



Irish Sagas and Folk Tales

Teacher Guide

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Irish Sagas and Folk Tales

EILEEN O'FAOILÁIN

Teacher Guide

A Note for Parents and Teachers

‘Irish Sagas and Folk Tales’ makes extensive use of Anglicised versions of Irish names and placenames, such as Niamh (who becomes *Niav*), Diarmuid (who becomes *Dermot*), and Fionn (who becomes *Finn*). While such translations might seem jarring to modern readers, it should be noted that this practise was commonplace at the time of Eileen O’Faoláin’s first edition of the text in 1954. To avoid any confusion for the student or teacher, we have retained these versions in the names.

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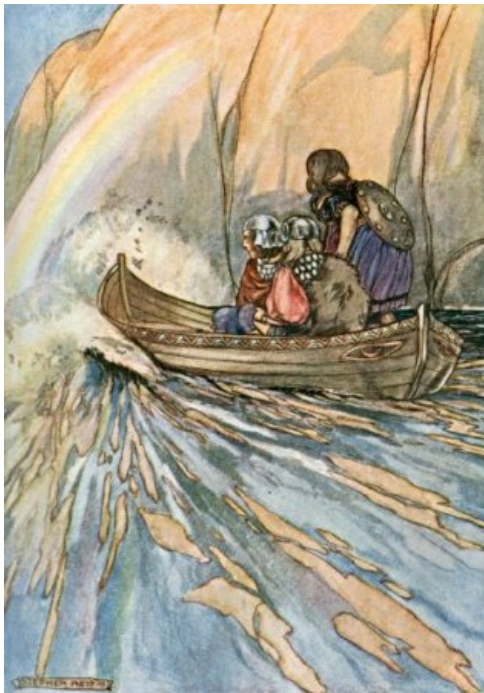
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From the Dawn of Time

The Quest for the Children of Tureann

Summary

The Children of Turenn introduces the De Danaans, descendants of the goddess Dana, who lived in Ireland and were oppressed by the Fomorians, savage sea-raiders led by the fearsome Balor of the Evil Eye. Lugh of the Long Arm, a radiant warrior, arrives to challenge the Fomorians and restore freedom to his people. Meanwhile, a tragic event unfolds when the Sons of Turenn, locked in an old family feud, kill Lugh's father, Kian. Lugh seeks revenge, imposing a nearly impossible quest on the Sons of Turenn to gather magical items from across the world as compensation.



The escape of the Children of Tureann.

Character List

1. **Lugh of the Long Arm:** A heroic figure of the People of Dana, Lugh is a skilled warrior with magical gifts. He becomes the central figure in leading the fight against the Fomorians and seeks vengeance for the murder of his father, Kian, by placing an impossible blood fine (*eric*) on the Sons of Turenn.

2. **Kian:** The father of Lugh, Kian is slain by the Sons of Turenn after being transformed into a pig to avoid conflict. His death sets the central conflict in motion, with Lugh demanding retribution from his killers.
3. **Brian:** The eldest of the Sons of Turenn, Brian is the most decisive and clever of the three brothers. He often takes the lead in their quests, devising plans to achieve their seemingly impossible tasks.
4. **Cu and Ceithin:** The younger brothers of Brian, Cu and Ceithin are loyal and brave, accompanying their brother on the dangerous quests to pay the blood fine. They face many challenges alongside Brian, sharing his fate.
5. **Turenn:** The father of the three brothers, Turenn advises them on how to approach their punishment and supports them throughout their quest. His grief is immense when they face their final fate.
6. **Eithne:** The sister of the Sons of Turenn, Eithne mourns the loss of her brothers and assists in their burial after their tragic demise.
7. **King Nuada of the Silver Hand:** The king of the People of Dana, Nuada holds court at Tara and witnesses Lugh's call for justice against the Sons of Turenn. He supports Lugh in his quest for vengeance against the Fomorians.
8. **Balor of the Evil Eye:** The fearsome king of the Fomorians, Balor possesses a deadly eye that can kill with a glance. He represents the primary enemy of the People of Dana and poses a constant threat to Ireland.
9. **The Sons of Turenn (Brian, Cu, and Ceithin):** Together, the three brothers are tasked with fulfilling the impossible *eric* placed on them by Lugh as punishment for killing his father. Despite their strength and bravery, their ultimate fate is tragic.
10. **King Asal:** The ruler of the Land of the Golden Pillars, King Asal aids the Sons of Turenn by giving them his magical pigs when they arrive during their quest to fulfill Lugh's demands.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who were the De Danaans, and what were they known for?**
They were the descendants of the goddess Dana and were known for their beauty, godlike bearing, and love for poetry, music, and beauty.
2. **Who frequently raided the People of Dana?**
The Fomorians, savage sea-robbers from the northern mists, frequently raided them.
3. **What was the name of the Fomorian king, and what was his deadly feature?**
The Fomorian king was Balor of the Evil Eye, who had a single eye that could kill anyone it gazed upon.
4. **Who appeared in Ireland to oppose the Fomorians?**
Lugh of the Long Arm, a young warrior of the People of Dana, appeared to oppose the Fomorians.
5. **What magical items did Lugh possess?**
Lugh had the Wave-Sweeper, a magical boat, and a powerful sword called *The Answerer*.
6. **Why did Lugh attack the Fomorian tax collectors?**
Lugh was outraged that King Nuada and his nobles stood to honour the Fomorian tax collectors, but not him, and he sought to challenge their authority.

7. **What mission did the Sons of Turenn undertake?**

They undertook a quest to gather several magical items as part of a blood fine for killing Lugh's father, Kian.

8. **How did Kian die?**

Kian was killed by the Sons of Turenn after they recognised him and pursued him, even after he tried to hide by turning into a pig.

9. **What did Lugh demand as compensation for his father's death?**

Lugh demanded several difficult-to-obtain items, including three apples, a pig's skin, a spear, two horses and a chariot, seven pigs, a puppy, a cooking spit, and three shouts on a hill.

10. **What did Lugh do to complicate the Sons of Turenn's quest?**

Lugh sent a druidic spell that caused the Sons of Turenn to forget the cooking spit and the three shouts on the Hill of Midcain.

