church, and dropped into rural, pagan Ireland as a slave?

History Activities

Preschool

Look at a map together. Point to England, then to Ireland. Say: "Patrick lived here. He was taken HERE. That is FAR!" Count how many fingers fit across the gap on the map.

Elementary

- Label a blank map with Britain, Ireland, and the Irish Sea.
- Draw an arrow showing the direction Patrick traveled.
- Write two sentences: one about what Britain was like, one about what Ireland was like.

Middle

- Research Roman Britain in 400 AD. What was daily life like? What was the church like?
- Write a half-page comparison of Roman Britain vs. Celtic Ireland. Use at least three specific details for each location.

High School

Research the withdrawal of Roman troops from Britain (around 410 AD) and how that affected Roman citizens. How might this political instability have made coastal raids more common and dangerous? Write one page connecting political history to Patrick's personal story.

Math

Distance, Speed, and Time on the Irish Sea

The Irish Sea is approximately 50 miles across at its narrowest point. Patrick was transported by ship and then spent six years as a shepherd slave in Ireland.

Distance = rate x time. Take some time to explore this idea!

Math Activities

Preschool

Count to 50 together using drawings (like shamrocks, coins, sheep, etc), and draw one drawing for every 5 numbers. "Patrick sailed 50 miles across the water. That is SO far!"

Elementary

- If the ship traveled 5 miles per hour, how many hours did the crossing take?
- Draw a number line from 0 to 50. Mark every 5 miles and label each mark. Think outside the box: use chalk and mark the driveway, or use a roll of paper and see how long you can make your number. How can you divide up the line evenly so that each number is the same distance from the next?
- Patrick worked as a shepherd for 6 years, 7 days a week. How many total days did he work? How many weeks?
- If he watched 20 sheep each day, how many total sheep did he log across 6 years?

Middle

- Calculate the crossing time at 4 mph, 5 mph, and 6 mph. Make a table with columns for speed, time, and distance.
- If Patrick walked 8 miles per day with the sheep for 6 years, how many total miles did he walk in captivity?
- Ancient ships traveled 50–75 miles per day with favorable wind. If Patrick's journey was 200 miles total (a longer coastal route), what is the range of days it could have taken?
- Create a double number line: miles per day on top, total journey days on the bottom.

High School

- Write the function $t(r) = 50/r$ where t = crossing time in hours and r = rate in mph. Identify the domain and explain why $r > 0$ is necessary.
- Analyze the behavior as r approaches 0 and as r approaches infinity. What do these limits mean in physical context?
- Graph the function. Label axes, identify asymptotes, and explain what the curve's shape tells us about the relationship between speed and time.
- Modern ferries cross at 20–25 mph. Calculate the time difference. What does this suggest about ancient trade, communication, and the spread of ideas?

Language Arts

Writing the Self: How Patrick Opens His Story

Discussion first: Read this line from Confessio, Section 1: "I, Patrick, a sinner, most uncultivated and least of all the faithful and utterly despised by many..." What do you notice about how he begins? Why might someone start an autobiography this way?

Language Arts Activities

Preschool

Draw a picture of yourself. Have a parent write: "My name is _____. I am _____." Fill in your name and one describing word. Share it with the family.

Optional: Choose a letter to focus on, and "introduce" the letter. Then create it using a kinesthetic activity, like sand, play dough or shaving cream.

Ex: "This is letter C. It is the first letter of your name, and starts the words cat, cow, and can! Let's create the letter C with play dough."

Elementary

Write a short paragraph (3–5 sentences) pretending you are Patrick, writing a letter home to your parents from Ireland. What would you say? How would you feel? What would you want them to know?

Middle

Patrick calls himself a sinner and an uneducated man before he tells us anything about his mission. Why do writers sometimes begin by lowering themselves before the audience?

Write 2–3 paragraphs exploring this technique. Then try it yourself: write the opening of your own "autobiography" using the same approach.

High School

In rhetoric, beginning with a statement of personal weakness is called *captatio benevolentiae*: capturing the goodwill of the audience. Read Sections 1–6 and identify at least three examples of *captatio benevolentiae*.

Write a 1-page analysis: Is Patrick's humility authentic, strategic, or both? Support your argument with direct text references.

