

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

MAGIC TREE HOUSE®

MERLIN MISSIONS

Leprechaun in Late Winter* and *Leprechauns and Irish Folklore:

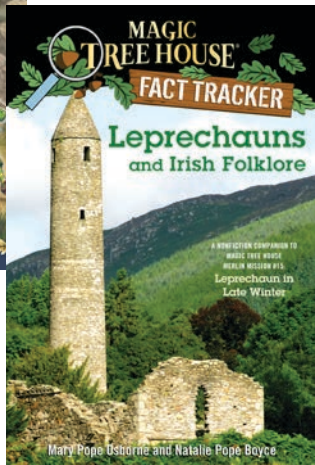
A Nonfiction Companion to Leprechaun in Late Winter



PB: 978-0-375-85651-8
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Grades: 2-5
F&P: N • Lexile: 500L

ABOUT *Leprechaun in Late Winter*

Jack and Annie are on their third mission to find (and inspire!) creative people to bring happiness to others through the arts (Mozart and Louis Armstrong so far). Set in Ireland, Jack and Annie meet an Irish girl and go on a magical adventure that changes the girl's life—she grows up to be Lady Gregory, who helped bring back the Irish legends, started a theater, and helped the Irish people regain both their heritage and their pride.



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ABOUT *Leprechauns and Irish Folklore:*

A Nonfiction Companion to Leprechaun in Late Winter

Do the folk stories about leprechauns match our ideas about them today? Are there other fairies in Irish tradition? What are the origins of these stories? Why do people believe in leprechauns and fairies? Find out the answers to these questions and more in *Leprechauns and Irish Folklore: A Nonfiction Companion to Leprechaun in Late Winter*, Jack and Annie's guide to the wee folk of Ireland.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Activate prior knowledge by engaging the class in the following activities:

Ask students what clues the title, *Leprechaun in Late Winter*, might reveal.

Ask questions to find out what students know about leprechauns. What connections can they make with the clues from the title?

Ask if they think this book will be fiction or nonfiction and why.

Find Ireland on a world map. Distribute a copy of a world map to each student. Laminate a bigger map and allow children to use erasable markers (normally used with overhead projectors) to trace Jack and Annie's journey from Pennsylvania to Ireland. Erase the map with a damp cloth and keep it in the journal for each adventure.

Students will sharpen geography skills as they travel the world with Jack and Annie!

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

ACTIVITIES FOR *Leprechaun in Late Winter*

Fashion a Fairy Garden

Leprechaun in Late Winter will introduce students to the enchanted world of fairies. These wee folk live together in kingdoms deep under hills, in caves, or in rivers. What a perfect opportunity for children to create their own fairy gardens! Recycled containers can be used to design terrariums and provide children with an economical way to create their own ecosystems. For instructions on how to use a recycled container for a terrarium, visit the eHow Web site.

As miniature ecosystems, terrariums can provide beauty and enjoyment for your students. Children's minds can soar away in imagination as they construct and maintain their work of art.

Accessories add a special touch to a fairy garden. Use items found around your garden and home. A few rocks would provide seating for tired fairies. A table made of bark or Popsicle sticks could provide possibilities for creative play. Acorn cups and walnut shells might serve as bowls for hungry fairies. A small pile of soft pine needles or a patch of moss could be a bed, and so on. Encourage students to be creative. The possibilities are endless!

CURRICULUM: *Science • Art*

You're On!

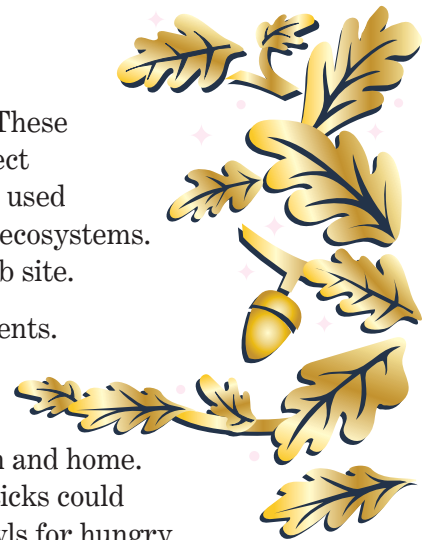
When the Magic Tree House whisks Jack and Annie off to the year 1862 in Galway, Ireland, they are asked, "What are you good for?" They decide that they are not good at plucking a chicken, milking a cow, or catching rats in the cellar. They are able to help their friend, Augusta, find her gifts. She grew up to write more than forty plays, started her own theater, and helped save Irish folklore! Jack and Annie also remember what they were good for: Helping others. What are your special talents? Have students draw a picture of themselves and write a brief description of their special talents! You're on!

