

GREENER GRASS

EDUCATOR'S
GUIDE

CAROLINE PIGNAT

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE BY CAROLINE PIGNAT



Red Deer Press

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Contents

Part I

	Page
Cast of Characters & Prologue	8
Chapter One and Two	9
Chapter Three and Four	10
Chapter Five and Six	11
Chapter Seven and Eight	12
Chapter Nine and Ten	13
Chapter Eleven and Twelve	14
Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen	15
Chapter Fifteen and Sixteen	16
Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen	17
Chapter Nineteen and Twenty	18
Chapter Twenty-One and Twenty-Two	19
Chapter Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four	20
Chapter Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six	21
Chapter Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight	22
Chapter Twenty-Nine and Thirty	23
Chapter Thirty-One and Thirty-Two	24
Chapter Thirty-Three and Thirty-Four	25
Chapter Thirty-Five and Thirty-Six	26
Chapter Thirty-Seven and Thirty-Eight	27
Chapter Thirty-Nine and Forty	28
Chapter Forty-One and Forty-Two	29

Part II

	Page
Final Project Ideas	31
Theme Based Activities	31
Historical Resources	32
Make Fiction From Historical Fact	33
Plot Line	34
What's Your Problem?	35
Making Decisions	36
Character Development	37
Reading Response Prompts	38
Vocabulary	39
Simile Samples	40
Art Activities	
• St. Brigid's Cross	41
• Harvest Knot	41
• Celtic Design-Trinity Knot	42
Drama	
• Corridor of Voices	43
• Tableau	43
Myth	
• Planner	44
• Resources	44
• Author Chat	46

Introduction to *Greener Grass* Educator's Guide

by Caroline Pignat

Greener Grass is a historical fiction novel appropriate for students aged 12 and up to use literature circles, guided reading, class novel study, or independent reading.

Part I divides the novel into twenty-two sections. Each section contains: plot summaries, guiding questions for activities and discussions to be used before and after reading. The questions extend thinking and encourage prediction and inference. Also included are *exploring the writing* activities that invite students to identify, understand, analyze, evaluate and create key parts of in the writing process. The *exploring the writing* activities can be used at the end of each section or at the end of the novel.

Part II provides blackline masters for the underlined activities in Part I as well as end of novel activities.

Part I

	Page
Cast of Characters & Prologue	4
Chapter One and Two	5
Chapter Three and Four	6
Chapter Five and Six	7
Chapter Seven and Eight	8
Chapter Nine and Ten	9
Chapter Eleven and Twelve	10
Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen	11
Chapter Fifteen and Sixteen	12
Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen	13
Chapter Nineteen and Twenty	14
Chapter Twenty-One and Twenty-Two	15
Chapter Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four	16
Chapter Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six	17
Chapter Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight	18
Chapter Twenty-Nine and Thirty	19
Chapter Thirty-One and Thirty-Two	20
Chapter Thirty-Three and Thirty-Four	21
Chapter Thirty-Five and Thirty-Six	22
Chapter Thirty-Seven and Thirty-Eight	23
Chapter Thirty-Nine and Forty	24
Chapter Forty-One and Forty-Two	25

Part II

	Page
Final Project Ideas	27
Theme Based Activities	27
Historical Resources	28
Make Fiction From Historical Fact	29
Plot Line	30
What's Your Problem?	31
Making Decisions	32
Character Development	33
Reading Response Prompts	34
Vocabulary	35
Simile Samples	36
Art Activities	
• St. Brigid's Cross	37
• Harvest Knot	37
• Celtic Design-Trinity Knot	38
Drama	
• Corridor of Voices	39
• Tableau	39
Myth	
• Planner	40
• Resources	40
• Author Chat	42

Cross Curriculum Connections

Language Arts

- literary devices
 - tone
 - foreshadowing
 - metaphors and similes
 - point of view
 - descriptive writing
 - vocabulary
- creative writing
 - poetry
 - short story
 - historical fiction
 - persuasive essay
 - myth
- story elements
 - plot
 - setting
 - conflict
 - character
 - development
 - motivation
 - compare and contrast

Social Studies

- Ireland in 1847
- influence of famine on the world
- Irish descendents in America/Canada
- contemporary famines in the world

Science

- information on the organism that caused the blight

Drama

- reenact a scene from the book
- interviews
- tableau
- corridor of voices

Music

- traditional Irish music and dance
- laments

Visual Arts

- St. Brigid's Cross
- Celtic art – trinity knot
- harvest knot

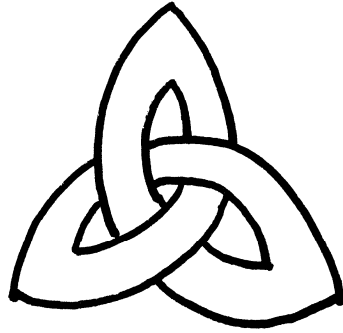
Religious Studies

- the Rosary
- the St. Brigid and St. Patrick

Character Development

Reflections and discussions on

- hope
- gratitude
- empathy
- ethics
- justice
- morality
- dreams
- worry
- injustice
- choice



Part I

Literature Circles / Guided Reading

Cast of Characters

Moira and Jim Byrne – Kit's parents
Kathleen (Kit) Byrne – age 14
Jack Byrne – Kit's younger brother, age 11
Annie Byrne – the youngest Byrne, age 4

Lizzie Plunkett – a wise woman/witch living up the hill

Nora O'Toole – Kit's poorer neighbour who is quite bitter from all her loss
Ken O'Toole – Mick's father who has died
Mick O'Toole – Jack's friend, who has a secret crush on Kit, age 14
Meg and Nan O'Toole – Mick's younger sisters, ages 7 and 8
Young Kenny O'Toole – Mick's older brother, who leaves to work in England
Joseph O'Toole – the eldest brother who has emigrated to New York

Millie Kelly – Kit's friend and co-worker at the Big House
Don Kelly – Millie's brother, he plays the pipes
Mr. Kelly and Mrs. Kelly – Millie's parents

Brigid Kealey – cook at the Big House
Bill Devitt – gardener at the Big House
Joe Murtagh - stableman
Lord James Fraser – landlord who lives in England
Lady Victoria Fraser – wife of Lord Fraser, they live in England

Daniel Lynch – middleman who takes care of affairs at Big House
Henry Lynch – eldest son following in father's footsteps
Patrick Lynch – middle son
Tom Lynch – youngest son, who is attracted to Kit

Preparing to Read

Cover: What predictions can you make from the cover?

Title: What do you think "Greener Grass" refers to?

Back cover copy:

Setting: Where and when does the story take place?

Character: Who is the main character and how old is she?

Plot: What do you think happens to her during the story?

Conflict: What do you think will be the main conflict?

Prologue

- Who is speaking?
- What is the tone?
- What do we know about her from this prologue?
- What does she say that makes you want to read more?

Chapter One and Two

(pages 1-12)

Summary

Fourteen year old Kathleen Mary Margaret Byrne (or Kit) is the eldest of three children. She lives with her brother Jack (11), her sister Annie (4) and her parents in a small cottage in Killanamore, Ireland. As usual, her father must travel to England for work in the summer months while they wait for the potato harvest. Kit hates to see him go but times are tough and everyone must do what they can to weather the summer hunger. Everyone has a job to do. Kit works as a maid in the Big House run by the middleman Mr. Lynch. Jack works for old Lizzie Plunkett up the hill (though he much rather be with his friend Mick), and Annie “takes care” of Mam and the baby on the way. Hard work and faith are simply a way of life.

Preparing to Read

- Killanamore is a fictional town in County Wicklow. Find the county on a map of Ireland.
- Show a photo of a thatched cottage. Talk about what it might be like to live in a small two-roomed cottage in 1847.

After the Reading

- How is Kit’s life different from your own? How is it similar?
- Describe the difference between life at the Big House and life in Kit’s home.

Extending the Reading

- The Byrne family motto is “look after your own.” What do you think that means?
- “No matter what load was in your pack, worry truly was the heaviest burden.” What does Kit mean by this? Describe what it feels like to be worried.

Exploring the Writing

Mam is quoting Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 from the Bible.

*To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones together;
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace.*

- **Creative Writing:** Write a modern version of this poem using opposites from your every day life. Example: A time to learn and a time to play.
- **Reflection:** Does life have seasons? What would you associate with the springtime or fall of life? What symbolic season would you say you are in right now? Why?
- Start a **Reading Journal**. Choose a starter from the [Reading Response Prompt list](#).

Chapter Three and Four

(pages 13-26)

Summary

Da and Kenny (the oldest O'Toole son) have been gone a month but there has been no sign of his pay. The bread is smaller these days, much to Kit's dismay. Mam has even been sharing what little they had. Jack has been run ragged working for Lizzie, the witch-like crone most kids would give anything to avoid. Kit's daily routine keeps her busy – prayers, fetching water, milking the cow, making butter, and then off to work at the Big House. On her way, Kit “happens” to meet Tom Lynch who is riding Lord Fraser's horse. As they walk through the grove to the Big House, they talk about Mick O'Toole's family not paying their rent and how the Big House was made to seem bigger than it is. They talk about wanting something more – for Kit, that something more is Tom's heart.

Preparing to Read

- What customs/rituals does our culture have? Can you explain the reason why we do these?

After the Reading

- Describe a typical day in Kit's life. What are her chores?
- What chores do you have?
- How does Kit feel about the sea?
- Do Kit and Tom “just happen” to meet that morning?
- What impression does Tom have of Mick? What does Kit think of Mick?