Day 2

The Dream, the Ship, and the Voice That Wouldn't Quit

Theme: Obedience over comfort.

Primary Source

Confessio, Sections 7–23

After six years of slavery, Patrick heard a voice in a dream telling him a ship was ready. He walked 200 miles to the coast, found the ship, and eventually made it home to Britain. But years later, another dream came: the voices of the Irish people pleading with him to return. He couldn't ignore it.

Devotion

Called Back to the Enemy's Land

Read aloud:

Isaiah 6:8 "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

Reflect together:

Patrick didn't volunteer for Ireland the first time: he was taken. The second time, he went willingly. The man dragged away as a slave walked back as a missionary.

Discussion:

- What's the difference between being sent somewhere and choosing to go?
- Why do you think Patrick went back to the very place that had enslaved him?
- Is there something in your own life God might be asking you to do that feels uncomfortable or hard?

Vocabulary

The Language of Calling

providential

happening as if guided by God's care and plan

heathen

another word for pagan; people who do not worship the God of the Bible

epistle

a formal letter; Paul's New Testament letters are epistles

ordained

officially appointed to serve in church ministry

perseverance

continuing to do something difficult over a long period of time

compelled

driven to do something, as if by a force you cannot resist

Vocabulary Activities

Preschool

Play 'go and come back.' Walk to one side of the room and back. Say: 'Patrick went far away and came back home. Then God asked him to go AGAIN. He said YES!' Practice saying: 'Here I am!'

Elementary

- Write each word and definition. Circle the word that best describes why Patrick returned to Ireland.
- Write one sentence explaining your choice.
- Use the word perseverance in a sentence about your own life.

Middle

- Using the words *compelled* and *providential*, write a paragraph explaining why Patrick went back to Ireland.
- Consider: How do people today discern whether something is from God or just their own emotions? Write 3–4 sentences explaining your thoughts.

High School

Read Sections 16–23. Patrick's call to return is mediated through dreams, Scripture, and inner conviction, not a direct audible voice.

Write a 1-page theological analysis: What criteria does Patrick use to evaluate his call? Compare it to how calling is discussed in Romans 10:14–15 and Acts 13:1–3.

History

From Slave to Bishop: Patrick's Journey Back

Patrick's escape required walking approximately 200 miles across Ireland to reach a port. Once home, he trained for ministry (likely in Gaul (modern France)) and was eventually ordained and sent back to Ireland as a bishop

Locate on a map:

- Patrick's escape route across Ireland
- Gaul (France)
- Rome (center of the Western Church)
- Britain (Patrick's homeland)

Discuss:

Patrick crossed Ireland on foot as a runaway slave. What would that journey have been like: physically, emotionally, spiritually?

History Activities

Preschool

Walk around your house or yard together counting steps. "Patrick walked SOOO far to get home! Let's see how far we can walk." Count together and celebrate.

Elementary

- On a map of Europe, trace Patrick's life: Britain → Ireland → escape across Ireland → ship → Britain → Gaul → back to Ireland.
- How many countries did his life touch? Write three sentences about what you think was the hardest part of his journey.

Middle

- Research the early church's structure in the 5th century. Who sent missionaries? How were bishops appointed?
- Narrate how Patrick fit into (or didn't fit into) that system. Why did some church leaders in Britain question his mission?

High School

Patrick's mission was unusual. Rome didn't officially send him, and he operated largely outside standard church channels. Research the controversy surrounding his appointment. How does this tension between institutional authority and personal calling appear throughout church history? Write one page connecting Patrick's situation to at least one other historical example.

Math

Miles, Years, and Thousands of Believers

Patrick walked approximately 200 miles to escape. He later returned to Ireland and spent roughly 30 years in active ministry, during which he baptized thousands of people.

Math Activities

Preschool

Count sheep! Cut out or draw 10 little sheep. Count them forward and backward. "Patrick took care of sheep every day and counted them so none would get lost."

Elementary

- If Patrick walked 200 miles and covered 15 miles per day, how many days did his escape take?
- If he took 2 rest days along the way, how many total days did the journey last?
- He was 16 when captured and returned home around age 22. How many years was he in captivity?
- If he returned to Ireland at age 30 and died at age 71, how many years did he spend in ministry?

