

**QUIZZES!**  
**PUZZLES!**  
**GAMES!**  
**AND MORE**



**HISTORY-AT-HOME**  
**St. Brigid's Day**



*Make a traditional St. Brigid's Cross*

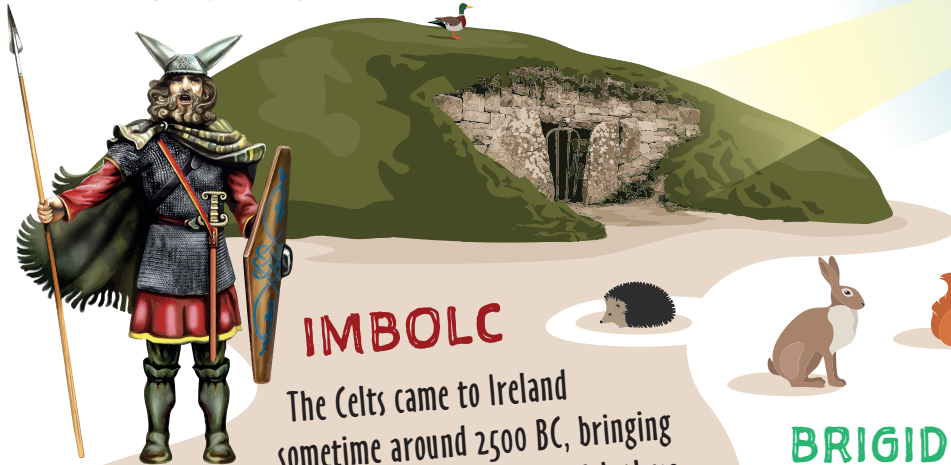


*Learn about the life and history of Brigid*



# A HISTORY OF... St. Brigid's Day

St. Brigid's Day is celebrated on the 1st of February in Ireland. About halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, it heralds in the arrival of spring. Rich in cultural history and tradition, scholars report that the Irish may have held festivities on this day as far back as the Neolithic age, over 4,500 years ago.



## IMBOLC

The Celts came to Ireland sometime around 2500 BC, bringing four fire festivals celebrating the seasons with them. One of these was Imbolc, or Imbolg, possibly meaning 'in the belly' to represent all the baby animals being born at this time of year. We see evidence of these celebrations in monuments built to align with the sun at this time, such as the Mound of the Hostages on the Hill of Tara in Meath. An old folktale tells of an ancient witch called the Cailleach, who gathers firewood for the rest of the winter on this day. If the weather is good, she will gather lots, however, if the weather is bad, she won't venture out of her home, which means that winter is almost over.



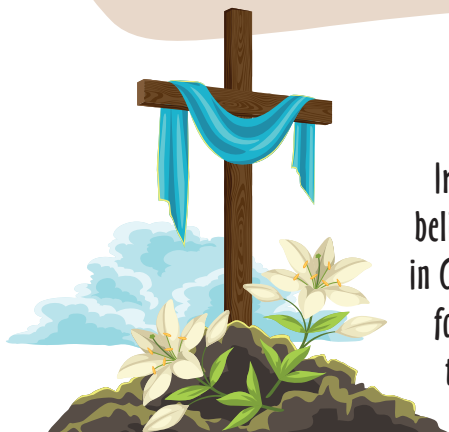
## BRIGID

As Imbolc was associated with new life and birth, the Celts celebrated a female goddess on this day called Brigid, meaning "High One" or the "One Who Is Exalted". She was said to be one of the Tuatha dé Danann, a mythical race of supernatural people who arrived in Ireland thousands of years ago. She represented many things, including wisdom, poetry, animals, healing, protection, leadership, crafting (especially metalwork and blacksmithing), fire, water, and more.



## CHRISTIANITY

Sometime around the 5th century AD Christianity came to Ireland. A lot of the old pagan traditions were adapted to suit the new beliefs. A new story about Brigid was shared, that of a saint who was born in Co. Louth and established a famous Irish monastery in Kildare. No-one knows for certain whether the two Brigids were the same or different people. However, they both stood for similar things. Find out more about their stories on page 5.



## TRADITIONS

There are many traditions associated with St. Brigid's Day in Ireland. Some people believe that Brigid visits every home on the eve of St. Brigid's Day (Jan 31st) to bless the people and animals that live there. A spring clean was completed, holy wells were visited, songs were sung, Brigid's crosses made, a bed of reeds was laid for Brigid to rest in, potatoes and butter were shared, ashes from the fire were raked smooth, and people dressed up, sometimes in straw hats or as Brigid herself.