Extending the Reading

- **Art Activity**—St. Brigid's Cross
- Kit says: “If wanting more was a sin, I'd never make it to heaven.” What does she want at this stage of the story? What does Tom want?

Exploring the Writing

- **Plot Line**—Summarize what has happened in the first few chapters.
- **Reflection**—Everyone wants something. Is it wrong to want more than you have? When might it become a problem?
- **Similes**—The author uses a lot of similes in her writing. Keep a chart in class and add similes as you discover them. The appendix includes Sample Similes from Chapters 1-8.

Chapter Five and Six

(page 27-44)

Summary

Kit and her friend Millie are run ragged by Brigid, the Big House cook, as they prepare for the arrival of Lord and Lady Fraser. Mr. Lynch, who aspires to power and status, scoffs at the ignorance of Kit and Millie. After a long day at work, Kit returns home to work the garden. Tending the potatoes takes priority. They, like most small farmers, depend on that crop for survival. As they work, Jack tells stories of Lizzie's antics and ravings. She has been foretelling the coming of "The Gray Man." Mick interrupts to take Jack fishing and inadvertently mentions his family has been eating worms. That horrid cabbage soup didn't sound all that bad to Kit in comparison. To ease her anxiety Kit sprinkles holy water on the crop.

In Kit's nightmare the Gray Man is chasing her, Tom abandons her, and just when she gives up she realizes her worst fear – she won't be killed, she will be left behind. Mam tries to reassure Kit with the strength of her faith, but all Kit has are unanswered questions.

Preparing to Read

- As a class discuss why the Irish relied on potato crops alone.

After the Reading

- Annie asks something many readers wonder: why did the small Irish farmers rely so much on the potato? What was Kit's answer to that?
- If they have no food, why can't Jack and Mick go fishing in the river?
- What news is Mick embarrassed of that he accidentally revealed?

Extending the Reading

- Why does Lizzie's word about the Gray Man unnerve Kit?
- How does Kit react to the warning about the Gray Man?

Exploring the Writing

- **Foreshadowing** – dreams are often a way to foreshadow themes or events. What does Kit's dream foreshadow?
- **Character Description:** Brigid's character is hen-like. How does the author show that to us? Write a description of a fictional character using animal characteristics. Try not to mention the name of the animal, just refer to their similar characteristics. (Example: His ears stuck out on either side of his bald head and his skin hung in loose wrinkles and folds as he lumbered about [elephant]). See if your readers can guess what animal you were drawing upon.

Chapter Seven and Eight

(page 45-56)

Summary

Lord and Lady Fraser arrived with their obese dog Susan. Despite all their work, Lady Fraser finds the staff and house below her expectations. The chasm between the well-fed rich and working class grows wider as they are shown together. Tom is burdened with caring for Susan, much to his disgust. On her way home, Kit stops by the stable to tell him about the dance that night. She hopes he'll ask her to go but he seems more interested in the horse than in Kit.

Kit scoffs at Jack's announcement that he and Mick will be going to the dance or Annie's question about Mick wanting to marry Kit. Mick acts so young and looks so gawky Kit often forgets they are the same age. Even cleaned and properly dressed, he's no Tom Lynch. Mick waves at Kit at the dance. She nods, but keeps an eye out for Tom. Finally Tom arrives and joins the dancing. He and Kit end up partnered for a song and she is ecstatic. Even "perfect" Millie seems jealous.

Preparing to Read

- In this scene, Kit attends a dance at the crossroads. Music and dancing is a huge part of Irish culture. Check the resource list for suggested music to play in class.
- Invite an Irish dancer to come teach a lesson or perform for the class.

After the Reading

- How does Lady Fraser seem to react to the Big House?
- How does Mr. Lynch act toward the Frasers?
- What words does Kit use to describe Mick?

Extending the Reading

- Mam says: "There is more to a man than the cut of his coat." What does she mean? Is that saying relevant today?

Exploring the Writing

- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.
- **Descriptive Writing**: The first three paragraphs on page 54 describe the dance scene. Describe what it is like to arrive at a dance in your school. Describe the environment, the music, the feelings as you enter the gym, and the way the dancers move. (If you do not attend/like dances, try describing another activity and its location, like karate class.)

Chapter Nine and Ten

(page 57-66)

Summary

Kit is terrified to find Lizzie crouched by her in the middle of the night. Lizzie drags Kit outside and starts digging up the garden. Jack is sure she's gone completely crazy, it's too early to dig, but Mam orders the kids to uproot all their potatoes. The smell hits Kit as they unearth not potatoes but lumps of black mush. The blight has hit! The family spends the rest of the night uprooting all potato plants in the hopes of finding some still sound. As the sun rises, so does the wailing as families awake to the destruction of their precious crops. Thanks to Lizzie, the Byrnes saved a third of their crop. The O'Tooles like most others lost everything. At work that day, Kit overhears Fraser and Lynch discussing the blight and what that means for the farmers. They relied on the crop for food, to sell, to feed livestock and to pay rent. Lynch shows Fraser a map of Killanamore with large squares drawn over the small farmers' homes. Kit wonders what will happen to them now?

Preparing to Read

- The blight was caused by an organism called *Phytophthora infestans* that spread rapidly, especially during hot humid weather. Water or rain carries the spores from one infected plant to another. The potato plants' leaves get dark, blotchy, or moldy and the potatoes turn to black mush. Even healthy looking potatoes carried the spores and rotted in storage.

After the Reading

- Kit and Jack are wary of Old Lizzie, yet she comes to them to warn them of the blight. What does that tell us about her?
- Does Lord Fraser fully understand the plight of his tenants?

Extending the Reading

- Mr. Lynch's map of Killanamore has big squares drawn over the small farms. What do you think he is planning?
- If you were Lord Fraser or Lady Victoria, what could you do to help your tenants get through the blight?

Exploring the Writing

Simile You be the editor. Revise the following sentences using a different simile. Be sure to pick something that Kit would know about since it is in Kit's voice. For example, you couldn't say: "she jumped around like a cell phone on vibrate." Challenge: try to extend the simile to two references. Example: kindling/twigs or hurricane/blew/tempest.

- "She flapped around like a sick crow." page 58
- "Meg and Nan sat huddled in the corner like a stack of kindling, their skinny legs already like twigs from the summer hungry months." page 64
- "Brigid clattered the pots and pans like a hurricane as she blew around in her tempest." page 64

Myth

- Myths explain how the world works. Considering Irish farmers would not know about *Phytophthora infestans* (see preparing to read), how did they explain the blight? Use the Myth Planner to help write your own myth about what caused the blight.

Chapter Eleven and Twelve

(page 67-80)

Summary

Kit is dismayed to hear she, the gardener, and Millie are fired from their jobs. Before leaving, she sees leftover meat on the counter set aside for Susan. Kit debates the morality of stealing an obese dog's dinner and finally wraps it in her apron and leaves. Tom is surprised to hear of her being let go and makes a date to meet her at the stones. Kit wonders how interested he'd be if he knew she stole the dog's dinner for her own. Mam is skeptical about Kit's tale of being given the meat, but when Annie sees it as an answer to her prayers, Mam gives in and makes stew so she can share it with her neighbours.

Kit brings a pot of stew to the O'Tooles and is surprised to find their home empty of furniture. If things weren't bad enough for the O'Tooles, now Mick's younger sister Nan has a raging fever.

Preparing to Read

- In chapter eleven, Kit struggles with her conscience. Talk about conscience and how it directs our choices and actions. How do we know right from wrong? Is there ever any gray areas?

After the Reading

- How did Mr. Lynch "reduce expenses" at the Big House?
- Why wasn't taking the meat an easy decision for Kit?

Extending the Reading

- Debate: Was Kit right to take the leftover meat?
- How could across the hill be considered "another world away"?
- Why does Kit think that Tom would never understand why she stole?
- **Making Decisions** – explore choice and consequences

Exploring the Writing

- **Setting:** Read the setting description of the O'Tooles' cottage and make a list of all the words that give you a feeling of poverty. Write a description of a setting for a homeless person (soup kitchen, street corner, park bench, alley, abandoned building, etc.). Try to include at least six descriptive words to really give your readers a sense of place. The character should be missing in the description, but give the readers a sense of who they are by what you describe in their setting.
- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.
- **Corridor of Voices**—drama activity

Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen

(page 81-93)

Summary

Kit reluctantly delivers a pot of stew and some requested weeds to Lizzie's cottage. Bees buzz in and out of the roof reminding Kit of stories about Lizzie having the power to change you into a bee and trap you in the thatch forever. The visit is unsettling as Kit waits out the storm in the smoky cottage listening to Lizzie's foretelling of two more specters: Plague and Death. Mick arrives for Nan's medicine and Kit is eager to leave, even if it's with Mick. Before she goes, Kit agrees to work for Lizzie. With no job at the Big House, Kit feels she has no choice.

The next day, as Kit and Jack scavenge for the plants Lizzie needs, Kit reminisces about her days playing up in the hills and the time she scared herself in the tomb entrance. Her childhood was rich with myth and fairy lore. At home, Annie tells Kit her mother got a letter from England. Kit finds Mam and Mrs. O'Toole in tears and fears the worst. But it wasn't about Da, it was from Da. Young Kenny O'Toole was dead.

Preparing to Read

- What kind of make believe games did you play as a little kid? What kinds of games do you think Kit would have played?

After the Reading

- Lizzie is an unusual character. Make a list of all the unusual things about her (her home, actions, hobbies, ways, etc.)
- Why does Lizzie ask Kit to help her?
- Why does Kit say yes, considering how she thinks Lizzie is creepy?
- What news does Kit fear is in the letter from England?