Middle

- Patrick walked 200 miles in roughly 14 days. Calculate his average miles per day.
- If he walked 10 hours per day, what was his average speed in mph?
- If he baptized an average of 1,000 people per year over 30 years, estimate total baptisms. Show your work and state your assumptions.
- Create a life timeline: born ~390, kidnapped ~406, escaped ~412, returned to Ireland ~432, died ~461. Calculate the duration of each life phase.

High School

- Model church growth as exponential: starting with ~100 believers, doubling every 10 years. How many believers after 30 years? Write the function and solve.
- Compare to linear growth of 500 converts/year over 30 years. Which gives a larger result?
- Ireland's 5th-century population was ~500,000. If Patrick's church reached 30,000 by his death, what percentage was Christian? What annual growth rate does this represent?

Science

Navigation: Finding Your Way Without GPS

Patrick's escape ship had no GPS. Ancient sailors used stars, currents, wind patterns, and coastal landmarks to navigate. The Irish Sea is notorious for unpredictable weather and strong tidal currents.

Discuss: How did people find their way before maps and compasses were common? What did they have to know? What did they have to trust?

Science Activities

Preschool

Go outside at night (or look at pictures of the night sky) and find the moon. "Sailors used the moon and stars to find their way. God made the stars to help people!" Point out the brightest star you can find.

Elementary

- Research the North Star (Polaris). Why was it especially useful for ancient sailors?
- Draw a simple diagram showing how the North Star stays fixed while other stars appear to rotate around it.
- Write three sentences about how Patrick's ship might have used Polaris for navigation.

Middle

- Research ancient Celtic and Roman navigation methods. What tools did they have? How did they use the sun, stars, and coastlines?
- Write a half-page explanation of how Patrick's ship might have navigated from Ireland to Britain. Include at least two specific navigational techniques.
- How do tidal currents in the Irish Sea affect sailing? Research and include this in your explanation.

High School

- Research celestial navigation using Polaris for latitude determination. If Patrick's ship departed from $\sim 54^\circ\text{N}$ in Ireland and arrived at $\sim 51^\circ\text{N}$ in Britain, how would Polaris have appeared differently? Calculate the angular difference.
- How does latitude relate to the altitude of a star above the horizon? Write a short explanation connecting the mathematics to actual ancient navigation practice.

Language Arts

Writing About the Unbelievable

Discussion first: Patrick heard a voice in a dream: "See, your ship is ready." He had no evidence, no map, no guarantee. He walked 200 miles on faith. How do you write about something that sounds unbelievable and make people believe you?

Language Arts Activities

Preschool

Draw your favorite dream. "What do YOU dream about at night?" Share it with the family and have someone write down what you say.

Elementary

Write a journal entry from Patrick's point of view on the night before he started walking toward the coast. What is he thinking? What is he scared of? What does he hope for?

Use at least 5 sentences.

Middle

Patrick returned to the people who had enslaved him. Write a persuasive paragraph arguing either FOR or AGAINST his decision to go back. Use evidence from what you've read. Then write 2–3 sentences representing the opposing view.

High School

Compare Patrick's account of his calling in the Confessio with Paul's account of his Damascus Road experience in Acts 9 and Galatians 1. What similarities do you find? What are the key differences?

Write a 1–2 page comparative analysis using direct references from both texts.

Day 3

Preaching, Persecution, and the Price of Obedience

Theme: Leadership through humility.

Primary Source

Confessio, Sections 24–43

Patrick describes his ministry in Ireland : baptizing thousands, ordaining local leaders, and pushing into areas no missionary had reached. He paid local kings for safe passage and faced opposition from fellow Christians in Britain who accused him of misconduct. He defends himself without bitterness.

Devotion

Accused and Undeterred

Read aloud:

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness... For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Reflect together:

Patrick faced accusations from the very people who should have supported him — church leaders who knew him personally. He didn't respond with anger. He responded by doubling down on his mission and trusting God to vindicate him.

Discussion:

- Has anyone ever accused you of doing something for the wrong reason when your reason was actually good?
- How do you respond when people misunderstand you?
- What's the difference between defending yourself and trusting God to defend you?

