

Pilgrimage

LESSON 2

All the way from Tuam



ARCHAEOLOGY
time in transition

IT'S ABOUT TIME 2

**Aim(s)**

To explore medieval pilgrimage using archaeological and historical evidence.

**Objective(s)**

To recreate the route of a thirteenth century Irish pilgrim travelling from Tuam, Co. Galway to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain.

**Time Period**

Medieval (12th to 15th centuries).

**KEY INFORMATION****Lesson**

- Archaeological excavation can add to our knowledge of medieval pilgrimage.
- Medieval pilgrims wore a uniform.
- Medieval pilgrims from Ireland went abroad.

Context

- Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey made by people to a holy place.
- In Medieval times pilgrimage was very popular.
- From the 12th Century, Irish pilgrims travelled on the boats returning to Bordeaux. These boats were part of the wine trade.
- The scallop shell is the emblem of St. James, the apostle, whose shrine is at Santiago de Compostela.

**METHODOLOGY & MEDIUM**

- Instruction
- Visual–PowerPoint
- **Worksheet** The Medieval Pilgrim
- **Student Handout** The Uniform of the Medieval Pilgrim

**SECTIONS**

- Section 1** Archaeological Excavation at Tuam, Co. Galway
- Section 2** The Uniform of a Medieval Pilgrim
- Section 3** On Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela
- Section 4** The Camino
- Section 5** A Modern Pilgrimage



Key Question(s) What does the 1986 excavation in Tuam tell us about medieval pilgrimage?

Slide 1 All The Way From Tuam

We will now look at a thirteenth century Irish pilgrim who travelled from Tuam, Co. Galway to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain.

Slide 2 Excavation in Tuam

Our story begins with an archaeological excavation at a site adjacent to the medieval cathedral in Tuam, Co. Galway.

- This excavation was carried out in 1986 by the archaeologist Miriam Clyne.
- The excavation uncovered part of a medieval graveyard, containing thirty-eight burials.
- The burials date to the 13th century.
- The burials were typical of the period: fully extended bodies in shallow rectangular graves, roughly aligned east-west, with the head at the western end (see *10,000 Years of Burial*, T1,U4,L2).
- There was no evidence for coffins so the bodies were probably just wrapped in a shroud for burial.
- One of the burials, that of a middle-aged man, was particularly interesting.
- This is because beside the hipbone was a perforated scallop shell.

What was the significance of this find?

Slide 3 The Scallop Shell

Here we see a drawing of the burial. The body is lying on its back, fully extended, with its head to the west. This is the typical form of medieval Christian burials.

But on his hip was a scallop shell. Why?

What is a scallop shell doing in this man's grave?

A clue is the two small perforations that have been made on the shell.

Slide 4 A Symbol of St. James

The perforations show that the shell was attached to a bag or satchel when the body was placed in the grave. None of the clothing or the other organic material, like the leather of the bag itself, has survived.

The scallop shell is the emblem of St. James and a souvenir of pilgrimage. It shows that this is the body of a pilgrim who visited the shrine of St. James at Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain.

Burials of pilgrims with scallop shells had been found in various parts of Western Europe but this is the first time that such a burial has been discovered in Ireland. Since then another burial with a scallop shell was discovered during archaeological excavations at Ardfert Cathedral, Co. Kerry. In this case a gilt figure of St. James is attached to a pewter shell. This was purchased from a stall in front of the Cathedral at Santiago. The gilt statue suggests a wealthy pilgrim.



Key Question(s) What features of dress would identify a medieval pilgrim?

Slide 5 Dress of a Medieval Pilgrim

If the middle-aged man buried in Tuam was wearing the garb of a typical medieval pilgrim, as seems likely, what did he look like?

The word 'pilgrim' derives from the Latin *pelegrinus*, which means stranger or foreigner. In early medieval times travel was a dangerous and difficult business, so pilgrims were often seen as 'foreigners' or 'strangers' in the places they passed through. For this reason it was advantageous to wear a distinctive uniform so that people would know a pilgrim when they saw one.



Teacher Instruction

Distribute **Worksheet** *The Medieval Pilgrim* to the students and ask them to complete it. Discuss the results.