Extending the Reading

- **Response Journal:** You probably played imaginary games when you were little. What is one of your favourites? Who did you play with? What did you like best about it? Tell us about it.
- What do your make believe games say about you?
- When playing make believe as kids, Kit was always Scathach, the legendary warrior woman who trains heroes in the arts of combat. What does that tell us about Kit? What does her comment about the smell of rain on a turf bog (page 91) tell us about her?

Exploring the Writing

- In the old days, parents of all cultures would tell children stories of what happens if they didn't behave. Write a warning tale to keep kids doing their homework. What happens to them if they don't? Use exaggeration, imagination and fantasy characters.
- **Character Development:** Choose a character and track their traits as you read.

Chapter Fifteen and Sixteen

(page 95-104)

Summary

Kenny and Da had trouble finding work. They'd ended up mucking stables. A horse kicked Kenny in the head and killed him. Mrs. O'Toole never fully recovered from the loss, but Mick did what had to be done. Mam confides in Kit, sharing her worries and concerns and encouraging Kit to always keep hope alive. Kit's hope is that Tom shows up at the stones and he does. During their visit at the stones, Tom and Kit forget about the famine and tough times for a while but when Tom brags about his father's great idea to capitalize on selling Indian Meal Kit realizes how different they are. As one who has to eat the meal, Kit knows better. She worries that Tom doesn't understand her situation or care about her, but before she leaves Tom gives her her first kiss.

Preparing to Read

- Discuss why it is important to have hope in the midst of adversity.
- Discuss why it is important to have empathy in the midst of differences.

After the Reading

- What does Mam hope for?
- What does Kit hope for at this part of the novel?
- Why does Tom think his father was smart to advise Lord Fraser to export his crops? Why does Kit disagree?

Extending the Reading

- Mam shows great gratitude for all things, whether it is a handful of weeds that Annie picked for her or a single egg from Kit. Why is it important to see things with eyes of gratitude? How can we learn to be more grateful? As a group, or in small groups, try and list 100 different things we can be grateful for.
- **Reading Journal:** Kit says: "You have to walk a mile in another man's shoes... before you judge." What does this mean? Do you agree? Who in your life most understands what it is like to walk in your shoes? How do we learn what it is like to walk in someone else's shoes [empathy].

Exploring the Writing

- **Compare and Contrast** – Mam and Mrs. O'Toole are two very different characters. Using examples from the story, describe each woman's reaction and approach to difficult times. What does Mam do to help herself and others survive? What does Mrs. O'Toole do?
- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.

Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen

(page 105-114)

Summary

Kit finds Mam laying on the ground in great pain. Lizzie arrives and tells Kit the baby is coming, three months too soon. After the delivery, Kit holds her tiny brother in awe and helplessness as his heart slowly stops. Lizzie gently draws Kit back from her grief to do all she can to help Mam – for Mam has the fever. Days run into each other as Kit tends to her mother, but Kit fears she can't bring her back. She worries about losing her forever. Just as she is about to lose hope, Da returns home.

Preparing to Read

- Dreams often show us things that are important to our subconscious, particularly our fears and desires. Choose a few examples and discuss what might be a related dream or discuss specific dreams and what they may represent.

After the Reading

- What does Kit's dream show us about her fears?
- Why does Kit cry when her father arrives home?

Extending the Reading

Examining Worries: Make a chart comparing Kit's worries to your own. You don't have to list specific worries you have, just include the typical worries of someone your age today. You may not worry about things like famine and fever, but are any of your concerns similar to Kit's? Include columns listing what adults or little kids worry about. What we worry about may be different, but we all bear the burden of worry.

Kit said that Lizzie was "drawing me back from thinking of all I couldn't do, to doing the little I could" (page 109). Why is that an important way to deal with worry? Beside some of your worries, list what you can do to help deal with them.

Exploring the Writing

- **Symbolism:** In what ways is the tiny baby similar to the blanket? Symbols are powerful tools in writing that can convey deep meaning, particularly in an emotional scene. Choose an emotion: brainstorm descriptive words, now choose a symbol, something that represents that emotion well. For example: *Hope*: slowly growing, needs nurturing, fragile, comes from somewhere deep inside. *Symbol*: a seed. Write an extended metaphor poem using these images.

Chapter Nineteen and Twenty

(page 115-128)

Summary

With Da home, Mam starts improving and she is soon well enough to argue. Adamant that they will not convert to Protestantism for a bowl of soup (as many people were) Mam decides it's time to sell the animals and sends the children out to scavenge the garden for any sound potatoes they might have missed. Kit is thrilled to find one for it meant the promise of more.

Kit is outraged to see Murphy the cart man wheeling away their possessions (along with those of so many other families). In a temper, she races up the hill and sits on her stone, sulking about the unfairness of it all. But slowly Mam's words sink in – they were only things. Kit finds a Harvest Knot (love token) on the stone. Mick appears and they talk about her knot. Kit brags about its craftsmanship and Mick blushes, but his smile fades when she tells him it must be from Tom. Their discussion is interrupted when Kit notices smoke from Mick's cottage and realizes it's on fire.

Preparing to Read

- Prediction: How do you think things will change for Kit now that Da is home?

After the Reading

- Some things are offered “with strings attached.” What “strings” are attached to taking the soup? Why won't Mam take the soup? **Making Decisions**
- Why is Kit so excited to find one tiny potato?
- What does Mam decide to do to help the family survive?

Extending the Reading

- What does the Harvest Knot mean? Who does Kit think it is from? Who do you think it is from? Why?
- **Art Activity** – Harvest Knot
- Things are important to us. What is your most treasured item?
- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.

Exploring the Writing

- Sitting on the ancient stone, Kit wonders what it must have been like for people in her past. How does looking into the past help her deal with her present? What lessons can we learn by looking in our past? **Myth** is one way that the past helps those in the present understand the world. Read some other myths or write your own.
- **Voice:** Choose a specific location and write in first person for two people generations apart. For example: Contrast an 18th century voyageur canoeing down the river with a Girl Guide at camp canoeing in the exact same spot. What is each thinking/seeing/feeling? Each should have a specific voice. Write a paragraph or two in each one's voice.
- **Corridor of Voices** — drama activity

Chapter Twenty-One and Twenty-Two

(page 129-140)

Summary

Kit races behind Mick to the flaming cottage. Lynch and the crowbar brigade stand around watching it burn and Kit knows then how it started. Nan and Meg are with Mam and Kit races into the burning home to help Mick drag out his mother who refused the leave. Just as they get Mrs. O'Toole free, a beam falls pinning Mick underneath. Kit uses a pike as a lever to roll the fiery log off his arm and they barely make it out before the roof crashes down. Lynch warns them that this is what happens to those who can't pay their rent and warns against housing the evicted. Kit's hatred for the man burns deep.

Mrs. O'Toole is bitter for having been saved. She wanted to die rather than be homeless or end up at the workhouse. Mick is recovering under Lizzie's care. Da tells him of the road works starting the next day. It's a chance to make money. Mick's arms are badly burned and one is broken, but he agrees to go. He knows he is his family's only hope.

Preparing to Read

- Last chapter we heard that Mick's house is on fire. What do you think has happened?

After the Reading

- Why doesn't Mick's mother want to be saved? What does that have to do with the theme of hope?
- List Mick's actions during these two chapters. What do they tell us about his character? How is that different than the way Kit described him back in the beginning of the novel?

Extending the Reading

- **Righting Injustice:** Kit is furious at the injustice happening in Killanamore. Looking at the [plot line](#) review what injustices she has witnessed or experienced. Discuss one or two in depth (example: A famine is a food shortage, but during this period only the potato crops were blighted. There was lots of food in Ireland during the "famine", but landlords exported to England even though Irish people were starving to death). What injustices exist in our world today? Are there contemporary famines or epidemics? What is being done to right these injustices? What more could be done? What can we do?

Exploring the Writing

- **Righting Injustice Writing Activity:** Write a persuasive essay that addresses one of the modern day injustices and what the global community can and should be doing about it. Be sure to include a hook, information (research based, statistics, etc) and a proposed plan of action.
- **Metaphorical Paragraph:** Make a web with the word "fire" in the middle. Around it, list all the things that describe/relate to fire. For example, light, heat, destruction. Include descriptive nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives that describe fire (ashes, burns, hungry). Now list things that fire can represent symbolically? Choose one and write a paragraph that presents fire as a symbol. Don't forget to use the descriptive words.

Chapter Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four

(page 141-158)

Summary

Kit is kept busy working for Lizzie as the fever spreads throughout the village. As the days go by, the famine grows worse. Evictions, illness, and starvation take their toll. Millie's family emigrates to New York leaving nothing but an ember from their fire in Kit's. The soul of the family must never go out. Da and Mick continue the grueling labour on the road works. Kit gets a firsthand view of it when she and Jack go with Da to get the wages that never arrive. Men line the road eager to take the place of any that die and a young boy with a wagon waits for the bodies.

Lynch bursts into their cottage that evening in the hopes of finding them housing the evicted. But with nothing to their name, the O'Tooles have left no evidence of living with the Byrnes. Mam and Da realize it is too dangerous to keep the O'Tooles in their cottage. Not wanting to live in a scalpeen, Mrs. O'Toole ends up taking her girls to live in the workhouse while Mick saves his wages in the hopes they can emigrate to the United States. Mam worries the O'Toole women won't live long enough to see it happen.