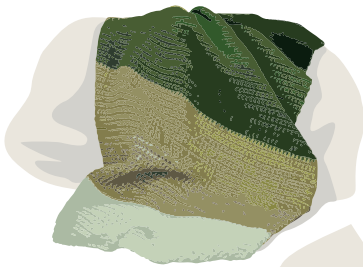
### Brídeóg dolls

– a doll-like figure of Brigid, usually made from reeds or straw, and in some places butter churns or plastic. Decorated with flowers or shells and covered in cloth, they might be left on a bed of straw to invite Brigid into the home to rest, have a seat of honour at the dinner table, or be paraded around the village while reciting a poem and asking for a penny for the poor.



### Brigid's cloak

– a small piece of cloth often left outside. The colour varied around the country, with many using colours associated with Ireland or the Christian church like blue or green. Once touched by Brigid, these items were thought to possess the powers of healing and protection, and were used over the next 12 months to treat things like headaches.



## CELEBRATIONS TODAY

Many people still celebrate St. Brigid's Day today. Parades are being revived around Ireland, such as in Killorglin, County Kerry, and Irish emigrants as far as Newfoundland in Canada make Brigid's crosses. The Imbolc tradition of watching to see if serpents or badgers come out of their winter dens to herald in spring is similar to Groundhog Day, celebrated on February 2nd in the USA and Canada.

Due to Brigid being the only female patron, or matron, saint of Ireland and a powerful woman with multiple talents, recently St. Brigid's Day has become associated with the celebration of womanhood in Ireland and women's talent and creativity across the globe.



# ST. BRIGID'S TRIVIA wordsearch quiz

Answer the questions below and seek out the words in the word search to see how much you recall about the history of St. Brigid's Day.

- 1 Irish celebrations on the 1st February can be traced back to this age beginning with 'N'.
- 2 The Celtic festival associated with February 1st.
- 3 The season associated with St. Brigid's Day.
- 4 The name of the female goddess celebrated on Imbolc.
- 5 The county in Ireland that St. Brigid established a famous monastery in.
- 6 What is a Brídeóg?
- 7 What item, usually left out overnight for Brigid to bless, is said to cure headaches?
- 8 Today, Brigid's day is usually associated with the celebration of w\_me\_.
- 9 People traditionally look out this animal that lives in dens on Imbolc in Ireland.
- 10 Another country in North America that St. Brigid's Day is celebrated in.

U	K	K	G	R	K	C	J	L	T	G	C	C	A	F
T	A	A	B	E	E	I	I	T	Q	G	D	L	D	L
N	E	M	O	W	E	G	L	H	I	R	O	O	A	B
R	Y	B	R	I	G	I	D	D	T	S	L	B	N	F
D	H	P	M	L	C	U	X	A	A	I	L	M	A	P
S	N	W	I	L	I	O	Q	U	B	R	L	I	C	S
A	Q	R	O	U	Q	W	Y	B	P	X	E	O	A	Z
S	L	T	G	S	I	G	K	G	O	V	E	E	E	U
R	H	V	M	R	G	O	N	T	N	P	V	A	Y	N
X	O	H	Z	F	M	I	K	V	D	K	C	P	Q	M
C	R	F	T	B	R	Y	W	Z	T	M	G	U	O	I
D	W	H	Y	P	N	G	D	A	Z	E	K	W	V	I
J	N	G	S	V	B	L	P	A	Q	X	I	I	B	Q

Answers:  
 1. Neolithic  
 2. Imbolc  
 3. Spring  
 4. Brigid  
 5. Kildare  
 6. Doll  
 7. Cloth  
 8. Women  
 9. Badger  
 10. Canada



# BRIGID'S Stories

Who Brigid was is still a bit of a mystery. This is because there are many stories about her, and no-one knows for certain whether the stories relate to one person, or many.



## THE GODDESS BRIGID

Originally, Brigid was said to be a goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danann, a mythical race of people with supernatural powers who came to Ireland thousands of years ago. What was called a triple goddess, she had multiple lives and families. In one story, she was born on the 1st February, and was the daughter of the chief god, called Dagda. Some people said she was also the daughter of the Morrigan, the goddess of war, while others reported that her mother was the mother of the Tuatha Dé Danann herself, a river-goddess called Danu. The goddess of many things such as animals, healers, poets, blacksmiths, childbirth, inspiration, wisdom, fire and hearth (home), and more, she was held in high esteem, with her ability to always know what was needed one of her many talents.