Discussion Questions

1. Lugh sets a series of seemingly impossible tasks for the Sons of Turenn as payment for their crime. Do you think Lugh's demand for the fine is motivated more by justice or vengeance? What does this say about the nature of justice in ancient Irish mythology?
2. The Sons of Turenn demonstrate great bravery and cleverness in their quests, yet their fate remains tragic. Do you think their eventual deaths were inevitable, or could they have changed their fate by acting differently? How does this reflect the theme of fate versus free will in mythological tales?
3. The concept of a blood fine is central to this story, as a form of compensation for a murder. How does the idea of a blood fine compare to modern understandings of justice and punishment? Do you think that such an act truly bring closure or redemption?
4. Throughout the story, the characters frequently employ magic, deception, and violence to achieve their goals. How do these elements affect the moral landscape of the tale? Do the ends justify the means in the context of this myth, or are the characters' actions morally wrong?
5. The eventual deaths of the Sons of Turenn, despite their success in fulfilling the fine, bring about deep sorrow and loss for their father. How does the story explore the theme of familial loyalty and the devastating consequences of revenge? How might this resonate with the values of ancient Irish society?

Midir and Etain

Summary

The chapter tells the story of Midir, a Faery prince, who falls in love with the beautiful Etain. Jealous of her beauty, Midir's first wife, Fuamnach, turns Etain into a butterfly and sends her away. Etain endures years of being buffeted by winds until she is eventually reborn as the daughter of a mortal queen. Midir, after years of searching, finds her again, though she does not remember him. Through a game of chess with the High King, Midir wins the right to kiss Etain, and, upon the appointed day, he takes her back to the land of Faery.



Midir and Etain

Character List

1. **Midir the Proud:** A faery prince who lives on Slieve Callary. He falls deeply in love with Etain, even though he is already married to Fuamnach. Midir spends years searching for Etain after she is transformed into a butterfly and taken from him.
2. **Etain:** A beautiful maiden whose beauty is legendary. She becomes Midir's second wife, which sparks Fuamnach's jealousy. Etain is transformed into a butterfly and suffers through many trials, including being blown across Ireland for years. She is later reborn as a human, becoming a queen again, unaware of her past life until Midir finds her.
3. **Fuamnach:** Midir's first wife, who becomes intensely jealous of Etain's beauty and love. She uses druidic magic to turn Etain into a butterfly and sends tempests to torment her, driving her away from Midir.
4. **Angus of the Birds:** The Irish god of love, who helps Etain after she is transformed into a butterfly. He keeps her safe for some time, giving her shelter and love, but cannot fully reverse the spell cast by Fuamnach.
5. **The High King of Ireland:** The mortal king who marries the reborn Etain, unaware of her faery past. He is tricked by Midir in a game

of chess, leading to Midir's reclamation of Etain, much to the king's dismay.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who were the people that built vast underground palaces after being defeated by the Milesians?**
The people of Dana built underground palaces in the hills and mountains.
2. **What did Fuamnach do to Etain out of jealousy?**
Fuamnach turned Etain into a butterfly with the help of a druid and sent a tempest to blow her away.
3. **Who recognised Etain in her butterfly form and tried to help her?**
Angus of the Birds, the Irish god of love, recognized Etain in her butterfly form.
4. **How was Etain reborn as a mortal after her time as a butterfly?**
She fell into the goblet of wine that the Queen of Leinster was drinking and was reborn as the Queen's daughter.
5. **What happened when Midir won a chess game against the High King?**
Midir requested a kiss from Etain as his prize, and when the time came, he took her away to the land of Faery.

Discussion Questions

1. Fuamnach's jealousy leads to Etain's suffering and transformation, yet her revenge is portrayed as ultimately futile. How does the theme of jealousy impact the characters and the course of events, and what moral lessons about envy and control might the story be conveying?
2. Etain's transformation into a butterfly, and later her reincarnation as a human, represents a cycle of change and renewal. Do the characters ever truly escape their past lives and fates?

The Children of Lir

Summary

The Children of Lir tells the tragic tale of Lir, who married two of King Bov the Red's foster daughters, first Eve, and then her sister Eva. While Eve gave Lir four beloved children, Eva grew jealous of the affection the children received and cursed them to live as swans for 900 years. The children spent centuries wandering the lakes and seas of Ireland, where their music brought comfort to those around them. Eventually, the sound of Christian bells marked the end of their enchantment, and the swans transformed back into humans, though aged and frail. Holy Kemoc baptised them before they peacefully passed away, ending their long and sorrowful journey.



The people of Dana mourn the Children of Lir.

Character List

1. **Lir:** A prominent member of the De Danaan, Lir is the father of the four children—Finola, Aed, Fiacra, and Conn. He is deeply devoted to his children and suffers immense grief after they are transformed into swans by their stepmother, Eva.
2. **Finola:** The eldest of Lir's children, Finola is a caring and protective sister. She leads her three brothers during their 900-year exile as swans and often offers them comfort through their hardships.
3. **Aed:** The second-born of Lir's children, Aed is a loving and close sibling to his sister Finola and his brothers Fiacra and Conn. He shares in their sorrowful fate but draws strength from his siblings.
4. **Fiacra:** One of Lir's twin sons, Fiacra is loyal to his family and follows his sister and brothers through the challenges of their transformation and exile.
5. **Conn:** Fiacra's twin brother and the youngest of the four siblings, Conn

experiences the same hardships as his siblings and remains under Finola's care during their long years as swans.

6. **Bov the Red:** King of the De Danaan and Lir's friend, Bov is the foster-father of Lir's first two wives. He shows great affection for Lir's children and, after discovering Eva's betrayal, transforms her into a demon of the air.
7. **Eva:** Lir's second wife and sister to his first wife, Eve. Initially caring for the children, Eva grows jealous of the love they receive from their father and others. In her jealousy, she transforms the children into swans, condemning them to centuries of exile.
8. **Holy Kemoc:** A Christian monk who cares for the children of Lir after they arrive at Inish Glora. He helps guide them spiritually during the final part of their journey and baptises them before they pass away.
9. **Largnen:** A king from Connacht who marries Decca, the princess of Munster. His actions lead to the breaking of Eva's spell, although he initially tries to take the swans from Holy Kemoc for his wife.
10. **Decca:** Princess of Munster and wife of Largnen. She desires to possess the swans and pressures her husband to retrieve them from Holy Kemoc, which ultimately leads to the breaking of the enchantment.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What happened to the People of Dana after the Milesians defeated them?**
After being defeated by the Milesians, the People of Dana retreated underground, where they built magnificent palaces and continued to live in a land of eternal beauty and summer.
2. **Why did Lir become offended and withdraw from the court of Bov the Red?**
Lir became offended because Bov the Red was chosen as king of the People of Dana, and Lir felt slighted that he was not chosen himself.
3. **Who did Lir marry first, and how many children did they have together?**
Lir first married Eve, one of Bov's foster daughters, and together they had four children: Finola, Aed, Fiacra, and Conn.
4. **What happened after the death of Lir's first wife, Eve?**
After Eve died, Lir married her younger sister, Eva, who at first loved the children but later grew jealous of the affection they received from their father and others.
5. **How did Eva curse the children of Lir, and what form did they take?**
Eva cursed the children by striking them with a druid's wand, transforming them into four white swans that would wander the lakes and seas of Ireland for 900 years.
6. **How long were the children of Lir destined to live as swans, and what would free them?**
They were destined to live as swans for 900 years, spending 300 years each on Lake Derravaragh, the Sea of Moyle, and Inish Glora. They would only be freed when a prince from the North married a princess from the South and the sound of Christian bells reached them.
7. **What was the fate of Eva after she cursed the children?**
After Lir discovered what Eva had done, Bov the Red punished her by transforming her into a demon of the air, where she would suffer for eternity.