Preparing to Read

- The British Government set up Public Works to help the Irish during the famine years. Landlords would submit construction proposals (i.e. build a bridge, wall, road, etc. on their property) and the government would pay eligible workers (one per family.) Discuss the effectiveness of this solution. Revisit your discussion about Public Works after reading the work scene.

After the Reading

- What does a burning ember represent? Why do they bring it to their neighbour before emigrating?
- Why can't Lynch prove the O'Tooles are living with the Byrnes?
- What plan does Mam suggest to help the O'Tooles survive? **Making Decisions**

Extending the Reading

- Body language is a big part of communication. Reenact the scene where Lynch enters the cottage. What does body language tell us about Lynch, Mam, Da, and Mrs. O'Toole?

Exploring the Writing

- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.
- **Body Language.** Stage direction tells actors in a play where to stand and how to move. In a novel or short story, authors must convey information about their characters' body language in subtle ways by describing specific actions or facial expressions. Write a scene that shows conflict between two characters. You may use dialogue, but try to have their physical movements and appearance speak loudly.
- **Corridor of Voices** — drama activity

Chapter Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six

(page 159-173)

Summary

Kit delivers Lizzie's honey to the Big House where she learns the Frasers are leaving Ireland. They are overwhelmed by the need and terrified after someone shot their dog. Kit worries what will happen when Lynch is in power again. In town, Kit gets caught up in a riot outside the bakery as people rush the store and fight over scraps. A blow to the head knocks her unconscious. Tom helps her up, but it's too late. All the money from Lizzie's honey has been taken and Lizzie only has two jars to last the rest of the season. Tom didn't show at the stones that Saturday and Kit begins to fear he no longer cares for her.

Mick and Da are late coming home. When Mam sees a wagon coming over the hill, Kit's worst fears are realized. She races through the rain to find Da, dead in the back of the wagon. Grief consumes the family. Mam lays down and didn't get up. The children are numb and apathetic. The Byrnes are defeated. Lizzie brings an ember one day and berates Kit for giving up. She challenges Kit to do better and Kit rises to it. She remembers the Byrne way – to look after your own.

Preparing to Read

- Hope is a theme throughout the novel. Watch for places where hope is strong or weak in the next two chapters.

After the Reading

- Why are the Frasers leaving? Why does this worry Kit?

Extending the Reading

- **Reading Journal:** A lot happens to Kit during these scenes. Choose a starter from the Reading Response Prompt list and journal on these past chapters.

Exploring the Writing

- **Conflict:** Fill out the What's Your Problem worksheet using a few scenes from the novel. Discuss how conflict occurs when obstacles prevent a character from getting what he/she wants. In these chapters, Kit faces an enormous obstacle: losing her father. What does Lizzie's character do to help Kit move past the obstacle of losing her father and recommit to helping her family?

Chapter Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight

(page 175-185)

Summary

With a renewed sense of purpose, Kit takes charge of the family and Jack and Annie are eager to follow her. Once the house is in order, Kit decides to take Jack to scavenge Fraser's back field for missed potatoes. Lynch catches her in the field and tells Tom to tie her hands so he can bring her to jail. Tom asks his father to turn a blind eye and receives a kick in the face as a lesson. Lynch wants his sons to know how to run the land, and there is no room for soft-heartedness. Tom ties Kit's wrists and avoiding her eyes, turns home as his father drags Kit to Wicklow Jail. Kit is charged and jailed for two weeks for her crime. Her cellmate, Eliza, appears crazy as she tells Kit of her botched attempt at shooting Lord Fraser. They missed him and accidentally shot his dog instead.

Preparing to Read

- Remind students about Kit's reluctance to steal a dog's dinner back in chapter 11.

After the Reading

- Did Kit have any hesitation about breaking the law and rooting in Lord Fraser's garden? Why? **Making Decisions** – explore choice and consequences.

Extending the Reading

- What do you think Tom was going to do when they found Kit in the garden?
- What lesson does Lynch try to teach his son?
- "I might be in jail, but the truth was we were both prisoners" page 182. She is talking about Tom, but what does she mean?
- **Mock Trial:** Do you think Kit was wrong to root in the garden? She knowingly broke the law. Do you think she deserves to go to jail? Conduct a mock trial that argues for and against her arrest.

Exploring the Writing

- **Point of View** – rewrite a scene from a new point of view:
 - finding Kit in the field – from Lynch's POV
 - finding Kit in the field – from Jack's POV
 - finding Kit in the field – from Tom's POV
 - the Fraser assassination attempt – from Eliza's POV
 - the Fraser assassination attempt – from Lord Fraser's POV

When finished divide into small groups and share your scenes. Talk about how the story changes depending on who is narrating.

- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.
- **Corridor of Voices** — drama activity.

Chapter Twenty-Nine and Thirty

(page 187-196)

Summary

Kit meets other inmates and learns their hunger-driven crimes. She learns of the horrid conditions in the workhouses. People preferred jail; they actually committed crimes to escape the workhouse. But no one has news about the O'Tooles. As the days go on, Eliza's ravings seem not so crazy. In fact, they help Kit realize that Lynch is the problem, not Fraser. Slowly, Kit begins to form a plan of her own.

Preparing to Read

Share some background information on

- Wicklow's Historic Goal <http://www.wicklowshistoricgaol.com/index.html>
- www.carolinepignat.com also has photos and a list of child inmates (many of whom appear in the following chapter).

After the Reading

- What do the inmates' crimes have in common?
- Eliza's ravings seem less crazy to Kit. Do you agree or is Kit just becoming a bit "crazy" herself?

Extending the Reading

- We are influenced by our environments and the people in them. How is Kit changed by her experience in jail? Describe an experience that changed you.
- **Making Decisions** – explore choice and consequences

Exploring the Writing

- **Short Story**: Choose one of the inmates, or create your own, and write the story of how they ended up in jail.
- **Corridor of Voices** — drama activity.

Chapter Thirty-One and Thirty-Two

(page 197-210)

Summary

Freed from jail, Kit is eager to get home, though worried about what she might find. Have they been evicted? She is comforted to see the house still whole, the smoke from the chimney, Annie, Jack and even Mam is up waiting for her. But her comfort is short-lived when she realizes that Mam is not herself. Mam asks when Da is coming back from England and why he won't write. Kit knows this is Mam's way of coping with her grief and does what Mam would have done for her.

Tom finds Kit at the well and apologizes for not helping her. He tells her of his father's plans for eviction and even promises to tie a red rag on her post as a warning. But Kit has a plan of her own. There will be no eviction. In Lizzie's kitchen, Kit steals a bottle of poison. Mick arrives and tells her the government has shut down the road works, but he has enough to buy his mother's and sister's passage. Eager to save them from the workhouse, Mick prepares to leave right then. Kit admires his strength and compassion, and tells him so before kissing his cheek goodbye.

Preparing to Read

- Kit has been in jail for three weeks. How do you think she feels when she is released? What is on her mind?

After the Reading

- The experience in jail affects Kit. How has she changed as seen in her interactions with Mam, Tom, and Mick?

Extending the Reading

- Describe a time when your first impression of someone was way off. What made you change your mind about that person?

Exploring the Writing

- **Character Development:** Reread Kit's original description of Tom. What part of Mick does she focus on (physical appearance)? Compare that to her description of Mick at the end of chapter thirty-two. How has her opinion of Mick changed? Why has it changed?
- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.

Chapter Thirty-Three and Thirty-Four

(page 211-218)

Summary

That night, Kit breaks into the Big House to poison Lynch and protect her family from being evicted. As she hides behind his chair and holds the bottle of poison over his glass, her conscience argues and she realizes she is motivated by revenge. She blames Lynch for her father's death. As she struggles with the morality and sin of attempting murder, Lynch catches her hiding. Kit has her say and vents all her anger on Lynch, promising some other farmer will finish the job she started. Lynch staggers and falls in the throws of a stroke. When his sons come running to his aid, Kit hides behind the curtains. Witnessing Tom's reaction to his father brings back memories of the night her father died and Kit realizes that no matter what Lynch was, Tom loved him.

Preparing to Read

- Discuss the progression from stealing the dog's dinner, to stealing potatoes, to Kit's plan to poison Lynch. Where is the line? Has she crossed it? Survey opinions about when.

After the Reading

- Kit thought she was poisoning Lynch to save her family but what was her underlying motivation?
- **Making Decisions** – explore choice and consequences.

Extending the Reading

- Kit was still arguing with her conscience about whether to poison Lynch when he caught her. Based on what you know about Kit's character, do you think she would have gone through with it?

Exploring the Writing

- **Character Motivation:** Character motivation is what drives a character to say or do things. Brainstorm a list of motivations (example: greed, love, revenge, etc.). Try to find examples of characters from this novel, other novels, or movies that are motivated by those examples. Tie in **Character Trait**.
- **Corridor of Voices** — drama activity

Chapter Thirty-Five and Thirty-Six

(page 219-230)

Summary

When Tom appears at Lizzie's door, Kit worries Lynch has recovered and accused her of attempted murder. But Tom is asking Lizzie to look at his father. When she returns, Lizzie holds out the empty poison bottle Kit had forgotten at the Big House and asks for the truth. Realizing she has implicated Lizzie now as well, Kit confesses. All they can hope is that Lynch never recovers.