## CHRISTIAN

Inspired by St. Patrick, Brigid wanted to become a Christian, dedicating her life to working with the poor, sick and elderly. However, her father wanted to marry her off for money. She prayed to God that her beauty would be taken away, and her prayer was granted. Then her father tried to sell her to the King of Leinster, however, she gave away his jewel-encrusted sword to a leper, so he finally released her to follow her dream.

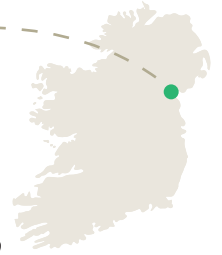


## ST. BRIGID

When Christianity arrived in Ireland, another story of Brigid started to circulate – that of a saint of healing, compassion, fire, farm animals and more. Also known as 'Our Lady of the Irish', 'Mary of the Irish' or the 'Foster-Mother of Christ', she was to become one of the Patron Saints of Ireland, alongside St Patrick and St Columcille.

## EARLY LIFE

Born around AD 452 in Faughart, near Dundalk in Co. Louth, her father, Dubhthach, was a powerful pagan chieftain of Leinster and her mother, Broicsech, was a Christian. Brigid's mother may have been bought to Ireland by pirates like St. Patrick, and spent her life as a slave. Therefore, Brigid spent most of her early life cooking, cleaning, washing and feeding the animals on her father's farm.



## CONVENTS AND MIRACLES

Brigid travelled to Croghan Hill in Co. Offaly and asked St. Maccaille, who was a bishop and had a church there, to take her in. She made her vows to God before travelling around Ireland, performing miracles and founding many convents, including ones for both women and men, which was unusual at this time. The most famous one was in Co. Kildare.

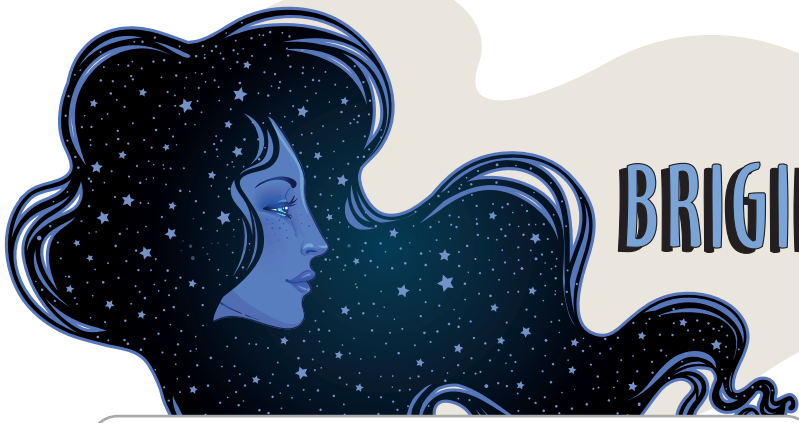
Legend has it that Brigid went to the King of Leinster to ask for a piece of land, and he reluctantly allowed her as much as her cloak could cover. Brigid's four friends grabbed the corners of her cloak and as they walked, it grew to cover many acres. Built inside an ancient oak tree, which was meant to have special powers of protection, it is from here that Kildare gets its name – Cill Dara meaning 'the Church of the Oak'.

## LATER LIFE

Brigid died around AD 525 at the age of 75 and was buried in a tomb in her Kildare monastery. However, after some time she was dug up and reburied in Downpatrick with the two other patron saints of Ireland, St. Patrick and St. Columcille. Her skull was brought to Lisbon, Portugal, where it remains in a little church called Lumiar today.

## A TALE OF TWO BRIGIDS

While both Brigids have a lot in common, one particular tale links them both. Sources suggest that thousands of years ago, Celtic priestesses used to gather on the hill of Kildare to light a fire to the goddess Brigid. When St. Brigid built her monastery in Kildare, she continued to light this fire, although this time to represent Christianity. Legend has it that twenty nuns would take it in turns to watch over the fire for twenty nights, with Brigid taking the last turn. When Brigid died, there was no-one to watch the flame on the twentieth night. However, the flame remained lit, causing the nuns to believe that Brigid still kept watch from beyond the grave. While the flame was extinguished for a time in the sixteenth century, it was relit in 1993 by the Brigidine Sisters and still burns to this day.



