

8 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT ST GEORGE



Think of Saint George and you're probably picturing a heroic knight slaying a ferocious, fire-breathing dragon. As the country's patron saint, today St George's story is as iconic as his white and red flag.

But like many early saints, the exact details of his life remain a mystery.

Here, we separate fact from fiction to try to get closer to the truth behind the legend of St George.

1. ST GEORGE WASN'T ENGLISH...

St George might be celebrated as a national hero, but he was actually born more than 2,000 miles away in what is now called Turkey in the 3rd century AD. He is thought to have died in Israel in 303 AD.

2. ...AND HE WASN'T A KNIGHT EITHER

Although George is often shown as a knight in shining armour, the truth is that it is more likely that he was an officer in the Roman army.

3. HE NEVER VISITED ENGLAND

Although St George never visited England, his reputation for virtue and goodness spread across Europe and his feast day – the 23rd April – was celebrated in England from the 9th century onwards.

His legend became popular with English kings. Richard the Lionheart and Edward I had banners designed with the symbol of St George (a red cross on a white background), but the St George cross was not used to represent England until the reign of Henry VIII.

4. THE DRAGON WAS ADDED LATER

The story goes that St George freed a city from a dragon which had a taste for humans, but it's a story which was developed and popularised in the 9th century – 500 years after his death. Originally these may simply have been representations of the battle between good and evil.

5. ST GEORGE WAS A SAINT FOR 1000 YEARS BEFORE THE 'HOLIDAY'

St George was canonised as (made into) a saint in 494 AD by Pope Gelasius and the feast day of St George has been celebrated in England for hundreds of years on 23rd April.

6. ENGLAND ISN'T THE ONLY COUNTRY TO CELEBRATE ST GEORGE

St George is truly an international saint and England is not the only country or region to claim him as its patron. England shares St George with Venice, Genoa, Portugal, Ethiopia and Catalonia among others as their patron saint and many of these places have their own celebrations and ceremonies in his honour.

7. PEOPLE TURNED TO ST GEORGE FOR PROTECTION

During the Middle Ages, people believed that St George was one of the 'Fourteen Holy Helpers' – a group of saints who could help during epidemic diseases. People prayed to St George for protection against several nasty diseases, including the plague and leprosy.

8. ST GEORGE REPRESENTS THOSE WE HONOUR

In 1940, King George VI created a new award to be given out for acts of the greatest heroism or courage in the face of extreme danger. The George Cross, named after the king, bears the image of St George vanquishing the dragon inside a silver circle. Around the circle are the words 'for gallantry', explaining why the medal was given. Holding the circle in place in the centre of the cross are four stylised 'G's each containing the roman numeral for six, to represent the king who created the award. The image of St George is also on many of the memorials built to honour those killed during World War One.

9 Things You Didn't Know About St George

Day 1 Activity

LO: I can retrieve information from a text.	What I think	My teacher thinks
<i>I can remember to:</i>		
read the questions carefully.	☐	
use words found in the text in your answers.	☐	

1. Who was St George?
2. When is the feast day of St George?
3. Which English kings were responsible for making St George's cross the flag of England?
4. Which countries have adopted St George as their patron?
5. Why might someone pray to St George?

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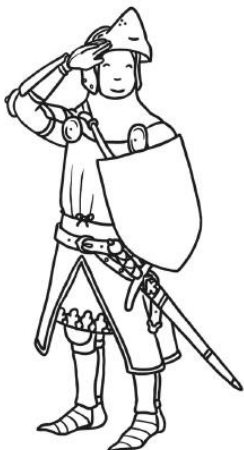
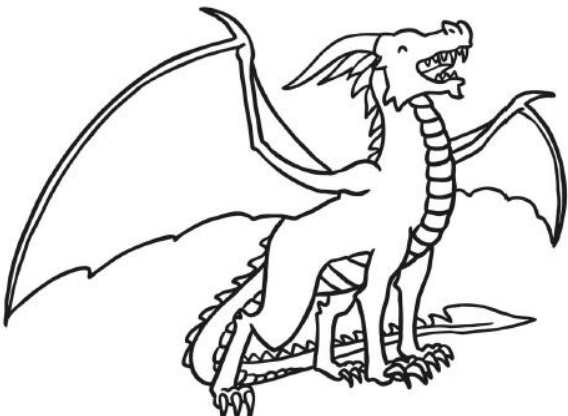
Day 2 Activity

LO: I can think of alternative words that could have been used in the text.	What I think	My teacher thinks
<i>I can remember to:</i>		
reread the description.	☐	
think about other words that could have been used in the sentence.	☐	

“Think of Saint George and you’re probably picturing a heroic knight slaying a ferocious, fire-breathing dragon”

The text begins with some descriptive adjectives that describe St George and the dragon.

Can you think of some other **adjectives** that could be used to **describe St George and the dragon?**

St. George	Adjectives
	
Dragon	
	

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Day 3 Activity

LO: I can infer using information from the text.	What I think	My teacher thinks
<i>I can remember to:</i>		
read the description carefully.	☐	
include all the features in your drawing.	☐	

Find the description of **The George Cross**. Can you **draw a picture** of what you think it might look like from its description?

Now that you've had a go at drawing the cross, compare your drawing to this [photo](#) of the real thing. How close were you?