That evening, Annie appears with her hair tied in a red rag. When Kit finds out she took it from the fencepost, she recognizes it as Tom's signal. The crowbar brigade is on their way. Kit sends Annie and Mam to Lizzie's and waits with Jack. The brigade arrives led by the Lynch brothers. Kit begs Henry (the eldest) to spare her home, but he is even more ruthless than his father. Kit pleads with Tom, but that only makes Henry give Tom the flaming torch along with the order to throw it on the roof. Afraid of his brother, Tom lights the thatch. Kit watches her home go up in flames and watches Tom ride away. He never looks back.

Preparing to Read

- We are not sure if Lynch survived his stroke. What will happen if he dies? What will happen if he recovers?

After the Reading

- When Lizzie holds out the bottle, what does Kit realize?
- Why does Kit react so wildly when she sees Annie's hair tied up?
- Describe Henry Lynch.

Extending the Reading

- Our choices affect others. Discuss the following:
 - How does Kit's choice to poison Lynch affect Lizzie?
 - How does Tom's choice to obey his brother affect Kit?

Exploring the Writing

- **Reading Response:** Choose a starter from the Reading Response Prompt list and journal on these past chapters.
- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.

Chapter Thirty-Seven and Thirty-Eight

(page 231-242)

Summary

Lizzie takes in the Byrne family, but Kit knows they can't stay long. Lynch was recovering. Kit could only imagine what Henry Lynch would do if he knew she'd tried to kill his father. Giving her the last two jars of honey to pay for passage, Lizzie tells her to leave Ireland: it's her only hope.

Afraid of being hunted by the Lynch boys, Annie, Jack, Mam and Kit cut through the Wicklow Mountains on the long journey to New Ross. They stop outside the workhouse and witness the terrible state of things there, then travel onward village after village, seeing more than they wanted of the famine horrors. Near total exhaustion, they stop at a well, and Kit fears she can get them no farther. Annie and Mam pray for help. When the Tommy and Ellen Crean and their daughter Tish stop to water their horse, Annie sees them as her answered prayer. The Creans offer the Byrnes a ride to New Ross in their wagon and Kit's hope is renewed.

Preparing to Read

- Predict what will happen next in the story.

After the Reading

- Why doesn't Lizzie go with them?
- Why do they take the longer route through the mountains to New Ross?
- Along the journey, what do they see that shows so many more families are suffering during this time?

Extending the Reading

- Trace the route to New Ross on a map of Ireland. What is sixty miles (95 km) from your home? Imagine walking that far.
- Have you ever moved to a new home? Why do people become attached to places? Share how it might feel to leave somewhere special.

Exploring the Writing

- **Bird's Eye View Descriptive Paragraph:** Before Kit leaves she takes one last look, a sort of bird's eye view of her home. Write a paragraph describing your home from a bird's eye view.

Chapter Thirty-Nine and Forty

(page 243-256)

Summary

Tommy helps Kit sell her honey and buy tickets aboard the *Dunbrody* sailing for Quebec. Annie is thrilled to be sailing with her friend Tish and Jack is eager for the adventure. As the families wait to board, Kit is terrified to see the Lynch brothers ride up the quay. They are looking for her – for attempted murder. Jack tells them Kit died on the journey and is buried in Killealy. Kit crawls down the line and hides in a trunk as they search the ship and passengers. Expecting the trunk will be carried on board right under their noses, Kit waits anxiously only to see the *Dunbrody* and her family standing along the rail, setting sail without her. The Lynch boys ride past the trunk talking about checking the death registry in Killealy. They will not give up the hunt. When Kit climbs out of the trunk hours later, she realizes it wasn't luggage, just abandoned things overburdened travelers had to leave behind.

Preparing to Read

- Kit and her family are almost at New Ross. What do you think will happen when they get there?

After the Reading

- Why does Kit decide to buy tickets aboard the *Dunbrody*?
- What does Jack say to Henry that shows quick thinking?

Extending the Reading

- Write ten historical facts about the ships used during the Irish emigration. Visit the following websites:
 - *Dunbrody* <http://www.dunbrody.com/>
 - *Jeanie Johnston* www.jeaniejohnston.ie/history.html
 - *Caroline Pignat* www.carolinepignat.com (check under Greener Grass / the research / ships)

Exploring the Writing

- **Plot Line** – summarize what has happened in the last few chapters.
- **Foreshadowing**: Go back and reread Kit's dreams at the start of chapter six and the end of chapter eighteen. How do they foreshadow what happens in chapter forty?
- **Make Fiction From Historical Fact** :
 - Review the facts on the sheet. Choose one and create a fictional story around it.
 - Review the facts. Which ones are used in *Greener Grass*?

Chapter Forty-One and Forty-Two

(page 257-267)

Summary

A gripping hand wakes Kit and she fears she has been caught. But it isn't the Lynches, it's Mick. He tells her he was too late to save his mother and sisters and that when he heard of the Lynches' warrant he just knew he had to find her first. Using what little money he had left, Mick buys Kit a ticket aboard the *Erin*. He will work as a crewmember to pay for his passage. Dressed as a boy, Kit, Mick's brother and Mick, wait to board the ship, but the Lynch brothers return from Killealy, sure Kit is living and on the *Erin*. Again the hunt is on, but they aren't looking for a boy. Kit fears Tom will know her despite the disguise so Mick falls into Tom, distracting him from seeing Kit scurry on board. As the ship pulls away, Kit takes a last look at her homeland and a last look at Tom. He shouts and raises his hand as she turns away, facing the new horizon full of hope.

Preparing to Read

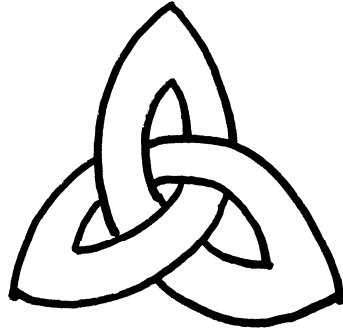
- Kit is alone. The Lynch boys are still hunting her down (assuming they don't believe Jack's news that she died). She has no money. Predict what will happen to her.

After the Reading

- What is Mick's plan for getting Kit on board?
- How does he stop Tom from recognizing Kit even in disguise?

Extending the Reading

- Tom shouts and raises his hand as the ship leaves. What do you think he is shouting to Kit? Act out this scene with different versions of what Tom yells.



Part II

Novel Activities and Blackline Masters

Final Project Ideas

Non-Fiction

- A Study of Ireland – culture, land, history, myth, statistics
- Irish Immigrants
 - In Canada—http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Canadians
 - In United States—<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish-American>
- Famous Irish People – write a biography.
- Biography of St. Patrick or St. Brigid.
- Write for *The Wicklow Times* or *The Irish Independent* in 1847. Check the *Illustrated London News* link for sample articles and illustrations.

Creative Writing

- Write a historical fiction piece set in a different time and place.
- Retell a part of this story from another character's point of view.
- Write the first chapter or outline for the sequel.

Arts and Oral/Visual Presentations

- 3D Model of Kit's home – byre, hearth, two rooms, kitchen garden, stone wall, back hill, Lizzie's place, O'Toole's, crossroads, well, foxglove.
- Irish Lament – write a song or poem about these difficult times
- Create a museum exhibit teaching others about the Irish famine years.
- Interview a character – radio or TV.
- Create a trailer for a movie (include a great hook, the themes, and conflict).
- Design the Byrne family crest (include their motto and Celtic knots).

- Drama – present a key part of the novel in tableau.
 - tableau – choose four key points from a chapter and reenact the story.

Theme Based Activities

Family The Byrne way is “To look after your own.” What are some examples of this? Does your family have a motto – even an unspoken one? Design a crest/flag with a motto that fits your family.

Heritage In the novel Kit's family is uprooted from where they have lived for generations. Where are your family's roots? Provide a fireside telling of your family story as told from knee to knee.

Prejudice There is obvious prejudice and class distinction in Ireland during these years. What are some examples of the differences between the way the classes are treated? Does Kit have prejudices of her own? Does prejudice like this still exist in our world today?

Survival This is a story of survival. Which of Kit's strengths help her survive? Who influenced her? What do people need to survive? Include physical/social/emotional/mental/spiritual needs.

Hunger Kit hungers for many things during the novel. Physical hunger is just one example. Can you describe something else she longs for? Describe how hunger is a great motivation.

Hope Kit's Mam told her to never give up hope. Why is hope so important? What happens when someone has lost all hope? What do you hope for (short term and long term)?

Historical Resources

Online sources

- Strokestown Famine Museum www.strokestownpark.ie/museum.html
- Country Life Museum www.museum.ie/en/intro/country-life.aspx
- Muckross Farms www.muckross-house.ie/farms/intro.htm
- Wicklow's Historic Gaol www.wicklowshistoricgaol.com/
- Illustrated London News <http://adminstaff.vassar.edu/sttaylor/FAMINE/index.html>
- The History Place articles <http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/famine/index.html>
- The Shamrock and the Maple Leaf <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/ireland/index-e.html>

Children's Non-fiction Books

- *Black Potatoes: The Story of the Great Irish Famine 1845-1850* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001)

Music

- The Chieftans (their first ten albums)
- The Bothy Band
- Planxty
- The Dubliners
- Liam O'Flynn

Irish Culture

<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/1Kids/1Home.html>

Irish Mythology

- *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, edited and selected by W. B. Yeats also available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/>
- *Celtic Fairy Tales*, by Joseph Jacobs.
- <http://www.luminarium.org/mythology/ireland/> contains links to Irish literature, mythology, folklore and drama.

Make Fiction From Historical Fact

Write a story idea based on a fact below or find your own fact and tell its tale.