Vocabulary

Words of Conflict and Character

ordain

to officially set someone apart for ministry; to appoint with authority

rebuke

a sharp correction; to tell someone clearly and firmly that they are wrong

testimony

a personal account of what someone has witnessed or experienced

adversary

an enemy or opponent who works against you

integrity

doing what's right even when no one is watching; consistency between words and actions

accusation

a charge that someone has done something wrong

Vocabulary Activities

Preschool

Talk about telling the truth. "Patrick told the truth about himself even when people didn't believe him. Do we always tell the truth?" Talk about how Practice saying together: "I am telling the truth!"

Elementary

- Define each vocabulary word in your own words — not the definitions above.
- Choose two words and write a sentence for each that connects to Patrick's story.
- Which word best describes Patrick? Circle it and explain why in 2–3 sentences.

Middle

Patrick was accused of going to Ireland for money or fame. Using testimony, integrity, and accusation, write a paragraph defending Patrick as if you were his lawyer. Use specific details from the Confessio to support your case.

High School

Read Sections 26–34. The accusations against Patrick appear to involve an old sin he confessed to a close friend who later used it against him. Analyze how Patrick handles this betrayal in the text. What does he say? What does he NOT say? How does his response demonstrate both rhetorical skill and Christian character? Write a 1-page analysis.

History

A Land of Kings: Irish Political Structure

Patrick describes paying local kings in gold and silver for the right to travel and preach in their territory. Ireland in the 5th century was divided into dozens of small kingdoms with no overarching legal system.

Locate and research

- The five ancient provinces of Ireland (Ulster, Munster, Leinster, Connacht, Meath)
- The Hill of Tara (seat of the High King)
- Armagh (Patrick's primary church)

Discuss:

Patrick operated with no Roman law, no postal system, no courts. How did he build trust? How did he protect himself and his team?

History Activities

Preschool

Draw a simple map of your neighborhood or home. "This is our territory. Patrick had to ask the king's permission to walk through his territory. Who is in charge of our house?" Talk about rules and authority.

Elementary

- Draw and label a simple map of Ireland's five ancient provinces.
- Write one sentence about each province.
- Why do you think Patrick had to pay kings to travel? What does this tell us about Irish society at the time?

Middle

- Compare the political structure of Roman Britain with 5th-century Ireland. Who held power in each system and why?
- Write a half-page comparison. Then explain: how did the difference between these two systems shape Patrick's mission strategy?

High School

Research the concept of paruchia: the monastic network that defined Irish Christianity after Patrick. How did Irish Christianity develop differently from Roman Christianity precisely because of Ireland's decentralized political structure?

Math

The Economics of Mission

Patrick mentions paying local chieftains for safe passage and giving gifts to judges for fair hearings. Money in 5th-century Ireland typically took the form of silver and cattle. He also traveled with a team of companions whose expenses he covered.

Math Activities

Preschool

Practice fair sharing. Get 10 small objects (coins, blocks, beans). "If we have 10 and want to share fairly with 2 people, how many does each person get?" Work up to 5 people. Count and check!

Elementary

- If Patrick paid a chieftain 5 gold coins per week for safe travel, how much did he pay in 4 weeks? In 6 months (24 weeks)?
- If he started with 100 coins and spent 5 per week, after how many weeks would he run out? He traveled through 5 provinces, each with 3 chieftains, paying each 4 coins. How many coins total?

Middle

- If Patrick traveled with 12 companions (each paid 3 coins/week) and paid 5 coins/week to chieftains for passage, what was his total weekly cost?
- If he received 500 coins in donations at the start of a year, would he run out? Show your work.
- Create a budget table for a one-month missionary journey: income (donations), expenses (team wages, chieftain fees, food). Calculate whether the mission was financially sustainable.

High School

- Research ancient currency purchasing power. What could one silver coin buy in 5th-century Europe? Compare to modern equivalents.
- Patrick mentions spending money on judges for fair hearings. When is paying for access to justice corrupt vs. simply how a system functions? Write a 1-page economic and ethical analysis.
- Create a 10-year financial model of Patrick's ministry. State all assumptions clearly. What variables matter most to the mission's sustainability?

Language Arts

Defense Without Defensiveness

Discussion first: Patrick says he would rather die than stop his mission. That's a strong statement. What kind of person says something like that and means it? Have you ever cared about something enough to say that?