# BRIGID'S STORIES **quiz**



1 What does the term 'triple goddess' mean?

2 Where was St. Brigid born?

3 Brigid is associated with many different stories, qualities and things. Which is your favourite and why?

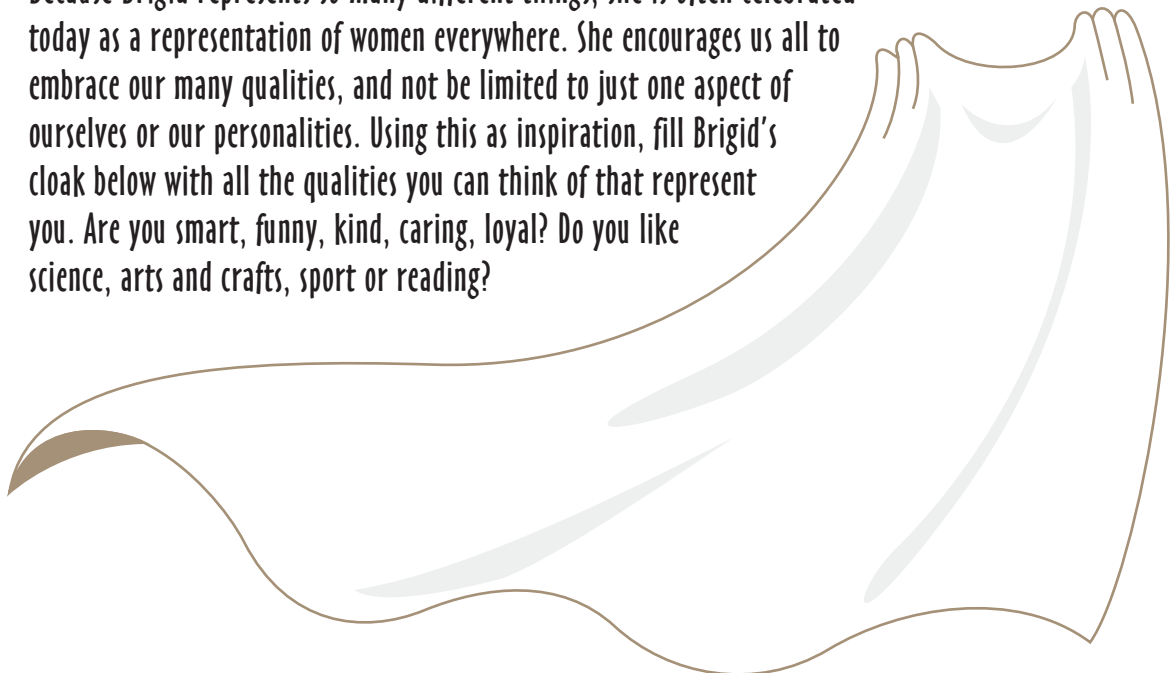
4 Both Brigids are associated with animals. Unscramble the words below to discover some of them.

a. Provides milk, and was said to help raise the goddess Brigid. **OWC** →

b. St. Brigid was once said to tame this small orange animal with a bushy tale. **XOF** →

c. Goddess Brigid raised the King of this white fluffy animal that goes baaa. **PESHE** →

5 Because Brigid represents so many different things, she is often celebrated today as a representation of women everywhere. She encourages us all to embrace our many qualities, and not be limited to just one aspect of ourselves or our personalities. Using this as inspiration, fill Brigid's cloak below with all the qualities you can think of that represent you. Are you smart, funny, kind, caring, loyal? Do you like science, arts and crafts, sport or reading?



Answers: 1. A goddess with many lives; 2. Faughart, near Dundalk, Co. Louth; 4a. Cow; 4b. Fox; 4c. Sheep

# Activity... Make a Traditional Cross

The most commonly practiced St. Brigid's Day tradition is making a Brigid's Cross.

There are many different versions of St Brigid's Day crosses. Some have three arms, some four; some are made from reeds, others felt, paper or straws. People used to make the crosses to ward off things like disease, evil, fire and hunger, and protect both themselves and their animals. They'd then hang the finished crosses over doors or in the roof of their barns.