There were five items that typified the medieval pilgrim. These are

- **Broad-rimmed Hat**—as well as the normal function of keeping off rain and sun, the hat was also used for pinning on pilgrim badges.
- **Sclavein**—a long tunic made of coarse cloth, sometimes with a hood.
- **Mantle**—a cloak worn over the shoulders, often decorated with pilgrim badges.
- **Scrip**—The scrip was a soft leather pouch or bag either tied to the pilgrim's waist or slung over his shoulder on a strap. It was used to store belongings like food, money, and documents. A pilgrim would also probably have a flask for water though public fountains were set up for the pilgrim's use at many places along the route.
- **Staff (Bardone)**—The staff was made of strong wood, with a metal tip. Apart from its use as a walking aide, it could be used as a means of self-defence against wolves or thieves.

Slide 6 The Medieval Pilgrim

Here are two depictions of a medieval pilgrim, a statue (left) and a painting on a church wall. How many of the distinctive features of the pilgrim's uniform can you identify? e.g. Broad-rimmed hat, mantle, sclavein, scrip, staff.

Both figures are displaying scallop shells—on the hat and mantle of the statue and on the scrip in the painting. This indicates that these pilgrims had been to Santiago.



Key Question(s) Where is Santiago de Compostela? Why did it become so popular as a place of pilgrimage in the medieval period?

Slide 7 Santiago de Compostela

Santiago de Compostela is located in Galicia, in north-west Spain. Today, Santiago de Compostela is a city with a population of about 90,000.

This was not an easy place to get to from Tuam, Co. Galway in the 13th century. Long journeys by sea were perilous undertakings at this time—so why did the man from Tuam go to such trouble?



Slide 8 St. James

According to tradition **St. James the Apostle**, having preached in **Iberia**, returned to Judea but was put to death by Herod Agrippa I. Then his body was miraculously translated to northwest **Iberia** for burial. Eight hundred years later, continuing the tradition, a hermit saw heavenly lights that led him to the burial place at **Compostela**.

Slide 9 A Popular Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage had always been an important part of Christianity. The ultimate pilgrimage was to visit Jerusalem and the Holy Land but this was not accessible to Christians in the 10th century (one of the chief purposes of the Crusades was to make Jerusalem accessible to Christian pilgrims). Rome was the second most important destination for Christian pilgrims. However, the chance to visit the tomb of one of the apostles, in a relatively accessible place like Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, proved a very attractive prospect for the medieval pilgrim.

- All of Christendom wanted to visit the Apostle's tomb
- Wave after wave of pilgrims began to arrive in the 10th century
- It achieved its greatest popularity in the 12th century
- By then it has been estimated that two million pilgrims visited Santiago de Compostela every year

Slide 10 Why go on Pilgrimage?

Why did people go on pilgrimage in the Middle Ages?

- To gain indulgences
- For penance
- Miraculous cure
- Expressing thanks to God
- Spiritual Journey / Veneration of God

Indulgences were important for medieval pilgrims. An indulgence was a relief from a set period in Purgatory in return for performing a pilgrimage. The church regulated these by official decree. It was said that the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela halved ones time in Purgatory.

Penance was imposed when one confessed one's sins and a common form of penance was to be sent on a pilgrimage. Pilgrims would therefore often need proof they had been on pilgrimage to bring back with them to their confessor like a pilgrim badge.



Miraculous cures were an integral part of medieval pilgrimage. Once a relic or shrine acquired a reputation for cures it quickly became a place of popular pilgrimage. Direct contact with a saint's relic was the ultimate goal of such a pilgrimage.

Expressing Thanks to God Pilgrimages were often undertaken as a gesture of thanks to God for some favour bestowed on the pilgrim, or in the hope that such a favour might be granted.

Veneration of God/ Spiritual Journey Pilgrimage was also undertaken for its own sake, to bring the pilgrim closer to God. Both the hardships of the journey itself, and the direct contact at the end of it with a holy relic, were considered acts of redemption and salvation as well as veneration and worship. Indeed, pilgrimage was also probably the only chance many people in medieval times had of travelling abroad.

Slide 11 The Shrine of St. James

The object of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela was the relics of St. James the Apostle. These were kept in the Cathedral.