Language Arts Activities

Preschool

Dictate to a parent: "My favorite thing to do is ____. I would do it even if ____." Draw a picture of it and share it with the family.

Elementary

Patrick had critics in Britain who didn't believe in his mission. Write a letter from Patrick to one of his critics. Be kind but clear. Use at least 3 sentences.

Middle

Patrick gave up comfort in Britain to live among people who had once enslaved him. Write a 2–3 paragraph personal response: Do you find his choice admirable? Foolish? Both? Be honest and support your view with reasoning.

High School

Sections 24–43 contain sophisticated rhetoric. Patrick makes his defense without appearing defensive. He acknowledges accusations without validating them. He appeals to God as his ultimate judge.

Analyze his strategy:

What appeals does he make (ethos, pathos, logos)?

How does he use Scripture? What does he pointedly NOT say?

Write a 1–2 page rhetorical analysis.

Day 4

Legacy, Gratitude, and a Life Well-Spent

Theme: Faithfulness over recognition

Primary Source

Confessio, Sections 44-62

In his final reflections, Patrick expresses deep gratitude to God. He marvels that someone like him, uneducated, taken from his home, once a sinner, could have been used for something so significant. He is not boasting. He is genuinely amazed. He closes by restating his mission: not for wealth, not for recognition, but because God called him.

Devotion

The Only Thing Required of a Steward

Read aloud:

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

"This is how one should regard us — as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful."

Reflect together:

Patrick faced accusations from the very people who should have supported him: church leaders who knew him personally. He didn't respond with anger. He responded by doubling down on his mission and trusting God to vindicate him.

Discussion:

- What does it mean to be a steward of something?
- Is there a difference between being successful and being faithful?
- What would it look like for you to be faithful with what you've been given this week?

Vocabulary

The Language of a Life Reviewed

steward

someone who manages something that belongs to another person; a caretaker

gratitude

thankfulness; recognizing that something good came from outside yourself

testament

a statement of belief; also a formal declaration — as in Old and New Testament

sovereignty

supreme power; God's sovereignty means He is in ultimate control

legacy

what you leave behind; the lasting effect of your life and work

eloquent

expressing ideas clearly and beautifully. Patrick says he is NOT eloquent, then writes beautifully

Vocabulary Activities

Preschool

Talk about being thankful. "Patrick was SO thankful to God for using him. What are YOU thankful for today?" Make a thankfulness list together — you draw, a parent writes the words.

Elementary

- Write each vocabulary word in a sentence that connects to Patrick's life.
- What do you think Patrick's legacy is? Write 3–4 sentences.
- What legacy would you like to leave someday? Write 2–3 sentences.

Middle

Patrick calls himself 'unlearned' and 'the most rustic', yet his writing has survived 1,600 years. Is he being honest, or is this another example of captatio benevolentiae (from Day 1)? Write a paragraph exploring this tension.

High School

Read Sections 55–62 carefully. How does Patrick understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and human agency in his mission? Write a 1-page theological analysis drawing on his specific language and at least one relevant Pauline passage.

History

The Ripple Effect: From Patrick to Europe

Patrick's death around 461 AD marks the beginning, not the end, of Irish Christianity. Within a generation, Ireland became a center of learning and mission. Irish monks would later carry the faith back to a Europe collapsing under barbarian invasions, preserving classical learning in their monasteries.

Research and Map

- Armagh, Ireland (Patrick's primary church)
- Iona, Scotland (founded by Columba, ~563 AD)
- Lindisfarne, England (Irish mission to Anglo-Saxons)
- Bobbio, Italy (founded by Columbanus; Irish mission to Europe)

Discuss:

Within 150 years of Patrick's death, Irish missionaries were evangelizing Europe. How did one man's obedience ripple outward across a continent?

History Activities

Preschool

Drop a small stone in a bowl of water. Watch the ripples. "When Patrick obeyed God, it was like a stone in water. Ripples went far, far away, all the way to other countries!"