CURRICULUM: *Language Arts • Writing a Description Art*

Fairies Rule!

In *Leprechauns and Irish Folklore*, we learn that trooping fairies are small, beautiful wee folk with long golden hair who live in fairy kingdoms. These tiny kingdoms are built in hollow hills and have beautiful rooms with rich colors and fine furniture. The dining rooms have diamond walls and flickering candles. The entrances to these fairy kingdoms are quite hard to find, as Jack and Annie discover in *Leprechaun in Late Winter*. Willy, their leprechaun friend, directs them to the hollow hill of the Shee (fairies), but won't go with them for fear the Shee might turn him into a weasel! Fairies are known to play tricks on humans and leprechauns, but they place a high value on friendship and family.

At the beginning of *Leprechaun in Late Winter*, Jack is trying to write a story for school. Have your class write their own stories and create imaginary fairy kingdoms. Allow students to create their own fairy kingdom posters to display and share with the class. Encourage them to create a name for their kingdom, select a king and queen, make rules and jobs for subjects of the kingdom, design the inside of the fairy castle, decide on powers that each subject and the ruler will possess, and how they will relate to humans and fairies of other kingdoms. What sort of tricks might they play? What do they value most? How will they travel? Encourage students to be creative. Their posters should illustrate their thoughts. Mary Pope Osborne vividly describes the journey to the home of the Shee and the entrance to the kingdom in *Leprechaun in Late Winter*. Let your students create a diorama for the entrance to their fairy kingdom with natural materials (sticks, bark, stones, nut shells, leaves.). If the climate



in your area permits, and you have a wooded area nearby, children could create their fairy kingdom entrances outside. Be sure to suggest that they sprinkle a bit of fairy dust along the way!

CURRICULUM: *Language Arts • Art*

Big House, BIG Chores!

Lifestyles of Irish children in 1862 were quite different from lifestyles of children today. Jack and Annie are unprepared for the tasks that they are expected to do when they arrived at the Big House where Augusta and her family live. Churning butter, milking cows, plucking chickens, and killing rats in the cellar are only a few requirements. There is very little time for play. Have students compare and contrast these two different lifestyles by sorting chores into categories of chores they might do today and those that Augusta and her siblings did in 1862.

CURRICULUM: *Language Arts (Sorting, Classifying) History*

ACTIVITIES FOR *Leprechauns and Irish Folklore:* *A Nonfiction Companion to Leprechaun in Late Winter*

Trap a Tricky Fellow!

Irish folklore is rich in stories about fairies. One of the most famous fairies to call the Emerald Isle home is the leprechaun! Leprechauns are thought to be the richest of all fairies, and have the difficult task of safeguarding all of the fairy gold for safekeeping. Legend has it that if you are able to catch a leprechaun, he will promise to give you his gold if you set him free. Watch out! He can be very sneaky! In an effort to catch a leprechaun in hopes of claiming his gold, people in Ireland try to trap leprechauns in their gardens. Children are often seen putting out leprechaun boxes. Assign your students the task of designing their own leprechaun traps. Encourage them to lure the tricky little fellows with gold coins to satisfy their greedy nature. Students can also decorate their traps with Lucky Charms cereal, four leaf clovers, and rainbows. Celebrate St. Patrick's Day by inviting other classes to tour your classroom filled with creative leprechaun traps designed by your students! In order to enter, they must be wearing green!

CURRICULUM: *History (Irish Folklore) Art*

Round Is a Rainbow

Rainbows don't touch the ground and there is no end to them. Light from the sun looks white, but it is actually made of lots of different colors. Normally they are all mixed together. A rainbow is formed when light from the sun meets raindrops in the air and the raindrops separate out all of the different colors. Because rainbows are made in the sky they don't touch the ground. So if you're on the ground, however far you walk, the end of the rainbow will always look as if it were on the edge of the horizon. Did you know that rainbows are actually complete circles? You never see the whole circle because the earth's horizon gets in the way. If you see a rainbow from a plane, you might be lucky enough to see a complete rainbow circle. Another interesting fact about rainbows: have you ever noticed that you'll only see a rainbow if the sun is behind you? Sometimes you can see miniature rainbows in your garden if you're watering your plants with the sun behind you.

CURRICULUM: *History (Irish Folklore) Art*

Teaching ideas provided by Paula Henson, the 2007 MTH Educator of the Year who is a teacher at the Christian Academy of Knoxville in Knoxville, TN.