8. How did the children of Lir regain their human forms?

The children of Lir regained their human forms when they were forcibly taken by King Larnen, and their swan feathers fell off, transforming them into aged humans.

Discussion Questions

1. What role does jealousy play in the tragic transformation of Lir's children, and how does this emotion affect both Eva's actions and the fate of those around her? How does this reflect on the destructive power of envy in relationships?
2. The Children of Lir endure 900 years of exile in the form of swans. How does the passage of time in the story relate to the theme of patience and endurance, and what might this signify about the nature of suffering and redemption in myth?
3. The transformation of Lir's children back into human form comes only at the sound of the Christian bell. What might the bell symbolise and how does it shape the moral and spiritual message of the tale?
4. Eva's transformation into a demon of the air as punishment is a common theme in folklore, where the perpetrator of a crime receives a fitting punishment. How does the nature of her punishment reflect ancient ideas of justice and retribution, and do you think her fate was deserved?
5. The Children of Lir are eventually baptised and buried together in peace. What does this final act of baptism and their peaceful death suggest about the relationship between myth and faith in Irish storytelling? How does the blending of pagan and Christian elements influence the way the story concludes?

Writing Assignment I: The Children of Lir

Genre: Literary Critique

Assignment: Write a 5-paragraph literary critique of Chapter III: 'The Children of Lir'.

In a literary critique, you give your opinion about a story or parts of a story, backing up your views with examples and evidence from the story. There are four stages of writing that you will undertake to complete this essay assignment:

Stage 1: Create an outline.

Stage 2: Write a rough draft.

Stage 3: Edit your rough draft.

Stage 4: Create a final draft.

Each stage is essential for formulating a clear, thoughtful, and compelling essay, so do not skip any steps. Your literary critique on 'The Children of Lir' will be a 5-paragraph essay. Your first paragraph will be an introduction, followed by three body paragraphs. Each body paragraph focuses on one key idea or point, which you will explain and support with evidence, examples, or analysis. Your final paragraph will be a conclusion.

In a literary critique, the body paragraphs introduce the characters and retell the story (or specific aspects of the story), while the introduction and conclusion will offer your opinion on the story.

In a 5-paragraph essay, it is usually best to write the body paragraphs first, followed by the introduction and conclusion. Before you begin any formal writing, you must complete Stage 1 of the writing process—create an outline.

Stage 1: Create an outline

An outline is a tool used to organise your ideas into a logical order. Your outline is like a map for your essay; it shows you what topics you will cover, what order you will write them in, and what points you will use to support each topic. A good outline is essential for a clear, logical essay.

The outline for your essay will look something like the example below. Each paragraph of the essay receives its own Roman numeral heading, and the numbers below the Roman numeral heading are for the examples, evidence, analysis, and supporting points you will add to each paragraph.

Remember, in a 5-paragraph essay, it is usually best to write the body paragraphs first, then the introduction and conclusion. Therefore, we will leave Sections I and V of the outline empty for now as we focus on outlining (and then writing) the three body paragraphs.

To create the outline of your body paragraphs, answer the questions in the outline below. Do not use full sentences, and keep your outline brief. You are simply organising your ideas and making a note of what points you want to cover in your writing later on. You will expand and elaborate when you write your rough draft. Recreate the outline below in your copybook, answering the prompts:

I INTRODUCTION:

- 1 We will complete this later.
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

II BODY PARAGRAPH 1: Characters and Setting

- 1 State when and where the story occurs.
- 2 Note of any important details of the setting.
- 3 Name and describe the important characters. What are they like?.
- 4 Note of physical descriptions and of their personalities or attitudes.

Use this template for your outline adding additional lines as needed:

- I. _____
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

- II. _____
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

- III. _____
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

- IV. _____
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

- V. _____
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

III BODY PARAGRAPH 2: *Conflict or Problem*

- 1 Tell what the main characters want or need or what challenges they face. Is there a conflict in the story?
- 2 Tell what the main characters do, say, and think in the face of the conflict.
- 3 Tell how the main characters feel and what happens to them as they face the conflict.

IV BODY PARAGRAPH 3: *Climax and Resolution*

- 1 Explain the climax. (The climax reveals how the conflict will or will not work out.)
- 2 Explain the resolution. (The resolution is the outcome for the main characters at the end of the story.)

V CONCLUSION:

- 1 We will complete this later.
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

You are now ready to begin writing your rough draft. A rough draft is the first version of your essay. It is written in full sentences and with all the points and evidence you want to include. Each paragraph should begin with the focus of the paragraph. Each paragraph must have a minimum of 5 strong sentences. Your rough draft will undergo edits and revisions later, so your final product (the final draft) is a polished work. Your rough draft should be written, not typed. Use your outline as a guide to write your body paragraphs. Note: The title of a short story or chapter should be put in quotation marks.

Introduction

Now that you have written your three body paragraphs, it is time to write the introduction and conclusion. The introduction should capture the readers' attention and make them want to keep reading. The first sentence of the introduction is called the 'hook' or 'attention grabber'. You will come up with a sentence that grabs the reader's attention, such as an intriguing fact or an interesting event from the story. After the hook, you will give some background on the story. You must introduce the story, giving the title and explaining how it is part of the tradition of Irish legends. Mention its importance in the Irish tradition/culture, and/or how it relates to other legends or history. Go back to your essay outline and fill in the section left blank for the introduction, following the prompts in the right margin.