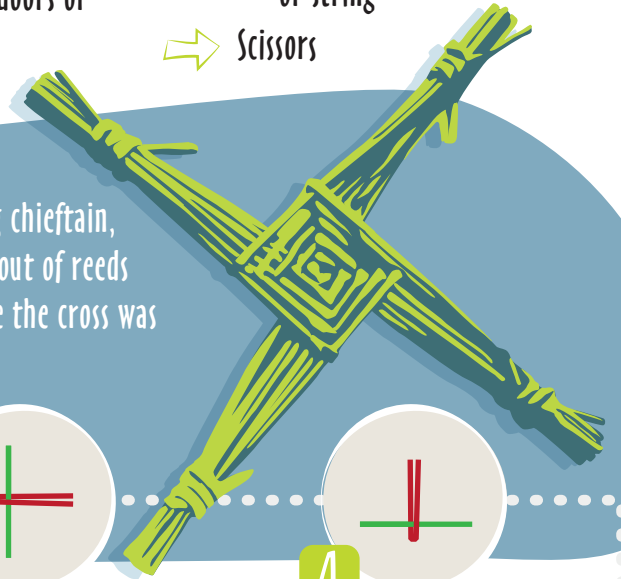



## What you will need

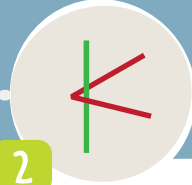
- 16 reeds or straws
- 4 small rubber bands or string
- Scissors


## ORIGINS


The tale goes that St. Brigid was called to the bedside of a dying chieftain, who was possibly her own father. While there, she made a cross out of reeds while retelling the story of Jesus. Legend has it that by the time the cross was made, the pagan chieftain had asked to be baptised.



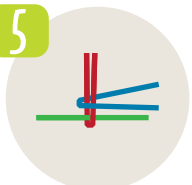
- 

1 Gather your reeds or straws together. Hold your first reed straight up vertically to make an 'I'.
- 

2 Grab your second reed. Fold it in half and wrap it around the first reed from the left to make a 'K' shape.
- 

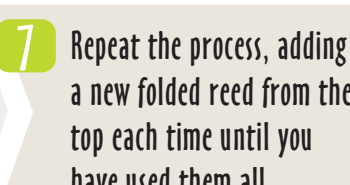
3 Then bring the two arms of the 'K' together, holding the two reeds tightly using your thumb at the point they cross over.
- 

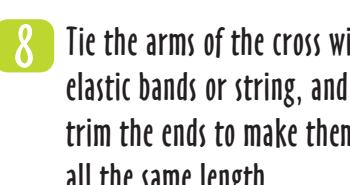
4 Turn your reeds 90 degrees (or one right angle) to the left (anti-clockwise) so that the open ends of the second reed are pointing upwards.

- 

5 Now treat your second reed like your first one. Fold a third reed in half and use it to wrap around your second reed to make another K. Then bring the two arms of the K together like before. Then turn the reeds 90 degrees or one right angle to the left again, so that the open ends of the third reed point upwards.

- 

6 Fold a fourth reed in half over and across the third reed in the same way. Now you will have a cross shape.
- 

7 Repeat the process, adding a new folded reed from the top each time until you have used them all.
- 

8 Tie the arms of the cross with elastic bands or string, and trim the ends to make them all the same length.

Contemporary Paper Craft Cross Want to try something different? Head to [www.epicchq.com/stbrigidscross](http://www.epicchq.com/stbrigidscross) and follow the video instructions to make a contemporary version using paper craft.



# HOW TO... host your own St. Brigid's Day celebration



SHARE & WIN!



Brigid is known as many things - a goddess, a saint, a poet, a leader, a crafter, a healer, a lover of animals, filled with wisdom, compassion and much more. Just like Brigid, get crafting and bring the story of Brigid to life in your own home or classroom by completing the following activities linked to her special qualities. Just remember to get an adult's help.

Share your projects using  
[@EPICMuseumCHQ](#) [@GlobalIrish](#) [#StBrigid'sDay](#) [#LáFhéileBríde](#)  
on social media to be in with a chance of  
winning a free virtual Explorers workshop for your class.

## SHARE LOVE, HEALING AND COMPASSION BY MAKING A LOVE TOKEN

Brigid was known for her love of others, and February, the month we celebrate Imbolc and St. Brigid's Day, is also known as the month of love. Before St. Valentine's Day existed, many of the people who left Ireland would exchange love tokens to remember each other by. These were coins that were worn as jewellery, punched with a hole and engraved with messages or initials. Create your own love token to send a message of love, healing and compassion to someone else. This could be a relative or friend abroad, someone you haven't been able to see for some time, or someone you don't know at all, like residents in a local nursing home.