Elementary

- Create a timeline from Patrick's birth (~390) to the founding of Bobbio (~614). Mark at least five events.
- How many years passed between Patrick's death and the Irish missionaries reaching Italy?
- Draw the 'ripple effect:' Patrick at the center, then show where the faith spread

Middle

- Research the concept of the 'Celtic Church.' How did Irish Christianity differ from Roman Christianity in practice and structure?
- Write a half-page comparison. Why were Irish monasteries so important for preserving learning during the collapse of the Roman Empire

High School

Historian Thomas Cahill argued in *How the Irish Saved Civilization* that Irish monks preserved classical learning during the Dark Ages. Research this thesis. What evidence supports it? What criticisms have historians made of Cahill's argument? Write a 1-page historiographical analysis evaluating the claim.

Math

Measuring a Legacy Across 1,600 Years

Patrick died around 461 AD. The faith he planted grew over fifteen centuries into one of the most culturally significant religious traditions in Western history. Let's look at the numbers behind that growth.

Math Activities

Preschool

Measure things around your house together with a ruler or string. "Patrick measured how far he walked and counted how many people he helped. Can we measure how tall we are? How wide is the door?" Record the measurements on paper.

Elementary

- Patrick was born in 390 and died 461. How old was he when he died?
- He was kidnapped at 16 and escaped around age 22. How long was he in captivity?
- He returned to Ireland around age 30 and died at 71. How long was his ministry?
- If there are approximately 5 million Catholics in Ireland today and Patrick started with 0 converts in 432 AD, find the missing number in the math sentence: $0 + ___ = 5,000,000$.

Middle

- Ireland's population is ~5 million today. If 78% identify as Christian, how many people is that?
- Patrick's church may have reached ~50,000 by his death. Create a timeline with population benchmarks every 200 years from 432 to 2032. Research or estimate Christian population at each point and plot as a line graph.

High School

- Model growth using $P(t) = 50,000e^{rt}$, where $P(1593) = 3,900,000$. Solve for r and interpret what this growth rate means.
- Discuss the limitations of applying an exponential model to historical religious growth. What events (Viking raids, Black Death, Reformation, famine) would cause the model to break down? Where would you expect inflection points?

Science

Why Is Ireland So Green? Climate and Geography

Ireland is called the Emerald Isle for a reason. Its remarkable greenness comes from a specific combination of geographic and atmospheric factors: the same landscape Patrick walked, prayed in, and spent his life serving within.

Discuss: Patrick spent decades living outdoors across this green island. What made Ireland's landscape so different from Roman Britain, and why?

Science Activities

Preschool

Look at pictures of Ireland's green hills and compare to pictures of a dry landscape. "Ireland is SO green! Do you know what makes plants green and happy? RAIN and SUNSHINE!" Water a plant together and talk about what plants need to grow.

Elementary

- Ireland receives 40–60 inches of rain per year. Divide by 12 to find the monthly average.
- Look up your city's average annual rainfall. Is it more or less than Ireland's? By how much?
- Draw and label the water cycle: evaporation, condensation, precipitation. Explain where Ireland's rain comes from (hint: the Atlantic Ocean).

Middle

- Research the Gulf Stream and explain how it affects Ireland's climate. Why is Ireland warmer than other places at the same latitude — like parts of Canada?
- Ireland sits at approximately 53°N — the same latitude as parts of Canada with very cold winters. Write one page explaining why Ireland's climate differs, covering: maritime vs. continental climate, the Gulf Stream, prevailing westerly winds, and the effect of latitude on sun angle.

High School

- Research thermohaline circulation — the 'ocean conveyor belt' — and explain how it drives the Gulf Stream. What would happen to Ireland's climate if this system were disrupted?
- Research scientific projections for thermohaline circulation changes due to climate warming. Write a 1–2 page scientific analysis: How is Ireland's climate shaped by its geography, and what does climate science project for its future? Include a discussion of uncertainty in climate modeling.

Language Arts

Looking Back: How We Write the End of a Story

Discussion first: Patrick ends his autobiography with gratitude, not pride. He is amazed that God used him. What would your reaction be if you were looking back on a life like his?

Language Arts Activities

Preschool

With a parent's help, dictate your own 'story so far.' 'I was born in _____. I love _____. God made me _____.' Draw an illustration and share it with the family.

Elementary

Write the final paragraph of Patrick's *Confessio* in your own words as if you're explaining it to a friend who has never heard of him. What is the most important thing Patrick wants people to understand?

