



Irish Myths and Legends

Some of Ireland's favourite myths and legends are brought to life on An Post's heroic set of 55c stamps 'Myths and Legends' issued in September 2012.



The Children of Lir tells the story of the four children of King Lir, who were turned into white swans when Aoife, Lir's second wife put a spell on them. When the spell was broken after 900 years, the swans turned back into four very old and frail human beings, who died shortly afterwards.

In **Deirdre of the Sorrows**, the King, Conor Mac Nessa vowed to marry Deirdre. However, Deirdre was in love with Naoise. Fearing the King, Naoise and Deirdre fled to Scotland. They were tricked into returning to Ireland, where the King had Naoise killed. Deirdre was distraught and died of a broken heart.



Fionn Mac Cumhaill, was a renowned leader and warrior. While still a boy, he gained his wisdom by eating the Salmon of Knowledge. With this knowledge and wisdom he went on to become leader of the mighty Fianna.

The fourth stamp tells the story of how **Cúchulainn** got his name. The boy Setanta was invited to a feast at the blacksmith Culan's house. When Culan's dog attacked Setanta he used his hurley and sliotar to kill the dog. Setanta offered to take the hounds place – taking the name Cúchulainn, which in English means the 'Hound of Culan'.



The stamps are based on paintings by Fergus Lyons with typography and layout by Steve Simpson.





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Answer the following questions:

1. What price are Irish Myth and Legends stamps?
2. How many children did King Lir have?
3. What kind of bird were the Children of Lir turned into?
4. How many years were they under Aoife's spell?
5. Who did King Conor Mac Nessa want to marry?
6. Who was Deirdre of The Sorrows in love with?
7. What country did they run off to?
8. How did Fionn McCumhail become wise?
9. Of whom did Fionn McCumhail become leader?
10. What was Cúchulainn's childhood name?
11. What is the name of the artist, whose paintings the stamps are based on?

Suggested homework:

- Imagine you saw the Children of Lir change from swans back into very old human beings. Write a news story for your school website explaining what you saw.
- Imagine you are Deirdre or Naoise and you have run away to Scotland. Write a letter to your family explaining why you ran away and what it was like travelling to Scotland.
- Choose another Irish myth or legend and draw your own stamp for An Post.