### What you will need

➔ Colourful paper or card, string, art materials like markers/crayons, scissors or a hole-punch.



1

Cut out a circle shape from your paper or card. It can be as big or little as you want it to be!

2

Using a hole punch or scissors, cut out a hole in your circle

3

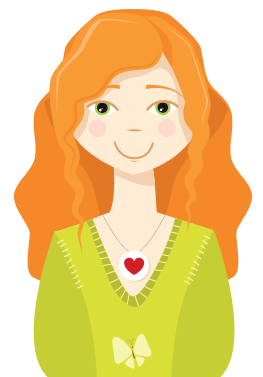
Write a message on the front such as 'joy, peace and love', and your initials on the back

4

Thread the string through the hole to make a piece of jewellery such as a necklace or bracelet

5

Send to your recipient



# Welcome spring through poetry



## Step 1

Write down the following, filling in your chosen flower's name:

Hello, I am [your favourite flower],  
I've been asleep so long,  
I'm waking up to welcome spring,  
Won't you help me to blossom?

## Step 2

Then, write four lines about your favourite flower using your senses to explore it.

Line 1: Where am I?

Line 2: What do I look like?

Line 3: What do I smell like?

Line 4: What do I feel like?

## Step 3

Finally, close your eyes, and pretend you are your favourite flower, waking up from a big winter's nap, experiencing spring for the first time.

Line 1: What do you see?

Line 2: What do you smell?

Line 3: What do you hear?

Line 4: What do you feel?

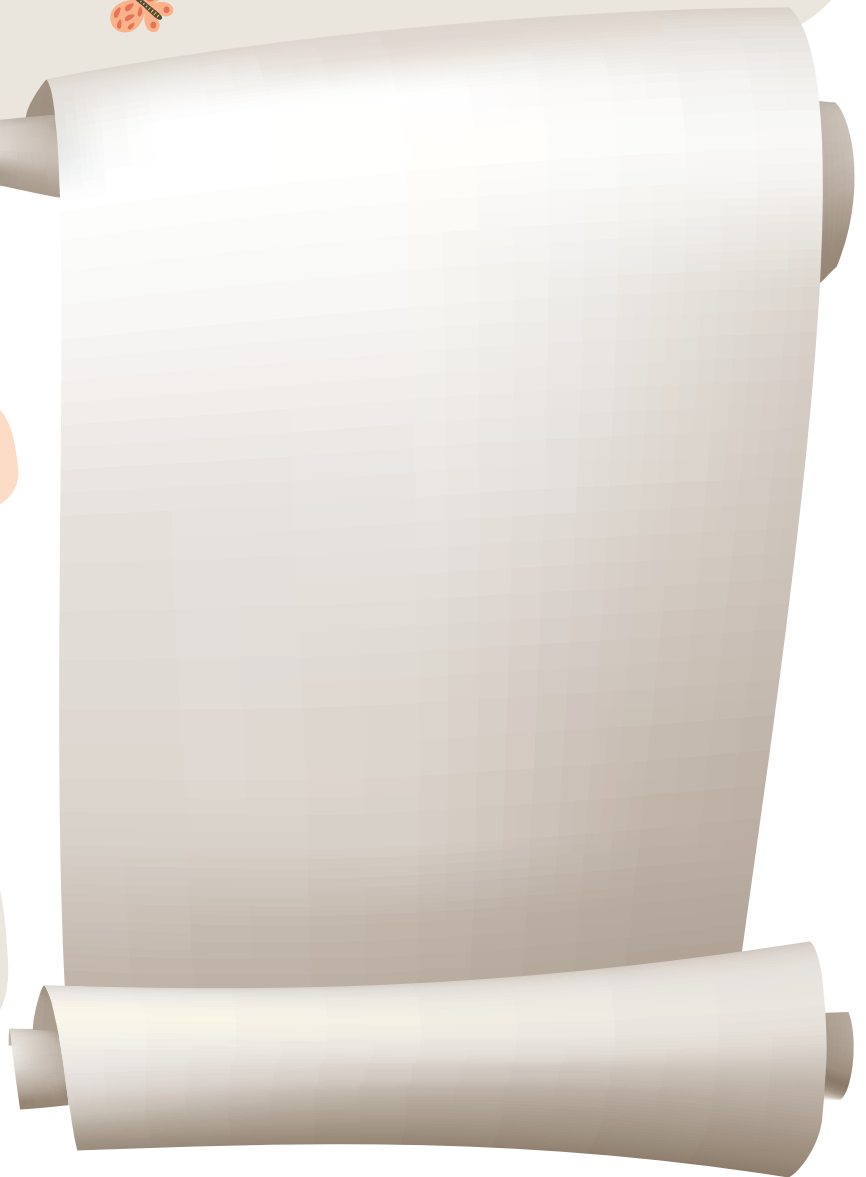


## Step 4

Finish off your poem with a line of your choosing, and by adding a drawing of your favourite flower.