Conclusion

The conclusion is where you express whether you liked the story or not, explaining your reasons. This paragraph should clearly state your opinion, which is the purpose of a literary critique. In a literary critique, the conclusion is the most important paragraph and is often the longest. It should transition smoothly from the third body paragraph. You will begin your conclusion by stating your overall impression of the story, using strong and specific adjectives. Do not use personal pronouns (I, my, we, us, you). Make statements. For example, say: 'The Children of Lir' is a thought-provoking tale. Do not say: I think that 'The Children of Lir' is a

EXAMPLE ROUGH OUTLINE FOR YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS:

The first body paragraph may begin: *'The Children of Lir' is set in...*

The second body paragraph may begin: *The conflict of the story is...*

The third body paragraph may begin: *The climax occurs...*

I INTRODUCTION: Write your idea for a 'hook.'

- 1 Background: The title of the story.
- 2 Explain how it is part of the tradition of Irish legends
- 3 Importance in the Irish tradition/culture.
- 4 How it relates to other legends/Irish history

V CONCLUSION: State your opinion

- 1 Explain why you hold that opinion. Use specific examples from the story.
- 2 Use the prompts listed above to guide you
- 3 Use the prompts listed above to guide you
- 4 State the message/moral
- 5 State the affect the message/moral has on the reader
- 6 Idea for the final sentence

good story. After stating your opinion, you will tell the reader why you hold that opinion, using evidence from the story. The following are some prompts and questions which may help you formulate your opinion.

Give your overall impression of the story.

Describe the writing style.

Was the story dramatic/action-filled/violent/romantic?

Describe how characters were developed in the story.

What made the story exciting/boring?

What values did the story emphasise?

Was the story predictable/suspenseful? Why?

Did you like the ending? Why?

After thoroughly explaining the 'why' behind your opinion on the story, tell the reader if there is a moral or message in the story, and discuss what effect that message has on the reader. Finally, you will end your conclusion with a final sentence that makes your essay sound complete. You may offer a final thought for the reader to continue pondering. Complete your outline by adding section V for the conclusion, following the prompts in the right margin.

Now that you have outlined the introduction and conclusion, write your introduction and conclusion in paragraph form. It is fine if your introduction and conclusion are on a different page than the body paragraphs since this is only your rough draft. Clearly label your introduction and conclusion so that you know where to locate them when you begin the editing process. Remember to skip a line as you write so that an editor has room to make corrections.

Stage 3: Edit your Rough Draft

Now that you have completed your outline, follow the guidelines for editing your rough draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 77.

Stage 4: Write a Final Draft

Now that you have completed editing your rough draft, follow the guidelines for creating your final draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 74.

Sample Essay I: *The Children of Lir*

A Literary Critique of 'The Children of Lir.'

The story of 'The Children of Lir' is a cornerstone of Irish mythology, encapsulating themes of transformation, familial love, and resilience. As one of the 'Three Great Sorrows of Irish Storytelling,' this legend occupies a significant place in Ireland's oral and literary traditions. Its origins trace back to the medieval period, connecting to the Tuatha Dé Danann—a mythical race of deities and heroes. The tale mirrors cultural values, such as loyalty and endurance, while also resonating with other myths of exile and transformation, such as those in classical and Norse mythology. The enduring power of this story lies in its poignant portrayal of suffering and redemption, reflecting broader Irish cultural and historical narratives.

INTRODUCTION

The Children of Lir unfolds in a mystical and timeless Ireland, blending the mortal and supernatural realms. The narrative begins in the idyllic palace of Shee Finnehy, where Lir's family resides in harmony. The key characters are Lir, a devoted father; his children—Finola, Aed, Fiacra, and Conn—who are renowned for their beauty and grace; and Eva, the jealous stepmother whose envy initiates their tragic fate. The contrast between Shee Finnehy's tranquility and the harsh, desolate landscapes of the Sea of Moyle underscores the transformative arc of the story. These vivid settings heighten the emotional resonance of the characters' struggles and sacrifices.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1: *Setting and Characters*

The central conflict arises from Eva's jealousy of Lir's love for his children, leading her to transform them into swans with a druid's spell. This act of treachery isolates the children, forcing them into a prolonged exile across three distinct locations. Their suffering is compounded by the natural challenges of their environments, including storms and solitude. Despite this, they retain their human consciousness and create solace through their melodious singing. The tension between Eva's malevolence and the children's resilience encapsulates the struggle between good and evil, illustrating the enduring power of love and courage in the face of adversity.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2: *Conflict and Problem*

The climax occurs when the children, after nearly a thousand years of exile, encounter Saint Kemoc, who provides them with solace and hope. When a forceful attempt by Queen Decca to claim the swans breaks Eva's spell, the siblings revert to their human forms—frail and aged from their prolonged suffering. They request baptism and a shared grave, symbolising their unbroken familial bond. This resolution, though tragic, offers redemption and peace. The juxtaposition of their physical decline with their spiritual liberation emphasises the transcendent nature of forgiveness and faith.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3: *Climax and Resolution*

'The Children of Lir' is a profound exploration of human resilience and spiritual transcendence. Through its lyrical narrative, the story reveals the power of familial love and the redemptive power of faith. The enchanting yet sorrowful tale underscores the inevitability of suffering and the hope for ultimate redemption through faith in God. The moral; that love and redemption endure beyond physical suffering; challenges readers to reflect on their own experiences. This timeless legend not only enriches Ireland's cultural heritage but also inspires a universal audience with its poignant message of endurance and love.

CONCLUSION

In the Time of Cuchullin

How Conor Mac Nessa Became King of Ulster

Summary

This chapter narrates how Conor Mac Nessa became King of Ulster through his mother Nessa's clever political maneuvering. Fergus Mac Roy allowed Conor to rule for one year, and with Nessa's guidance, Conor earned the support of the nobles and people, securing his place as king. The story highlights themes of wisdom, influence, and political strategy.

Character List

1. **Conor Mac Nessa:** The son of Nessa, who became the King of Ulster through a clever political maneuver, and led Ulster during its time of strength and prominence.
2. **Nessa:** Conor's mother, who was instrumental in his rise to power, guiding him to maintain the throne with wisdom and generosity.
3. **Fergus Mac Roy:** The former King of Ulster who was outmaneuvered by Nessa and Conor, allowing Conor to take over as king after Fergus ruled for one year.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who was Conor Mac Nessa, and what was his significance in Ulster's history?**
Conor Mac Nessa was the King of Ulster during its time of great power, associated with the famous champion Cuchullin and the Red Branch Knights, whose deeds made Ulster both powerful and feared.
2. **How did Conor become the King of Ulster, despite initially not being the heir?**
Conor became King of Ulster when Fergus Mac Roy, who had become king after Conor's father, agreed to let Conor reign for one year to please Conor's mother, Nessa, who wished for her son to have the title of king for her descendants' sake.
3. **What role did Nessa play in helping Conor maintain the throne?**
Nessa guided and instructed Conor during his reign, helping him make wise decisions, manage the kingdom, and distribute wealth generously, which made him popular with the nobles and people, leading them to support him as king even after Fergus' year was over.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Nessa's guidance influence Conor's rule, and how does this reflect the power dynamics between male rulers and their female advisors in Irish mythology?