Middle

Patrick says he doesn't care if people think he's uneducated or unimpressive, as long as he was faithful. Write a personal essay (2–3 paragraphs) about something you believe in strongly enough that you wouldn't care what other people think about it.

High School

The *Confessio* is sometimes classified as autobiography, sometimes as an apology (defense), and sometimes as a theological meditation. Having read the whole document across this week, write a 1–2 page essay arguing for one classification. Use specific textual evidence. Consider: Who is Patrick's intended audience? What does he want them to do or believe as a result of reading it?

Day 5

When the Gospel Costs Something

Theme: *Speaking truth against injustice.*

Primary Source

Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus, Sections 1–21 (entire letter)

Coroticus was a British warlord — supposedly a Christian — whose soldiers raided an Irish village shortly after Patrick had baptized its people. They killed some of the new believers and enslaved others. Patrick wrote this letter as a public moral rebuke: furious, heartbroken, and theologically precise. He demands the captives be returned and excommunicates Coroticus and his soldiers.

Devotion

When Silence Is Not an Option

Read aloud:

Proverbs 31:8–9

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Reflect together:

Patrick had already suffered slavery himself. When he saw freshly baptized believers enslaved by someone claiming to be Christian, he did not stay silent. He wrote a public letter and had it read to Coroticus's soldiers.

Discussion:

- What's the difference between staying quiet to 'keep the peace' and speaking up because someone is being harmed?
- Why do you think Patrick targeted Coroticus's soldiers (the men who carried out the raid) not just the commander?
- Is there ever a time when a Christian should publicly call out another Christian? What does Scripture say?

Vocabulary

Words of Justice and Judgment

excommunicate

to formally exclude someone from the Christian community and its sacraments

tyranny

cruel or oppressive use of power against those who cannot resist

apostate

someone who has abandoned their religious faith; a traitor to their own beliefs

ransom

a payment made to secure the release of a captive

lament

a passionate expression of grief or sorrow

prophetic

speaking truth into a situation with authority, especially when it is unpopular

Vocabulary Activities

Preschool

Talk about speaking up. "If someone was being hurt on the playground and nobody was helping them, what would you do?" Role-play together: one person is being treated unfairly, another speaks up to help them.

Elementary

- Write each vocabulary word and definition.
- Circle the words that describe what Patrick DID in his letter. Put an X next to the words that describe what Coroticus DID.
- Write one sentence explaining your choices.

Middle

Using tyranny, prophetic, and excommunicate, write a paragraph summarizing Patrick's letter in your own words.

Then answer: Do you think Patrick's response was proportionate to what Coroticus did?

High School

Compare Patrick's letter to the Old Testament prophetic tradition — specifically Amos 1–2, where God pronounces judgment on nations for war crimes including slave raids. How does Patrick use the prophetic genre? What theological moves does he make that are specifically 'prophetic' in the biblical sense? Write a 1–2 page analysis.

History

Post-Roman Britain: Power, Warlords, and Slavery

Coroticus appears to have been a ruler in post-Roman Britain. He was a warlord who called himself Christian but operated in the power vacuum left by Rome's collapse. Slave trading was common along the Irish Sea corridor, and Patrick had no legal recourse, only words, Scripture, and moral authority.

Research and Map

- The Irish Sea coast of Britain (Wales, western England, Scotland) — Coroticus's likely territory
- Major 5th-century slave trade routes
- The political situation in Britain after Roman withdrawal (~410 AD)

Discuss:

Coroticus considered himself a Christian. Patrick considered him an apostate. What made the difference in Patrick's mind, and possibly in reality?

History Activities

Preschool

Look at a picture of the ocean. "Coroticus's soldiers came on ships and took people away, just like pirates. Patrick said: 'THAT IS WRONG.' And he was right! Taking people is always wrong." Talk about why this matters.

Elementary

- Research slavery in the ancient world. Was it common? Who practiced it?
- Write three facts you learned. Then answer: How was Patrick's view of slavery different from most people in his time?

Middle

- Research the collapse of Roman Britain. What happened when Rome left? Who filled the power vacuum? Why were warlords like Coroticus able to operate outside any law?
- Write a half-page historical context essay, then connect it to Patrick's letter: Why did Patrick have no legal recourse? Why was a public letter his only real option?

