

The Golden Shamrock

James couldn't remember how he got there. He remembered he'd been walking for miles and that he'd been overcome with tiredness. He remembered closing his eyes, just for a moment, as he continued to trudge across the rocky path.

That's when it must have happened.

He must have fallen asleep and slipped from the mountainside. That's how he ended up here, deep between the rocks.

James tried moving his body. Aside from his head and hands, he was covered in armour. It seemed too big for him and the metal clattered and scraped as he moved. Everywhere ached but, luckily, nothing seemed to be broken.

He noticed something glinting in his hand. It was half washed in sun, half shrouded in the shadows.

He lifted it closer.

It was a shamrock: greeny-gold in colour and huge. As he rubbed his fingers across the leaves, their heart-shaped outlines seemed to sparkle. Strange, he thought...

His eyes widened as the memories suddenly came back. Visions of druids and knights and palaces filled his mind. There was a mission... something to do with the King of Ireland... his daughter...



"I am a knight," he whispered to himself. "I must be..." He glanced at the shamrock and carefully placed it inside a pouch he had hanging from his waist. "I must... continue," he muttered to himself. "The King is counting on me."

James pulled himself from the rocks. The armour scratched and clanged, echoing loudly through the valleys.

Before long, he had reached the summit from where he must have fallen. There was an old path that led through the mountains and James began on his way.

He had been walking all day and all night when he eventually came to the city walls. James staggered. He could see guards rushing towards him as he collapsed to the floor.

Then everything went black.

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James woke up feeling cold and unwell. He opened his eyes. He was lying on the floor surrounded by pigs! He jumped to his feet and instantly felt dizzy. He felt his body; the armour was gone! He was dressed in rags but still had his pouch around his waist. Then he looked up and his heart sank. He was in a prison!

"Let me out!" he yelled, shaking the iron bars. "I am a knight of the King's Court! The King's daughter is in danger!"

From the darkness, a familiar-looking face emerged. It was old and thin, with white hair and a fuzzy beard. "We know she's in danger," the old man replied. "The princess is very ill."

"Who are you?" James said.

"Who am I?!" the old man spat. "Have you lost your mind? I am Anvir the druid, and you are my apprentice! You stole lost Sir Galway's prize horse and scratched all his armour!"

"N... not... a knight?" James stuttered. Suddenly it all came back to him. It was true. He was a druid's apprentice. He had needed the horse and armour to get beyond the forest beasts on his way to the mountains. That was where the golden shamrock grew. It was the only thing that could save the...

"...princess!" James screamed.

"Shame, nothing but the golden shamrock can save her now," sighed the old man.

James pulled the sparkling plant from his pouch.

The old man gasped and, for a moment, he looked unsteady on his feet. "I don't believe it..." he exclaimed. "Guards! Quick! We can save the princess!"

A few months later, Sir James stood in his armour looking out across his green land that rolled before him towards the horizon. He tried to remember how all this had happened. Not only had he been given a full pardon for saving the princess's life but he had also been knighted and rewarded with his own castle!

But what now? It was becoming tedious being a knight...

Sir James looked towards the mountains and his imagination ran wild. "I think it's time for another walk," he smiled to himself.

1. **Not only had he been given a full pardon for saving the princess's life...**

Which of these best explains the meaning of the word **pardon**? Tick **one**.

- to forgive someone
- to let someone go past you
- to request someone's presence
- to punish someone for a crime

2. Number the events below to show they order in which they happen in the story. The first one has been done for you.

- Guards rushed towards James as he collapsed.
- James surveyed the land he now owned.
- 1 James awoke confused and dazed.
- James realised his true identity.
- James noticed the glistening shamrock in his hand.

3. Find and copy a phrase which shows that moving while wearing armour can be noisy.

4. **It was old and thin, with white hair and a fuzzy beard.**

What is the name of the character this sentence describes?

5. Fill in the missing words.

At the beginning of the story, James thinks that he is a _____ but he is actually a _____. By the end of the story, James is a _____.

6. Why do you think the shamrock's leaves began to sparkle?

7. Why do you think that James became Sir James at the end of the story?

8. Explain why the shamrock is important in this story.

9. What does the text imply about the beasts in the forest? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