2. Fergus willingly ceded power to Conor for one year, only to lose the throne permanently. What does this suggest about the balance of power and trust in leadership?

The Cattle Raid of Cooley

The Pillow Talk

Summary

This chapter sets the scene for one of the epic sagas in Irish mythology, the Cattle Raid of Cooley (or the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*). The chapter details Queen Maeve's quest to obtain the Brown Bull of Cooley from Ulster, setting off a great war. Initially, Maeve tries to negotiate for the bull, but after being insulted, she launches an invasion. The tale explores the themes of greed, pride, and the devastating consequences of ambition.



Queen Maeve.

Character List

1. **Queen Maeve:** The Queen of Connacht, ambitious and determined to have the Brown Bull of Cooley to match her husband's wealth.
2. **Ailell:** Maeve's husband, the King of Connacht, who owned the famous white-horned bull.
3. **Mac Roth:** The Herald of Queen Maeve, sent to negotiate with Daire Mac Fiachniu for the loan of the Brown Bull.
4. **Daire Mac Fiachniu:** The owner of the Brown Bull of Cooley in Ulster, who refuses to lend the bull to Queen Maeve after being insulted.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did Queen Maeve desire the Brown Bull of Cooley?**
Queen Maeve wanted the Brown Bull of Cooley because her husband, Ailell, had a famous white-horned bull, and Maeve lacked an equal to match it, making her feel that her property was less valuable than his.
2. **Who did Maeve send to ask for the loan of the Brown Bull, and what was the response?**
Maeve sent Mac Roth, the Herald, to ask Daire Mac Fiachniu of Ulster for the loan of the Brown Bull. Initially, Daire agreed to lend the bull, but after one of Maeve's servants boasted that they would have taken it by force if refused, Daire angrily retracted his offer.

3. **What was Maeve's reaction when she learned that Daire refused to lend the Brown Bull?**

Maeve was not concerned by Daire's refusal and decided that if the bull was not given willingly, it would be taken by force. She immediately began preparing for war.

4. **What were the omens and prophecies about the upcoming war?**

The omens and prophecies foretold much bloodshed and doom. Many seers predicted a tragic outcome for both sides.

Discussion Questions

1. Queen Maeve's ambition to possess the Brown Bull of Cooley sets off a chain of events leading to war. How does Maeve's desire for the bull reflect broader themes of power and material wealth in ancient Irish society?
2. What role do omens and prophecies play in the Cattle Raid of Cooley? Could the characters have avoided the war, or were they bound by fate?

Cuchullin Keeps the Gap of the North

Summary

Fergus Mac Roy, though leading Maeve's army into Ulster, delays their progress to protect his homeland. Maeve becomes suspicious and confronts him, but Fergus refuses to continue guiding the army against Ulster. Meanwhile, Cuchullin uses his guerrilla tactics to harass the invading forces, killing scouts and terrifying the troops with his sling. Fergus describes Cuchullin's extraordinary strength and prowess in battle, recounting his early deeds and explaining why he is known as the 'Hound of Culann.' Maeve realises that Cuchullin alone is causing significant trouble for her forces, despite his young age and relative inexperience compared to her larger army.



Cuchullin in battle.

Character List

1. **Cuchullin:** A young, fearless warrior from Ulster known for his incredible strength, skill in battle, and cunning. He is described as capable of taking on many warriors by himself and is feared by Maeve's army.
2. **Fergus Mac Roy:** A former king of Ulster and a loyal friend to Cuchullin. Though he is guiding Maeve's army, he secretly supports Ulster and deliberately misleads the invading force.
3. **Maeve:** The Queen of Connacht, leading an army to invade Ulster. She is determined to press on despite Fergus's delays and is both strategic and forceful in her leadership.
4. **Ailell:** Maeve's husband and King of Connacht, who accompanies Maeve and their army on the campaign against Ulster. He is present in discussions with Fergus about Cuchullin's strength.
5. **Conor Mac Nessa:** The King of Ulster and a key figure in the conflict. Though not directly involved in this section, he represents the leadership of the province under threat from Maeve's invasion.



The young Setanta, later called Cuchullin.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did Fergus mislead Maeve's army on their way to Ulster?**
Fergus misled Maeve's army because he was loyal to Ulster and wanted to delay the invasion. He secretly sent messages to Ulster chiefs, warning them about Maeve's intentions.
2. **What did Maeve do when she realised Fergus was not guiding her army directly into Ulster?**
Maeve confronted Fergus about not leading her army by the shortest route. He refused to guide the army any further, stating that he would not lead them against his own province.
3. **How did Cuchullin harass Maeve's army as they marched towards Ulster?**
Cuchullin used guerrilla tactics, picking off Maeve's men in small numbers, killing their scouts, and terrifying the army with the sound of his sling, which kept them awake at night.
4. **How did Fergus describe Cuchullin to Maeve and her captains?**
Fergus described Cuchullin as an extraordinary warrior, strong enough to take on an entire army by himself. He recounted Cuchullin's early feats of strength, including slaying enemies as a young boy.
5. **Why was Cuchullin called the "Hound of Culann"?**
Cuchullin was given the name after he killed a fierce hound that belonged to the smith Culann. In compensation, Cuchullin promised to guard Culann's home until a replacement hound was found.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Fergus's decision to mislead Maeve's army suggest about loyalty and honour in times of war? Can someone serve two masters without betraying one?
2. The story of Cuchullin as a young boy shows him performing heroic feats from an early age. How does the concept of destiny and early signs of greatness shape Cuchullin's role as a hero in Irish mythology?
3. Maeve is portrayed as a strong, determined leader. How does her leadership compare to that of Conor Mac Nessa or Cuchullin?

*Cuchullin Parleys with Maeve**Summary*

In this section of the Cattle Raid of Cooley, Cuchullin continues to fight against the forces of Queen Maeve, holding off her advancing army through single combat with her champions. Maeve initially agrees to send one warrior at a time, but as her champions fall quickly to Cuchullin's skill, she grows impatient and sends a hundred warriors to fight him at once. Despite being outnumbered, Cuchullin continues to slay his enemies, piling up their bodies at a ford now known as Ath Cro. Exhausted but undeterred, Cuchullin takes brief moments of rest by standing with his spear, watching the vast enemy encampment with anger and determination.

