

The Legend of Finn McCool

The Legend of Finn McCool was first written down in the 1840s. However, it was told before this and, like all tales and legends, there are several versions of the story told about the Irish giant. Irish storytellers tell a tale of how the Giant's Causeway was created by giants, who moved these huge rock formations. These giants were Finn McCool and Benandonner.



Did You Know...?

Finn McCool's name in Irish is 'Finn mac Cumhail'. This comes from a nickname meaning 'fair'. It is believed he was given this nickname after several legends talked about his fair skin and how his hair went prematurely white.

Benandonner was a neighbouring Scottish giant who was a rival of Finn McCool. He wanted to challenge him to a fight. It is said that Finn then built the Giant's Causeway so they could meet and do battle. As Finn made his way across to Scotland, he spied Benandonner, who looked much bigger, taller and stronger than he did from across the water. He decided he would not challenge the giant any longer but in his haste back home, he lost his boot on the shore.

There are two famous rock formations found at the Giant's Causeway. The 'Organ', which was said to have been played by Finn's wife and the 'Giant's Boot', which fell off Finn's foot as he fled from Benandonner the Scottish giant.



When he reached home, Finn told his wife, Oonagh, about terrifying Benandonner. Finn's wife came up with a clever plan to hide Finn in their baby son's cot and dress him up as a baby. Once wrapped up in blankets and in the cot, Finn heard a knock on the door. Benandonner had come to battle Finn, but he was nowhere to be seen. When Benandonner caught sight of Finn's enormous baby, he was so shocked he went pale with fear. He was now afraid to meet the father of this baby, who had to be much bigger and stronger than him. The legend says that he tore down some of the rocks on his way back so Finn could not follow him home.



Did You Know...?

The Giant's Causeway was Northern Ireland's first UNESCO.

Scientists now know, the Giant's Causeway, which is located on the north-eastern coast near the town of Bushmills, Northern Ireland, was created when lava oozed out of the earth and cooled into different rock shapes, including the hexagon shaped rocks you can see there today.

The Legend of Finn McCool Questions

1. Why did Finn's name become the nickname for 'fair'? Tick one.
 - ☐ He always played fair in his games.
 - ☐ His hair went prematurely white.
 - ☐ He had lots of freckles.
2. What do scientists now know caused the strange, hexagonal rocks to be formed?
 - ☐ a volcanic event
 - ☐ a hurricane
 - ☐ an earthquake
3. Can you find a word which means the same as 'enemy'?

4. According to Legend why did Finn build the Causeway?

5. Why did Benandonner run away when he saw the baby in the cot?

6. Do you think Finn's wife's plan was a good one? Give a reason for your answer.