Quebec — summer of 1847. After six weeks at sea the boats are left waiting along the St. Lawrence in a two mile stretch. Many Irish die waiting to be admitted to the overcrowded quarantine island of Grosse Isle. A young man jumps ship and swims 6 miles to Mount Tannier. *Does he make it?*

The ship *Maria* hit an iceberg on May 10, 1889. Of 121 passengers only 9 were saved – 6 men, 2 women, and a boy who had scrambled got on to the ice. *Whose POV would you pick?*

They thought Tom Gearins was dead when they threw him into a mass grave in Skibbereen. But when he moved they pulled him back out.

A bailiff took the roof off his own brother's house while the brother and family were still inside.

A 12-year-old girl knit all night making items to sell to keep her family from the poorhouse.

Thieves armed with spoons stole from unattended pots.

A man received a two-year sentence for stealing a sheep. His family died while he was in jail.

Thirteen hundred inmates crammed in jails made for 5,000. *Describe the setting.*

John Weadcock, age 13, was sentenced to one month in Wicklow jail with hard labour for stealing gooseberries. *Write his experience and describe his feelings.*

Labourers walked several miles on empty stomachs six days a week, 10-12 hour days, in all kinds of weather to build roads to nowhere for a few pence that wouldn't feed the family. Many died, shovel in hand, on the road. *Tell one worker's story.*

April 25, 1846 — partial solar eclipse was seen as a sign of the Great Famine.

The winter of 1846-47 was most severe and the longest in living memory – early frost, icy gales, snow, hail, sleet. *Seems like nature itself was against them.*

They often found things from gold age or bronze age in the bogs while cutting turf. *What was found? Tell it's tale.*

Fairies can transform themselves into an all-white hare.

They believed prehistoric darts were fairy darts – which caused unexplained illnesses like strokes.

Little boys were made to wear dresses until age 8 or 9 to con the fairies who were more interested in boys than girls. (This was an explanation of the high mortality rate of boys).

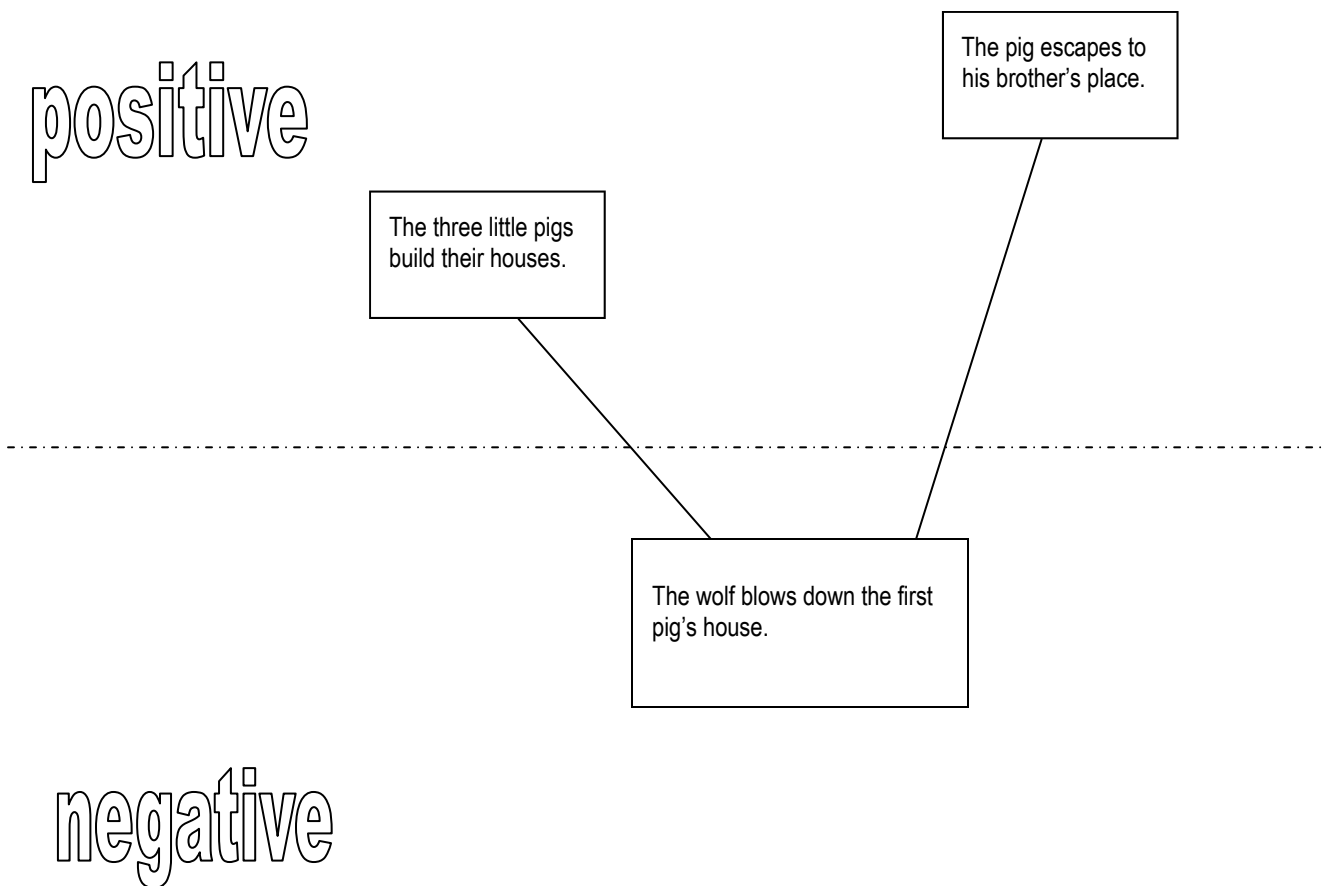
Fairies played tricks on you, brought down mist to make you lose your way.

Pacify the fairies by leaving out food – first a squirt of milk or poiteen (which was good because the first bit of poiteen is 100% alcohol!)

Plot Line

Track the main events in the novel on a plot line. Include the page #, the event, and place it in relation to whether it is a positive or negative experience. Don't forget that it should be higher or lower based on how it relates to the other experiences. Track it in your notebook, or on a bulletin board as a group. Notice how the plot points move up and down and peak at the climax.

Sample Plot Line for *The Three Little Pigs*



What's Your Problem?

The plot is driven by the characters' desires. The story is kept interesting and suspenseful when the author gives the characters obstacles, forcing them to try new ways to achieve their goals.

Somebody <i>Character</i>	Wants <i>Character's desire</i>	But <i>Obstacle preventing character's fulfilled desire</i>	So <i>Choice or action made by character in response to obstacle</i>

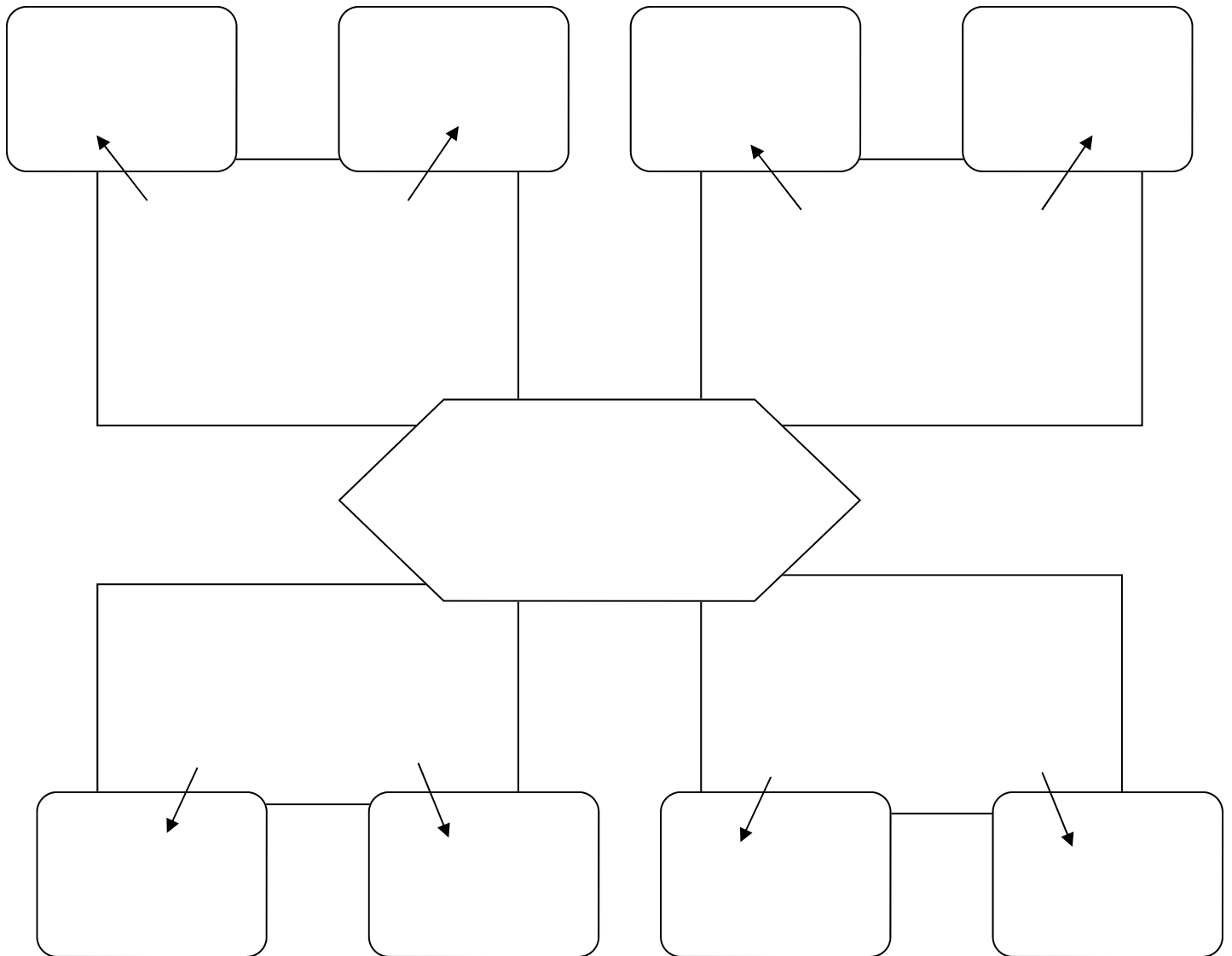
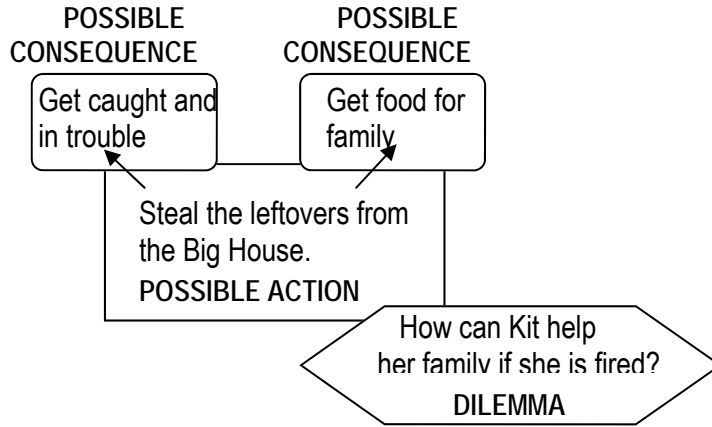
Adapted from *Think Literacy*