Character List

1. **Cuchullin:** The young, fearless warrior of Ulster who single-handedly holds off Maeve's advancing army by engaging in deadly single combat and fighting against overwhelming odds.
2. **Maeve:** The Queen of Connacht, leading her army in a raid against Ulster. She is determined to break through Cuchullin's defences and uses various strategies to advance her forces.
3. **Fergus Mac Roy:** A former king of Ulster who is now aligned with Maeve. He acts as an intermediary, carrying terms and messages between Cuchullin and Maeve.
4. **Laegh:** Cuchullin's charioteer, who assists him during the campaign by tending to his needs and helping him rest whenever possible during the long and exhausting battle.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did Maeve decide to send individual champions to fight Cuchullin?**
Maeve sent individual champions to fight Cuchullin because she believed it was better for one man to die each day rather than risking the loss of many soldiers at once. She wanted to slow her army's progress as little as possible.
2. **How did Cuchullin manage to keep Maeve's army at bay?**
Cuchullin managed to keep Maeve's army at bay by engaging in single combat with her champions and defeating them one by one. He eventually fought multiple warriors at a time, leaving their bodies piled up at a ford, which later became known as Ath Cro, or the Ford of the Slaughter.
3. **What did Maeve do when she realised her champions were being killed too quickly by Cuchullin?**
Maeve broke the agreement of single combat and sent a hundred warriors to attack Cuchullin all at once, hoping to overwhelm him and advance her army more swiftly.
4. **How did Cuchullin rest during the campaign against Maeve's forces?**
Cuchullin rested only briefly during the campaign, often standing with his head leaning against his spear for support. He had not slept properly for three months since the raid began, relying on short naps while remaining alert.
5. **What did Cuchullin feel when he saw the vast number of Maeve's warriors camped across the plains of Ulster?**
Cuchullin was seized with sudden anger when he saw the large number of Maeve's soldiers and their weapons gleaming in the campfires across the plains, realising the enormity of the forces against him.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Cuchullin's willingness to fight alone against overwhelming odds say about the values of heroism and duty in Irish mythology? How does this contrast with Maeve's more strategic approach to warfare?
2. Maeve's decision to break the agreement of single combat and send a hundred warriors against Cuchullin reflects a shift in her strategy. Do you think this decision was justified, considering her goal of advancing her army? Why or why not?
3. The story presents a stark contrast between Cuchullin's physical endurance and the psychological strain he experiences. What might this suggest about the cost of being a hero in mythological narratives, where victory often comes with personal sacrifice?

The Fight with Ferdia

Summary

The story recounts the tragic battle between Cuchullin and his former close friend, Ferdia. Though they had once been inseparable companions, circumstances force them into a deadly confrontation. Ferdia is reluctant to fight Cuchullin but is eventually coerced by Queen Maeve's manipulation. Over the course of several days, the two warriors engage in fierce combat, matching each other's skill and strength. Despite their mutual respect and shared history, the fight concludes with Cuchullin fatally wounding Ferdia using the Gae Bulga. Heartbroken, Cuchullin mourns the loss of his friend, carrying Ferdia's body to rest on his side of the ford.



Cuchullin carries Ferdia across the ford.

Character List

1. **Cuchullin:** A hero and warrior of Ulster, known for his strength, courage, and skill in battle. Despite his love for Ferdia, Cuchullin is forced to fight him, eventually winning the tragic duel.
2. **Ferdia:** A warrior of Connacht and former close friend of Cuchullin. Though initially hesitant to fight his friend, Ferdia is persuaded by Queen Maeve and engages in a fierce battle with Cuchullin, where he ultimately loses his life.
3. **Queen Maeve:** The Queen of Connacht, determined to defeat Ulster and push her army forward. She manipulates Ferdia into fighting Cuchullin by using public shame and mockery.
4. **Laegh:** Cuchullin's loyal charioteer who assists him during the battle. He helps provide Cuchullin with the Gae Bulga, the weapon that ultimately kills Ferdia.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who was Ferdia, and what was his relationship with Cuchullin?**
Ferdia was a champion warrior from Connacht and a former close friend of Cuchullin. They had trained together under the warrior woman Scathach and shared many adventures before becoming opponents.
2. **Why did Ferdia initially avoid fighting against Cuchullin?**
Ferdia avoided fighting Cuchullin because he respected their long-standing friendship and did not want to face his former comrade in battle.
3. **How did Maeve convince Ferdia to fight Cuchullin?**
Maeve convinced Ferdia to fight Cuchullin by sending poets and druids to mock and disgrace him in front of the army, using public shame to pressure him into combat.
4. **How did the first day of combat between Ferdia and Cuchullin end?**
The first day of combat ended in a stalemate, with neither warrior gaining the upper hand. They fought fiercely but agreed to stop the battle for the night without either being wounded.
5. **How did the fight between Ferdia and Cuchullin ultimately end?**
The fight ended when Cuchullin, gravely wounded by Ferdia, used his deadly spear, the Gae Bulga, to fatally strike Ferdia. Overcome with grief, Cuchullin carried Ferdia's body across the ford and lamented his fallen friend.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the theme of loyalty and friendship conflict with duty and honour in the battle between Cuchullin and Ferdia? Could their tragic confrontation have been avoided?
2. Ferdia's reluctance to fight Cuchullin suggests a deep inner conflict. Do you think Ferdia was more motivated by external pressure from Maeve or by his own pride? How might his fate have changed if he had refused the duel?
3. The use of the Gae Bulga to kill Ferdia represents a turning point in the battle. What does this unique weapon symbolise, and how does its use reflect the desperation or finality of the conflict between the two warriors?
4. Cuchullin's grief over Ferdia's death highlights the emotional toll of the battle. How does this scene explore the human cost of warfare, especially when it pits former friends and comrades against each other?

Ulster Awake

Summary

In this part of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, Cuchullin, gravely wounded from his battle with Ferdia, can no longer hold off Queen Maeve's army. He sends his father, Sualtach, to summon King Conor and the Ulster warriors. However, Sualtach dies in a freak accident, though his severed head continues to cry out warnings, rousing the men of Ulster. The warriors awaken and prepare for battle, as Mac Roth, Maeve's herald, describes the approaching Ulster army in vivid, symbolic imagery. The stage is set for a great confrontation between the armies of Ulster and Erin.