In Ireland, Brigid's day and Imbolc marks the arrival of Spring, when all the fresh new flowers begin to blossom. Brigid herself is linked to the celebration of new life and poetry, and was said to inspire some of Ireland's most famous writers! Combining all these things together, write a poem to celebrate your favourite flower by following our outline below.



## SHOW YOUR PASSION AND LEADERSHIP BY TAKING ACTION

Brigid wasn't afraid to fight for what she believed in. She was passionate about others in her local community and helping and caring for them where she could, often taking on those in power to make life better for them. Using her story as inspiration, consider what you are passionate about. Choose a cause you want to support, and do a poster championing it by following the below steps.



### 1 Choose your cause

It could be something like women's, workers' or animal rights; healthy eating; climate change; access to water, housing, education, the arts and/ or sport for all.



### 2 Research

Once you have chosen the issue you want to focus on, it's time to do some research. Come up with at least one problem and one potential way you could help to tackle it in your local community right now. For example, if you care about access to reading for all, you might want to do a poster calling out for book donations to your local school or community centre.

### 3 Get creative!

Now it's time to get creative! Using paints, pens and markers design your very own poster championing your favourite cause and advertising how to help. This can include images of your cause, and remember to include a slogan or call to action – that is, something positive that encourages those viewing the poster to be inspired and to act now!