By the 16th century the situation in Galicia was such that the relics were hidden from English and Dutch Protestant forces (The Wars of Religion). They were not rediscovered until 1879. They were then put in a specially made silver reliquary and this was placed in the crypt under the cathedral, where it remains to this day.

Slide 12 Irish Shrines

As we have seen in the previous lesson (*Journey of Worship*, T1,U3,L1), pilgrimage and the veneration of relics also played an important role in Irish Christianity from earliest times.

The most popular pilgrimage in medieval Ireland was to St. Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, Co. Donegal. This is still a place of pilgrimage today. There were also more local pilgrimages to places like the monastery at Aghabullogue, Co. Cork where the Shrine of St. Lachtin's Arm was kept. This shrine was made in the 12th century of bronze inlaid with silver (now in the National Museum of Ireland).

Slide 13 From Tuam to Compostela

How did the pilgrim from Tuam, Co. Galway get to north-west Spain in the 13th century? His exact journey is not known but he had a number of **choices**. The nearest port is Galway.

He could have embarked from **there**, or sailed from there to another Irish or British port and then onwards to the **Continent**. He could have first travelled overland to St. James' Gate in Dublin. This was a popular meeting place for pilgrims going to Santiago (hence the name).

Ships had long sailed between Ireland and the south-west of France, especially to the Bordeaux region. These ships were engaged in the wine **trade**. By the 12th century we know that pilgrims going to Compostela were using these ships. It is a long journey from Bordeaux to Compostela but this was the regular pilgrim route—what was known as the Camino (St. James' Way).

As the pilgrim trade grew, special ships were chartered from Irish ports and many of these went more directly to the north coast of Spain, closer to Compostela. This would have been much more convenient for pilgrims who did not have the time or resources to walk hundreds of miles across the north of Spain.

SECTION 4 The Camino



Key Question(s) What was the most popular medieval pilgrimage routes?

Slide 14 The Camino

This slide shows the many routes that led from all over Western Europe to Santiago de Compostela in the 13th century. The most popular routes are the three green ones leading down through France, from Paris, Vezelay and Arles. These all met up near Puente la Reina in Spain. From here onwards the most popular route was the Camino Francés (*red on the **map***).

Here we see the two most likely routes for the Tuam pilgrim. He probably sailed from Ireland either directly to a port in northern Spain close to Compostela, or to south-west France and then overland along the **Camino**.

The inset drawing shows the type of ship he would have embarked on. These are called 'cogs' and were not very comfortable or safe by modern standards. There was no 'below deck' and the only separate accommodation was the small 'castles' built on the stern and prow.

Slide 15 Along the Way

By the 12th century, the Camino had become an organised pilgrimage. A massive infrastructure was built to support pilgrimage and to gain commercially from it. Bridges were constructed across rivers and roads built and paved to draw pilgrims to certain towns and cities. Monasteries, cathedrals and churches were built along the route with money derived from the pilgrims. By the middle of the 12th century so many hostels and inns had been built on the routes to Santiago de Compostela through France and Spain that one was rarely more than a day's travel on foot from the next.

The pictures show, from left

Leon Cathedral—Completed in 1280. Regarded as the masterpiece of Spanish 13th century Gothic architecture. Shows French influence reflecting the number of French pilgrims who passed this way.

Water Fountain for Pilgrims—in Logrono. Built in late 17th century. One of many public fountains along the Camino.

Burgos Cathedral—Regarded as the most beautiful cathedral in Spain and a World Heritage Site. Most of the building is 15th century and shows French and German influences.

Bridge at Puente La Reina. Built in the 11th century in the Romanesque style.

As well as spreading architectural styles on the continent, pilgrimage was also largely responsible for their spread in Britain and Ireland. Returning pilgrims, especially higher ranked clergy and the nobility were often infused with new ideas about modernising the local church, including the introduction of more up-to-date architectural styles.

Slide 16 Pilgrim Badges

Today when we visit a foreign place we are used to the idea of bringing home some souvenirs as mementoes of our travels. This tradition goes back to the medieval pilgrimage.

Most medieval pilgrims purchased a lead or pewter badge at each shrine they visited. These were sold at all the popular shrines and usually bore an image or emblem of the local saint. For example, the badge from Santiago de Compostela was in the shape of a scallop shell (bottom right). In the 13th century the square in front of the cathedral at Compostela was full of stalls selling religious souvenirs items to the pilgrims.