Reflection Questions:

1. Put a star beside the main conflict in the table above.
2. Do you think your character's desire will get fulfilled? Write your prediction of how the story will be resolved. Be sure to use complete sentences and explain your reasoning.

Making Decisions

Consider some of the choices the characters face during the novel. Effective decision making means looking at all the options and possible consequences. In the centre, write the question the character is facing. In the rectangles write possible actions. Put consequences of those actions in the circles. For example:



Character Development

We get to know characters by what they say or think, how they act, and by what other characters say about them. As you find clues about a character fill in the chart below.

Character	Character Trait	Clues that prove this trait	Page #

Reading Response Prompts

Reading Response Journals encourage students to reflect on and relate to what they read. Remind students it is not a retelling of the story, but a relating to the story or a reaction to the story. Sometimes it is enough to give them sentence starters like:

- I wonder why...
- I was surprised that...
- I feel...
- I wonder if...
- I bet that...
- This reminds me of ...

Here are some other reading response prompts:

- What do you think will happen next?
- What has been the most exciting incident?
- What character do you find the most interesting? (Interesting doesn't mean you necessarily like the character.)
- Write a diary entry for one of the secondary characters.
- What would it be like for you to live in the setting where the story takes place?
- What choices would you have made differently from the main character?
- Would this story work if it happened today in your hometown?
- What other books or movies does it remind you of?
- What character do you relate most to? Why?

Vocabulary

The following items may not be familiar to young readers. For an inferencing activity, see if they can guess what the item might be or might be used for based on the context.

Settle-bed: a bed that converts into a bench during the daytime.	prologue
Spancel: rope used to hobble an animal.	page 14
The others: term used for the fairy folk.	page 14
Noggin: a small mug or cup.	page 15
Churn: a vessel used to turn milk into butter.	page 15
Farl: a type of soda bread cooked over the fire and cut in quarters.	pages 16 and 17
Spud: nickname for potato.	pages 11, 32, 33, 64, and 119
Banshee: a female spirit who is an omen of death.	pages 57, 168, 211
Drill: the garden row where potatoes are grown.	pages 45, 58, 59, 60, and 176
Bodhran: an Irish drum, held in the hand and hit with a tipper.	pages 53, 56, and 123
Cudgel: a wooden stick or club used as a weapon.	page 102
Loy: a type of shovel used during that period.	pages 33, 118, and 119
Harvest knot: a braid of wheat or straw given as a love token.	pages 125 and 127

Similes

Simile Collection

Write similes discovered in the novel on a chart similar to the one below.

Page #	Simile	What two things are being compared?		The simile implies that.
prologue	Mam tucked Annie, Jack, and me in the settle-bed, like fingers in a mitten.	The kids tucked in bed.	Fingers in a mitten.	they are cozy, squished, warm.

Sample Similes

Some simile examples from Chapters 1-8.

Even Nelly, poor old Nelly, stretched out like a rug by the hearth, wagged her tail as if she understood. prologue

When the tales had been told, Mam tucked Annie, Jack, and me in the settle-bed, like fingers in a mitten. prologue

Mam turned to find a hen staggering around the manure heap in the yard like a drunkard on his last legs, its feathers a mess of muck and blood. Page 4

I leapt through the field like a doe, my bare feet chilled in the wet grass. Page 21

Lord Fraser's estate sprawled like a rumped quilt before me. Patches of yellows and greens hemmed within white stone walls spread over the hills on all sides. Page 21

The sun shone like a halo behind his dark curls. Page 22

She looked like the dog's dinner, a right mess. Page 28

She gently laid a strip along the dark earth, tucking it up round the plant stems like a cozy blanket. Page 33

His pants draped about his gangly legs like rags on a rowan tree. Page 35

His goofy smile split his face like a jack-o-lantern. Page 36

Fog smothered me like a wet blanket. Page 39

She handed me the rosary beads from the nail on the wall. I gripped them like a lifeline in a storm and, bead by bead, found my way to solid ground again. Page 44

"Oh, the heat!" Lady Fraser whined. Trussed up like a peacock she was, right to her feathered hat. Page 46

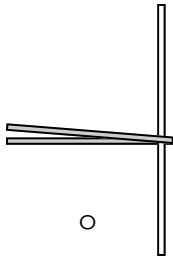
Bony Mick in his flour-sack shirt, pants held on by a bit of rope, and his gap-toothed smile, not to mention his ears like two handles on a jug? Page 52

Art Activities

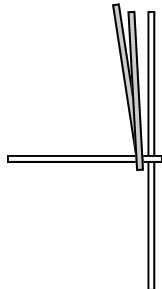
St. Brigid's Cross

Materials:

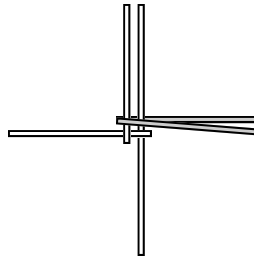
16 pieces of reed or straw (that's traditional, but drinking straws, pipe cleaners or even paper strips work as well)



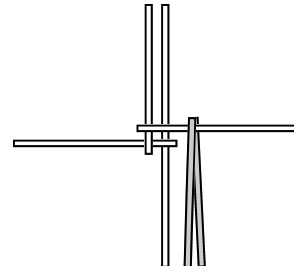
Step 1.
Fold one straw in half over the other and pull it tight.



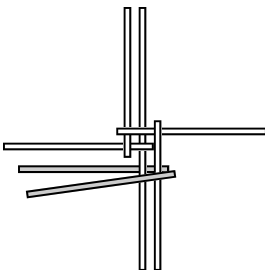
Step 2.
Going in a clockwise order, fold another straw in half around the one you just put on.



Step 3.
Fold another straw in half around the two straw arms at the top.

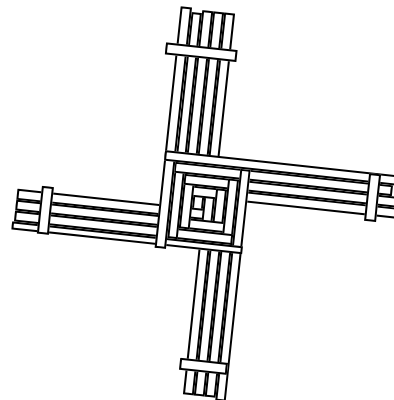


Step 4.
Going in a clockwise order, fold another straw in half around the one you just put on.



Step 5.
Fold another straw in half around the two straw arms at the bottom.

Step 6.
Repeat this process until all straws are used (about 16).
Secure the ends with twine or ribbon and trim the ends to be even.



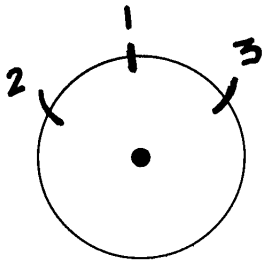
Harvest Knot

A harvest knot was made and shared as a token of affection in rural Ireland during Kit's time. A simple knot weaves three "straws" or blades of wheat (heads still on) and loops the braid, tying it with a ribbon. For more complex knot instructions visit the Guild of Straw Craftsmen at:

http://www.strawcraftsmen.co.uk/pdf/Countrymans_favour_hair_plait.pdf

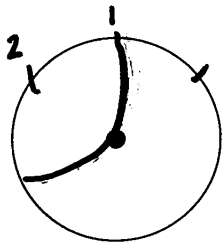
Celtic Design – Trinity Knots

To make your Trinity Knot you will need: pencil, paper, compass, eraser and marker.