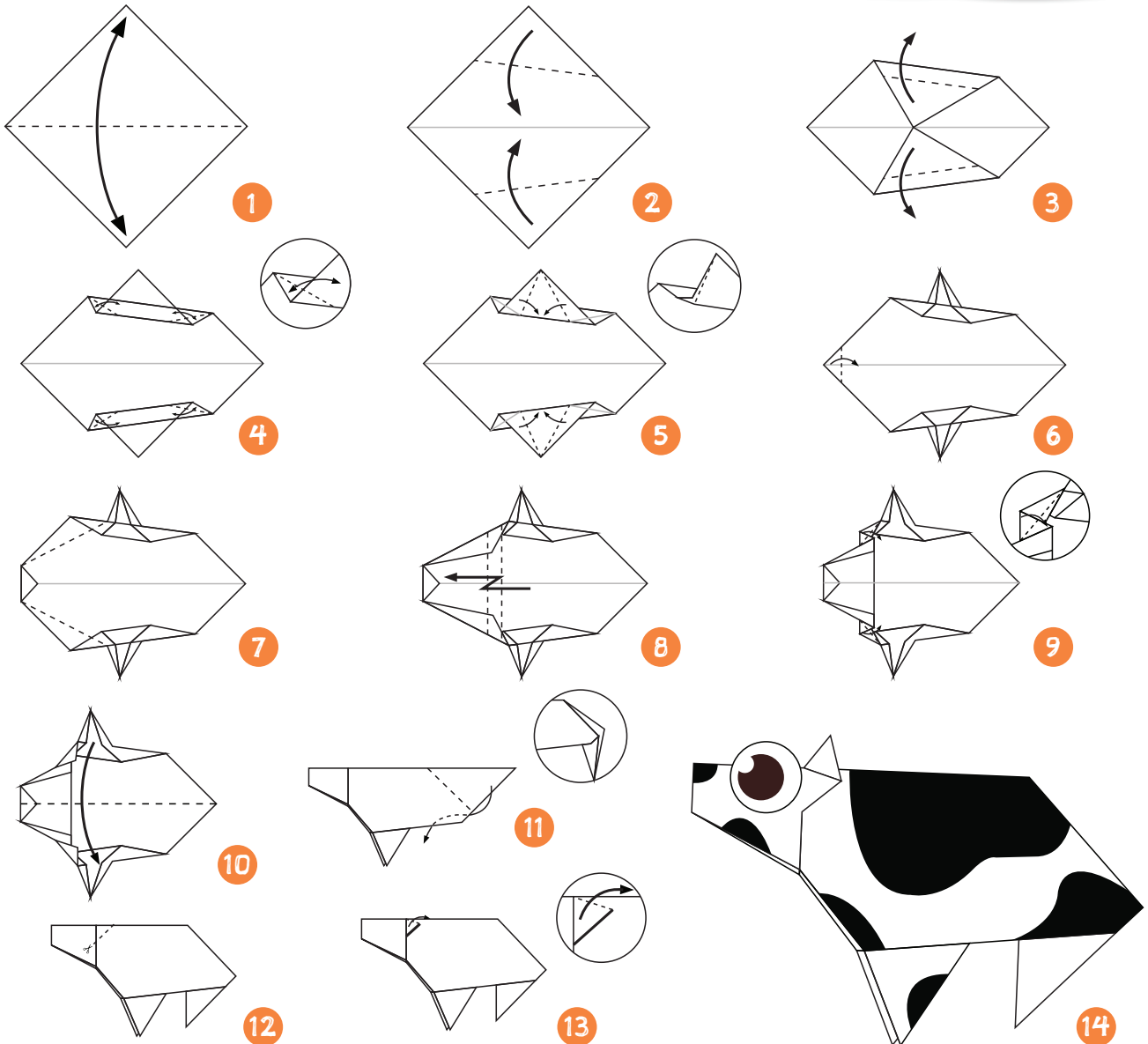
### 4 Display

Display the finished poster at home or in school to inspire both yourself and others.



# CREATE A FARM WITH ORIGAMI ANIMALS

Spring is a time when new life abounds, and baby animals are born in Ireland. Brigid was known for being compassionate towards all living things, and a guardian goddess of farm animals including oxen or cows, boars or pigs, and sheep or ewes. Like Brigid, create your own farm to watch over by using the ancient Japanese art of origami. We've started you off with a cow, but see how many other animals you can make yourself.





CELEBRATE  
**WOMEN**  
AROUND THE WORLD



BY MAKING A BRÍDEÓG

Just like Brigid, the women that surround us are many things. Celebrate an inspirational woman in your life and all the things that make them special by creating your own contemporary Brídeóg doll of them.



Instructions

- 1 Glue two lollipop sticks together to make the body of your doll.
- 2 Near the top of your lollipop sticks, glue on some googly eyes and draw on the features of your inspirational woman with markers, such as a nose and mouth.
- 3 Create their hair by gluing down string, feathers or any other material you have.
- 4 Using whatever craft materials you have, create an outfit that you feel represents your chosen woman.

What you will need

Lollipop sticks, googly eyes, markers, glue, materials for decoration such as paper, feathers, pipe cleaners, crepe paper, string or wool

This pack was developed in partnership between EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum and Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs.

Content by Shannon Wilson, Head of Education and Outreach at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum.

Design & Illustration by Verb Agency



## EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum was created to honour the Irish diaspora abroad and recognise the vital contributions and monumental impact Irish people have made worldwide. By combining personal emigrant perspectives with social and cultural context, visitors can understand why a person left Ireland and the beliefs and heritage they brought with them.

EPIC shares how the Irish have contributed to communities throughout the world and continue to do so, through exhibitions, education programs and digital engagement.

Want to discover more about Irish traditions and culture and how they spread around the world?

Join us both online and in person at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum, where you can learn more about the Irish through fun hands-on activities such as crafting, storytelling and quizzes. Head to our website [epicchq.com](http://epicchq.com) to discover more.



Ireland



LÁ FHÉILE BRÍDE  
Ag Ceiliúradh Cruthaitheachta na mBan  
ST BRIGID'S DAY  
Celebrating the Creativity of Women

On 7 February 2018, the Irish Embassy in London hosted the inaugural St Brigid's Day event, celebrating the talent and creativity of women through a broad programme of performances, talks and panel discussions.

Building on the success of that inaugural event, Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs' celebration of St Brigid's Day has grown into an expanded programme of events that takes place internationally over several days. It is coordinated by the Department's Irish Abroad Unit in cooperation with Ireland's Embassies and Consulates worldwide. In 2022, over 40 diplomatic missions celebrated the pioneering and creative role of Irish women in various aspects of life – including fine art, science, literature, business, comedy, politics, poetry, theatre, music and sport. The events aim to showcase Ireland's commitment to diversity and gender equality by celebrating the achievements of women, and acknowledging women's contribution across the globe.

Go to [ToBelrish.ie](http://ToBelrish.ie) to learn more about Brigid's Day and find online and in-person Brigid's Day events from across the globe.