Character List

1. **Cuchullin:** The heroic warrior of Ulster, who has been holding off Maeve's army single-handedly but is now gravely wounded and unable to continue without help from his fellow Ulstermen.
2. **Sualtach:** Cuchullin's father, who is sent to summon King Conor and the Ulster warriors. Despite his accidental death, his severed head continues to warn Ulster of the impending invasion.
3. **King Conor:** The King of Ulster, who is finally awakened after a long sleep caused by a curse. He rallies the Ulster warriors to prepare for battle against Queen Maeve's army.
4. **Queen Maeve:** The Queen of Connacht, leading an invasion of Ulster with her army. She is determined to conquer and uses every strategy at her disposal to defeat the Ulstermen.
5. **Mac Roth:** Queen Maeve's herald, who observes and reports on the movements of the Ulster army, describing their appearance in poetic and symbolic terms.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did Cuchullin send his father, Sualtach, to King Conor?**
Cuchullin sent his father to King Conor to summon the warriors of Ulster, as Cuchullin was too wounded and exhausted to continue defending Ulster alone against the army of Queen Maeve.
2. **What happened to Sualtach when he tried to warn the men of Ulster?**
Sualtach accidentally pulled the reins of his horse too roughly, causing it to rear up and throw him forward. His head struck against a shield, cutting it off cleanly from his body.
3. **How did the head of Sualtach continue to give the warning?**
Even after Sualtach's death, his severed head continued to cry out warnings about the invasion, urging the men of Ulster to rise and defend their lands from the army of Erin.
4. **What was the reaction of the Ulstermen when they finally woke up?**
When the Ulstermen finally awoke, they armed themselves immediately, even breaking out of their tents through the sides, and prepared to fight against the Men of Erin.
5. **How did Mac Roth describe the appearance of the Ulster army?**
Mac Roth described the Ulster army as a great mist and tumult, likening the warriors to horses breathing heavily, birds in the mist, and snowflakes, all representing the fierce energy and speed of the Ulster forces advancing toward battle.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the continuous warning from Sualtach's severed head reflect the theme of fate and destiny in Irish mythology? What role does the supernatural play in motivating the actions of the Ulster warriors?
2. Cuchullin's exhaustion and injuries illustrate the limits of even the greatest hero. How does this scene challenge the traditional image of the invincible warrior in mythology? What does it suggest about the need for collective effort in battle?
3. Queen Maeve's relentless determination to conquer Ulster contrasts with Cuchullin's solitary heroism. How does the story explore the different types of leadership and strategy through Maeve and Cuchullin? Which approach do you think is portrayed more favourably?

The Battle of the Bulls

Summary

The battle between the Brown Bull of Cooley and the White-Horned Bull of Ailell is the climactic event of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. After being driven into Connacht for safety, the Brown Bull lets out a powerful bellow, which angers the White-Horned Bull, leading to a fierce confrontation. The two bulls charge at each other, goring and butting violently. After a prolonged and brutal battle, the Brown Bull of Cooley kills the White-Horned Bull, claiming victory. The Men of Erin are warned by Fergus to let the Brown Bull return home peacefully. However, after a journey across Ireland, scattering the remains of the White-Horned Bull along the way, the Brown Bull collapses and dies from exhaustion.

Character List

1. **Brown Bull of Cooley:** A powerful and revered bull from Ulster, whose bellow and presence provoke a fierce battle with the White-Horned Bull of Connacht. He ultimately wins the fight but dies from exhaustion after returning to Ulster.
2. **White-Horned Bull of Ailell:** Ailell's prized bull from Connacht, who becomes enraged by the challenge from the Brown Bull of Cooley. Despite his strength, he is defeated in the violent battle.
3. **Briciu:** A notorious figure known for instigating conflict, Briciu is called upon to act as the judge during the battle of the bulls. He enjoys creating strife between others.
4. **Fergus Mac Roy:** A former king of Ulster who witnesses the battle and, after the Brown Bull's victory, urges the Men of Erin to leave the bull alone and let him return to his land without interference.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What caused the Brown Bull of Cooley to bellow loudly as he crossed into Connacht?**
The Brown Bull of Cooley bellowed loudly, either out of joy at the beauty of the land or excitement at the unfamiliar territory, as he crossed into Connacht at dawn.
2. **What was the White-Horned Bull of Ailell's reaction to hearing the Brown Bull's bellow?**
The White-Horned Bull of Ailell became agitated and angry, tearing up the sod beneath him and running off to challenge the Brown Bull of Cooley.

3. **Who was called to judge the battle between the two bulls?**

Briciu, known for creating strife and quarrels, was called to be the judge of the battle between the two bulls.

4. **How did the battle between the Brown Bull of Cooley and the White-Horned Bull of Ailell end?**

The battle ended with the Brown Bull of Cooley defeating the White-Horned Bull by goring and killing him, after which the Brown Bull returned to Ulster but died shortly after from exhaustion.

Discussion Questions

1. The violent battle between the two bulls symbolises the larger conflict between Ulster and Connacht. How do these two animals represent their respective provinces, and what might their deaths suggest about the nature of war and conflict in the epic?
2. The Brown Bull of Cooley, though victorious, dies from exhaustion shortly after the battle. How does the bull's death reflect the consequences of power and victory, and what might it suggest about the toll of triumph in mythological narratives?

Writing Assignment II: The Cattle Raid of Cooley

Genre: Character Analysis

Assignment: Write a 4-paragraph character analysis of Cuchullin based on Chapter II: 'The Cattle Raid of Cooley'. In a character analysis, you will analyse and critique one aspect of the character Cuchullin.

In a character analysis, you will make a statement about a quality, motive, effect, change, or lesson regarding the character. You will follow the 4 stages of writing:

Stage 1: Create an outline.

Stage 2: Write a rough draft.

Stage 3: Edit your rough draft.

Stage 4: Write a final draft.

Your essay will consist of 4 paragraphs with the following structure:

Paragraph 1: Introduction

Paragraph 2: Story Summary

Paragraph 3: Character Analysis

Paragraph 4: Conclusion

Stage 1: Create an Outline

How to Analyse a Character

Before outlining, we must discuss the basics of how to analyse a character. First you will choose your **topic** by looking at the character of Cuchullin and making a statement about a quality, motive, effect, change, or something he learned. Then you will make a **restriction**, which is a statement or claim about your topic, focusing the paragraph. The topic and restriction can be covered in one sentence. Next you will **illustrate** your restriction with an example from the story, using a quote from the book. You must then give an **analysis**, or explanation, of your illustration. Finally, you will write the **clincher**, which repeats or reflects 2-3 key words from your topic.