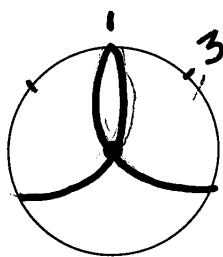


Make a dot. Put the point on the dot and use your compass to draw a circle. Don't adjust the compass. It needs to be the same size for all the arcs.

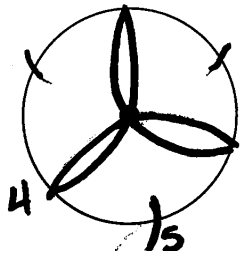
Mark 12 o'clock [#1]. Put the point on #1 and draw the parts of the circle that cut at #2 and #3.



Put the point on #2 and draw the arc. If your compass is still the same size, it should start at #1 and go through the centre dot.

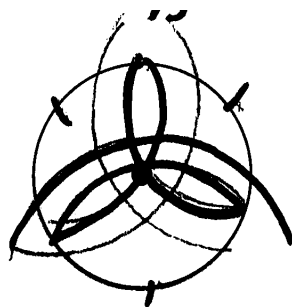


Put the point on #3 and draw the arc. If your compass is still the same size, it should start at #1 and go through the centre dot.



Where the arc touches at the bottom is #4. Put the point there and draw where #5 cuts the big circle.

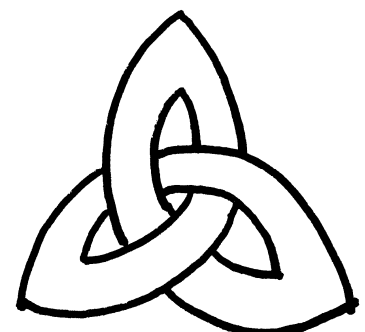
Put the point on #5 and draw the arc that starts at #4 and goes through the centre dot.



To make the Trinity Knot look thick, open your compass a little bigger and redo all the arc drawing steps above. It should go *beyond* your circle.

Pick where the knot intersects and decide which one is over and which is under. Erase the lines for the "under" section. Note that each loop goes over on one side and under on the other. Outline it in marker and then erase your pencil lines.

And...*ta-daa!*



Drama — Corridor of Voices

Read a passage from the novel that involves internal struggle. For example:

- Chapter 11: Kit's internal debate whether to take the dog's dinner.
- Chapter 19: Mam's argument about taking the soup and her decision to sell the animals.
- Chapter 24: Mam's rant about Lynch and what to do about the O'Tooles.
- Chapter 27: Kit's internal debate about rooting for potatoes in Lord Fraser's field.
- Chapter 30: Kit's thought process before she realizes Lynch is the problem.
- Chapter 33: Kit's internal debate as she is about to poison Lynch.

One student is the character, the rest of the group divide into two lines to form a corridor. As the character slowly walks through the corridor and passes each student, they voice concerns, thoughts, or ideas the character is feeling. The aim is to create a "collage" of comments that give voice to the internal struggle. Students may wish to plan who is saying what so the progression is logical.

Drama — Tableau

A tableau is one or more dramatic poses, or frozen scenes, created by students. The poses represent a key point (feeling, event, or idea) from the novel. Using body position, posture and expression, group members reflect on a specific point in the story. Encourage students to make use of space (high/low) and to have a focal point. Have them hold the pose for ten seconds then slowly transition into the next. Four is a good number of poses for one tableau story.

Some tableau ideas from the novel include:

- Da leaving for England
- Millie's mother bringing the ember to the Byrnes before they emigrate
- The wagon scene when Da dies
- Kit found rooting potatoes and taken to jail
- The poisoning scene at the Big House
- Waiting to board the *Dunbrody* and getting left behind

Myths

Use the following plan to help you brainstorm your own Irish myth.

This myth will explain how _____

The hero or heroine will be _____

and this character has special powers to _____

The setting is _____

The problem is that _____ and it will be
solved when _____

Resources

- *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, edited and selected by W. B. Yeats. Also available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/>
- *Celtic Fairy Tales*, by Joseph Jacobs (various editions)
- *Ancient Legends of Ireland* by Lady Wilde. New York: Sterling, 1996
- <http://www.luminarium.org/mythology/ireland/> contains links to Irish literature, mythology, folklore and drama

THE BANSHEE

An excerpt from:

Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry, edited and selected by W. B. Yeats, page 108.

The *banshee* (from *ban* [*bean*], a woman, and *shee* [*sidhe*], a fairy) is an attendant fairy that follows the old families, and none but them, and wails before a death. Many have seen her as she goes wailing and clapping her hands. The *keen* [*caoine*], the funeral cry of the peasantry, is said to be an imitation of her cry. When more than one banshee is present, and they wail and sing in chorus, it is for the death of some holy or great one. An omen that sometimes accompanies the banshee is the *coach-a-bower* (*cóiste-bodhar*) — an immense black coach, mounted by a coffin, and drawn by headless horses driven by a *Dullahan*. It will go rumbling to your door, and if you open it, according to Croker, a basin of blood will be thrown in your face. These headless phantoms are found elsewhere than in Ireland.

THE TROOPING FAIRIES

An excerpt from:

Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry, edited and selected by W. B. Yeats, pages 1-3

The Irish word for fairy is *sheehogue* [*sidheóg*], a diminutive of "shee" in banshee. Fairies are *deenee shee* [*daoine sidhe*] (fairy people).

Who are they? "Fallen angels who were not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost," say the peasantry. "The gods of the earth," says the Book of Armagh. "The gods of pagan Ireland," say the Irish antiquarians, "the Tuatha De Danān, who, when no longer worshipped and fed with offerings, dwindled away in the popular imagination, and now are only a few spans high."

And they will tell you, in proof, that the names of fairy chiefs are the names of old *Danān* heroes, and the places where they especially gather together, *Danān* burying-places, and that the *Tuath De Danān* used also to be called the *slooa-shee* [*sheagh sidhe*] (the fairy host), or *Marcra shee* (the fairy cavalcade).

... they will do their best to keep misfortune away from you, if you leave a little milk for them on the window-sill over night.... In dreams we go amongst them, and play with them, and combat with them.

Do not think the fairies are always little. Everything is capricious about them, even their size. They seem to take what size or shape pleases them. Their chief occupations are feasting, fighting... and playing the most beautiful music. They have only one industrious person amongst them, the *lepra-caun* — the shoemaker. Perhaps they wear their shoes out with dancing. Near the village of Ballisodare is a little woman who lived amongst them seven years. When she came home she had no toes — she had danced them off.

They have three great festivals in the year — May Eve, Midsummer Eve, November Eve. On May Eve, every seventh year, they fight all round, but mostly on the "Plain-a-Bawn" (wherever that is), for the harvest, for the best ears of grain belong to them. An old man told me he saw them fight once; they tore the thatch off a house in the midst of it all. Had anyone else been near they would merely have seen a great wind whirling everything into the air as it passed. When the wind makes the straws and leaves whirl as it passes, that is the fairies, and the peasantry take off their hats and say, "God bless them".

On Midsummer Eve, when the bonfires are lighted on every hill in honour of St. John, the fairies are at their gayest, and sometimes steal away beautiful mortals to be their brides. On November Eve they are at their gloomiest, for according to the old Gaelic reckoning, this is the first night of winter. This night they dance with the ghosts, and the *pooka* is abroad, and witches make their spells, and girls set a table with food in the name of the devil, that the fetch of their future lover may come through the window and eat of the food. After November Eve the blackberries are no longer wholesome, for the *pooka* has spoiled them.

When they are angry they paralyse men and cattle with their fairy darts.

When they are gay they sing. Many a poor girl has heard them, and pined away and died, for love of that singing. Plenty of the old beautiful tunes of Ireland are only their music, caught up by eavesdroppers. No wise peasant would hum "The Pretty Girl milking the Cow" near a fairy rath, for they are jealous, and do not like to hear their songs on clumsy mortal lips. Carolan, the last of the Irish bards, slept on a rath, and ever after the fairy tunes ran in his head, and made him the great man he was.

Do they die? Blake saw a fairy's funeral; but in Ireland we say they are immortal.

Author Chat

A Word with Caroline Pignat



Where did you get the idea to write *Greener Grass*?

I visited Ireland when I was 16 my uncle gave me a copy of Walter Macken's series (*Seek the Fair Land, The Silent People and The Scorching Wind*). The stories really affected me. My relatives lived through all that. It made me start wondering and imagining. How do people survive such difficulties; where do they find the strength; what gives them hope?

After I wrote the novel, I was looking through my old school work and I found a short piece I'd written back in Mr. Dinardo's Writers Craft class at Notre Dame High School: Ireland, the famine, a young girl by her father as he dies leaving her to wonder how she will go on and what will become of her. I don't even remember writing it, but it was so obviously the seed of *Greener Grass* planted way back then. I guess we all carry stories inside us – just waiting to come out.

How did you learn so much about Ireland in the famine years?

I read a lot of books and researched online to get the facts right. I also went to Ireland. My Granny still lives in Wicklow, Ireland. I stayed with her for a few days before my research took me around the country. I spent a week meeting with historians, curators, and experts in the field. Afterwards, having tea by the fire back at Granny's, I told her what I had seen and learned. She chuckled, "Sure, I could have told you that!" I'd forgotten that she grew up in a small cottage in the Wicklow hills, she'd baked on an open fire, she'd lugged water from the well. Everyone is full of fascinating stories. All we have to do is ask.

What advice do you have for young writers?

1. Keep a diary or journal.
2. Start a writing group with one or two other friends who like writing and want to share stories.
3. Read great writers. Everything you read helps you become a stronger writer.
4. Spend time each day doing something that inspires you.