These badges were sewn or pinned onto the up-turned brim of the hat, or attached to the mantle or the srip. Some well-travelled pilgrims had hats covered in these badges. Note the pilgrim badge top-right—this shows the type of ship, called a cog, a 13th century pilgrim travelled on.

Why were badges so popular with medieval pilgrims?

- All As well as being a memento like the modern souvenir, the pilgrim badge was also revered for its association with the shrine at which it was purchased.
- They were badges of honour worn with pride by the pilgrim..
- We can imagine therefore that the Tuam pilgrim would have been very keen to be buried with his shell because of its association with St James.

SECTION 5 A Modern Pilgrimage



Key Question(s) Is it possible to complete the Camino today?

Slide 17 The Camino Today

We have already mentioned that the relics of St. James were hidden in the 16th century and their location lost until rediscovered in the late 19th century. During this period the pilgrimage to Compostela waned and its important place in medieval times virtually forgotten.

However, as the 20th century progressed the pilgrimage grew in popularity again and today many thousands of pilgrims walk the Camino every year.

Slide 18 Walking to Santiago

The most popular route to Compostela remains the 'Camino Francés' (the Way from France). It covers a distance of 800 Km (500 miles) all the way from the Pyrenees. In 1987 the Council of Europe proclaimed the Camino as Europe's first *Cultural Itinerary*.

Slide 19 Wayside Markers

The route is a very ancient one and whilst parts are on modern tarred roads most of it is on a footpath or trackway, some of these going back to medieval and even Roman times. It is signposted all the way by wayside markers.

Slide 20: Where to Stay?

Accommodation en route comes in the form of **albergues**. These are special pilgrim **hostels**. They are usually quite basic but on the whole well maintained and run by local volunteers (cost about 10 euro a night). To stay in an albergue you **need** a pilgrims passport or 'credencial'. This is stamped at each albergue and shows where the pilgrim has stayed along the way. There are nearly 200 albergues along the main route from the Pyrenees to Compostela. These are mostly located in cities, towns and villages along the way—the Camino still travels from town-to-town as it did in medieval times.

Slide 21 Travelling Essentials

Here are some of the essentials you need to consider if planning a pilgrimage like the Camino

- **Budget**—how much daily allowance do I need?
- What type of **essential equipment** do I need? (backpack, compass, mobile phone etc.)
- What type of **clothing and footwear** are required?—what items should I not pack?
- What do I need to **record the pilgrimage?** (camera, notebooks etc.)
- Can I understand **the language**—do I need a phrase book?
- Have I enough **research** done about the history/culture of the pilgrimage site to be visited?

Just think how much more difficult this trip was for a pilgrim in the 13th century.

Slide 22 Difficulties

Remember—walking the Camino is a pilgrimage and not a stroll in the countryside. It should therefore not be undertaken lightly. Walking all day is not usually part of our everyday experience and so it may require some preparation.

Some medieval pilgrims had to make their journey barefoot as a penance for their sins!

Slide 23 Where to Start?

A good place to start planning a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is the website of the *Irish Society of the Friends of St. James*—www.stjamesirl.com
Every year more and more Irish people are walking the Camino. This is the place to start planning your journey.

Slide 24 How Long?

The full length of the Camino is 800km. However, most pilgrims now just do a section of it, depending on how much time is available to them. The full journey takes at least four weeks for a fit walker.

See Projects section: *Organise and go on a Pilgrimage.*

WEB LINKS

WWW.



Irish Society of the Friends of St. James
The Roads to Santiago—the Pilgrim's Guide
The Compostela and the Credential