High School

Patrick addresses his letter to Coroticus's soldiers, not just Coroticus himself. Why? Research moral responsibility in warfare: when are soldiers responsible for the orders they carry out? How does Patrick's theological argument relate to what we now call command responsibility in international law? Write a 1-page essay connecting 5th-century theology to modern legal and ethical frameworks.

Math

The Economics of Slavery and Ransom

Slave trading was economically significant in the ancient world. Patrick references ransom (buying back enslaved people) as the only way to free captives. The economics of slavery shaped both the crime and the potential remedy.

Math Activities

Preschool

Practice counting and sorting. Sort small objects by color or size into groups. "Patrick was counting how many people were taken and how many he could help free. Let's practice counting our objects!" Count forward and backward.

Elementary

- If 50 people were captured and Patrick could ransom 5 per month, how many months until all were freed?
- If each ransom cost 12 silver coins and Patrick had 100 coins, how many people could he free?
- How many coins would he need to free all 50 people?
- If donations came in at 20 coins per month, how long would it take to free everyone?

Middle

- If one enslaved person was worth approximately 20 cattle, and Patrick needed to ransom 50 people, what was the total cattle-equivalent cost?
- If Patrick spent 15% of annual donations on ransoms and received 200 silver coins per year in donations, how much did he spend on ransoms over 30 years?
- Research the economics of ancient slavery. What percentage of the population was enslaved in the Roman Empire, Celtic Ireland, and Anglo-Saxon Britain? Create a comparison chart.

High School

- Research the economics of the transatlantic slave trade (17th–19th centuries) and compare it structurally to the ancient slave trade Patrick was dealing with. What economic incentives drove both systems? What made them difficult to dismantle?
- Patrick's letter is essentially an economic and social sanction: calling on Christians to cut off trade and contact with Coroticus. Research how economic pressure and moral argument have been used together to fight slavery historically. Write a 1–2 page comparative essay.

Language Arts

Writing to Power: Argument, Structure, and Moral Courage

Discussion first: Patrick was writing to people who had the power to ignore him — and probably did. He had no army, no political authority, no legal system. All he had was words, Scripture, and conviction. Is that ever enough?

Has it been enough in history?

Language Arts Activities

Preschool

Make a sign together that says something important to you. Draw a picture and have a parent write the words. "Patrick used words to stand up for what was right. What's something important YOU want to say?"

Elementary

Pretend you are one of Coroticus's soldiers who received Patrick's letter and actually read it. Write a 5–7 sentence journal entry. Do you feel convicted? Angry? Defensive? Guilty? Explain.

Middle

Patrick's letter has a clear structure: identify the crime → call the criminals to account → state the demand (return the captives) → announce the consequence (excommunication). Write your own letter to someone in authority about an injustice you care about, using Patrick's structure. Write at least half a page.

High School

Analyze Patrick's letter using the Toulmin model of argument:

(1) claim, (2) grounds, (3) warrant, (4) backing, (5) qualifier, (6) rebuttal.

Write a 1–2 page analysis evaluating the strength of his argument. Where is it strongest? Where is it weakest? Would it persuade a modern audience?

Final Reflection

Patrick did NOT leave:

- Wealth
- Political power
- Fame in his lifetime
- A comfortable life
- Official institutional support

Patrick DID leave:

- Churches planted across Ireland
- Thousands of converts baptized
- Two letters that still speak today
- A generation of Irish leaders ordained
- A witness of obedience over ambition

Family Discussion

- Which day's reading surprised you most?
- What one thing from Patrick's life do you want to remember?
- Is there something you've been avoiding that Patrick's example challenges you to do?
- What does it mean to be faithful rather than impressive?
- How did reading Patrick's own words change how you think about him — versus the cultural St. Patrick's Day stories?

High School Final Essay (2-3 Pages)

Was Patrick's legacy primarily spiritual, cultural, or political? Develop a clear thesis. Support it with evidence from both the Confessio and the Letter to Coroticus. Cite section numbers for all primary source references. Consider a counterargument and address it directly.

Checklist:

- Clear thesis stated in the introduction
- At least 3 pieces of textual evidence
- Section citations for all references
- Counterargument addressed
- Strong conclusion that returns to the thesis