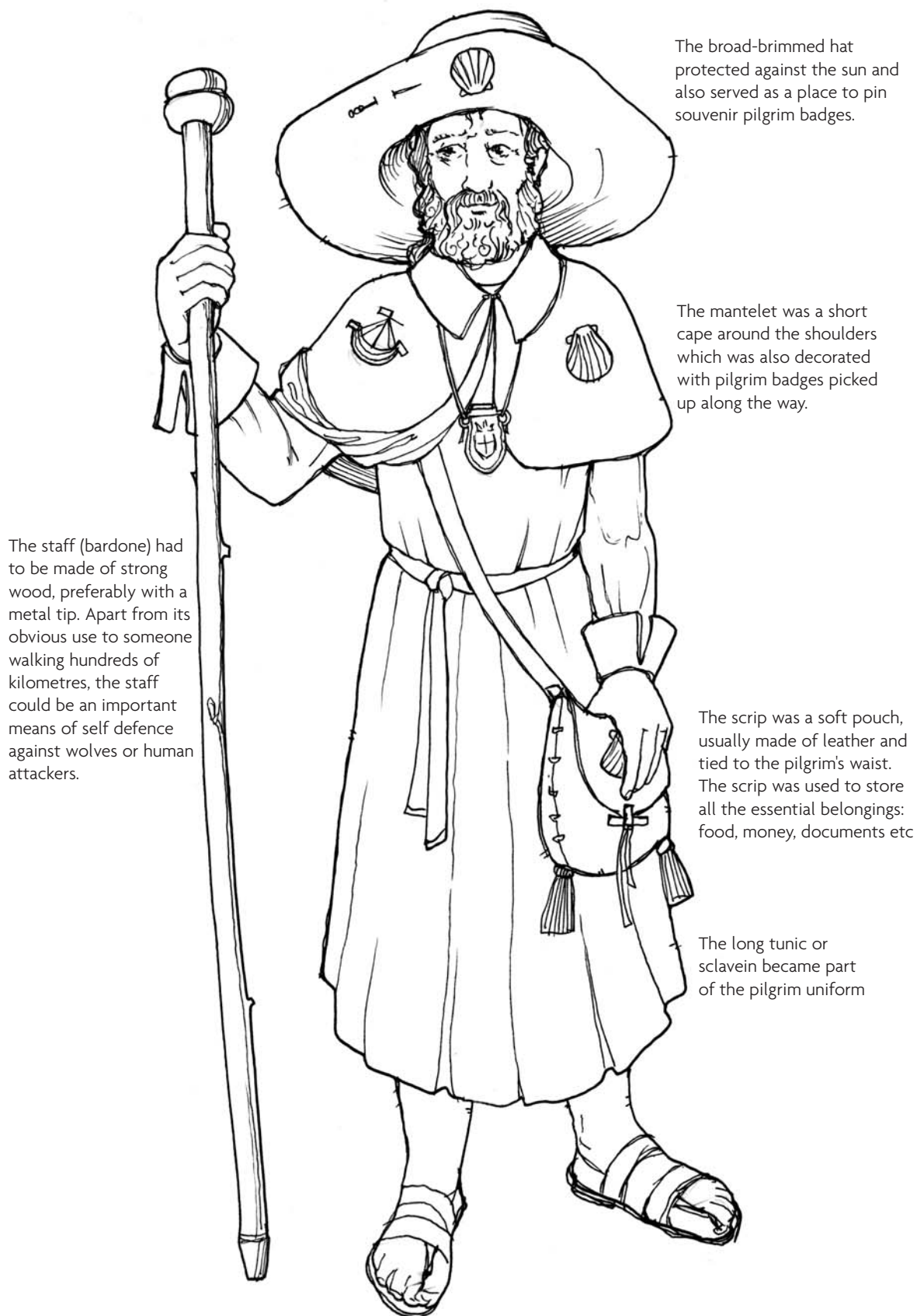
www.stjamesirl.com/

<http://pilgrim.peterrobins.co.uk>

www.archicompostela.org/Peregrinos/Ingl%E9s/La%20Compostela%20.htm

How do we know this is a medieval pilgrim? Describe what he is wearing and how it relates to pilgrimage.





The staff (bardone) had to be made of strong wood, preferably with a metal tip. Apart from its obvious use to someone walking hundreds of kilometres, the staff could be an important means of self defence against wolves or human attackers.

The broad-brimmed hat protected against the sun and also served as a place to pin souvenir pilgrim badges.

The mantelet was a short cape around the shoulders which was also decorated with pilgrim badges picked up along the way.

The scrip was a soft pouch, usually made of leather and tied to the pilgrim's waist. The scrip was used to store all the essential belongings: food, money, documents etc

The long tunic or sclavien became part of the pilgrim uniform

The Medieval Pilgrim