Below is an example of a character analysis of Edmund from the book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. The topic, restriction, illustration, analysis, and clincher are noted in bold square brackets. You will follow this model for the third section/paragraph of your outline and rough draft.

In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Edmund [Topic] demonstrates significant personal growth as [Restriction] he moves from selfishness to redemption. [Illustration] At the start, Edmund's selfishness is evident when he betrays his siblings for the promise of Turkish Delight and power from the White Witch. Lucy warns Edmund about the Witch, but he 'still wanted to taste that Turkish Delight again more than he wanted anything else' (p. 32). Edmund then willingly lies to Lucy about Narnia and later, he sneaks off to the Witch's castle, driven by his desire to gain favour and authority.

[Analysis] This behaviour illustrates his desire for personal gain, even at the expense of his family's safety. However, after being rescued by Aslan and witnessing the consequences of his actions, Edmund shows remorse and becomes a braver, more selfless individual. He proves his change of heart by fighting alongside his siblings to defeat the Witch. [Clincher] This transformation shows that Edmund learned the value of loyalty and sacrifice, changing from a selfish traitor to a noble hero.

Stage 1: Create an Outline

Since this essay has 4 paragraphs, the outline will have only 4 Roman numeral sections. You can look back at Essay 1: 'The Children of Lir' to remind yourself what an outline looks like. Since we are beginning with the body paragraphs, leave section I and IV of your outline blank for now.

To create the outline of your body paragraphs, answer the questions in the outline in the right margin. Do not use full sentences and keep your outline brief. Remember, you are not writing your essay right now. You are simply organising your ideas and making a note of what points you want to cover in your writing later on. You will expand and elaborate when you write your rough draft. (You may need to use more or less lines than this example shows. You may need multiple lines to answer the prompts.)

Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

You are now ready to begin writing your rough draft. Remember, a rough draft is the first version of your essay. It is written in full sentences and with all the points and evidence you want to include. Each paragraph must have a minimum of 5 strong sentences. Your rough draft will undergo edits and revisions later, so that your final product (the final draft) is a beautiful and polished work. Your rough draft should be written, not typed.

A note on quotes from the book: In your second body paragraph, you are required to find a quote from the book which shows an example of your topic. Be sure to put your quote in quotation marks. You must also cite the page number of the quote in brackets, outside the quotation marks. Finally, the full stop should go after the page citation. For example:

'Ferdia resolved to take no part in such an unfair fight' (p. 67).

Notice the quotation marks, the page citation in brackets, and the full stop after the page citation. It is also very important to introduce your quote. A sentence should not begin with a quotation. There should be something to lead into it. You can introduce your quote with a simple phrase such as the following:

In Chapter IV, 'Ferdia resolved to take no part in such an unfair fight' (p. 67).

or:

Maeve tricked Ferdia saying, 'He said that you are not wise to go against him in single combat' (p. 70).

Note that in most situations, you place a comma before the quote. Sometimes a colon is appropriate.

Using your outline as a guide, write body paragraph 1 and body paragraph 2 in your copybook. Skip a line as you write so that an editor has room to write in corrections later.

Introduction and Conclusion

Now that you have written your two body paragraphs, it is time to write the introduction and conclusion.

The introduction should capture the readers' attention and make them want to keep reading. The first sentence of the introduction is called the 'hook' or 'attention grabber'. You will come up with a sentence that grabs the reader's attention, such as an intriguing fact or an interesting event

I INTRODUCTION.

1 To be completed later.

2 _____

3 _____

II BODY PARAGRAPH 1:

Story Summary. (Only summarise the chapter which is relevant to the part of Cuchullin's character you are analysing.)

1 State when and where the story occurs (setting).

2 Name and describe the important characters. What are they like?

3 Tell what the main characters want or need, or tell what challenges the main characters face.

4 Tell what the main characters do, say, and think to solve the problem and how they feel while solving the problem.

5 Explain the climax. (The climax is the event reveals how the conflict will work out or not work out.)

6 Explain the resolution. (The resolution is what the outcome is for the main characters at the end of the story.)

III BODY PARAGRAPH 2:

Character Analysis

1 Topic: (Statement about a quality, motive, change, effect, or something Cuchullin learned).

2 Restriction: (Make a statement about the topic).

3 Illustration: (Find a quote from the book which shows an example of the topic and restriction. Write down the page number.)

4 Analysis: (Explain the illustration).

5 Clincher: (Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic and restriction)

IV CONCLUSION

(To be completed later).

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

from the story. After the hook, you will give some background on the story. You must introduce the story, giving the title and explaining how it is part of the tradition of Irish legends. Mention its importance in the Irish tradition/culture, and/or how it relates to other legends or history. Finally, since your essay is a character analysis, you should end the introduction with a sentence that reflects the clincher of body paragraph 2. Make sure that the final sentence still flows from the rest of the introduction. You may need additional sentences to do so.

Go back to your essay outline and fill in the section left blank for the introduction, following the prompts in the right margin.

The conclusion is where you will restate the topic and offer your personal opinion on the character. First you will restate the topic and explain its importance. Then you will give your personal opinion on the topic. Use this as a way to make a personal connection with the story. You may want to use one of the following phrases:

Cuchullin demonstrates...

Cuchullin's character teaches...

Cuchullin reminds one of...

Cuchullin's character challenges the reader...

Cuchullin's character causes the audience to think...

You should then state what is significant, moving, or important about the character and explain why. Finally, end with a sentence that makes the paper sound complete. An example conclusion from a character analysis of Edmund from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is given below. The elements of the conclusion are indicated in bold, square brackets.

[Restate topic] Edmund's character demonstrates the power of personal growth and the possibility of redemption, which is an important theme in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. **[Personal feeling]** Edmund's journey from selfishness to selflessness shows that even those who make serious mistakes can change and become better people. His character teaches the audience about the importance of owning up to one's mistakes and making amends, which is a valuable lesson for anyone facing difficult choices. **[Significance / why?]** Edmund's transformation is significant because it shows that growth is possible when one is willing to face their flaws and seek forgiveness. **[Final sentence]** This lesson, though simple, is deeply moving as it inspires hope and reminds readers of the importance of second chances.

Complete your outline by adding section V for the conclusion, following the prompts.

Stage 3: Edit your Rough Draft

Now that you have completed your outline, follow the guidelines for editing your rough draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 77.

Stage 4: Write a Final Draft

Now that you have completed editing your rough draft, follow the guidelines for creating your final draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 74.

I INTRODUCTION

- 1 Background: Title.
- 2 Explain how it is part of the tradition of Irish legends.
- 3 Importance in the Irish tradition/culture.
- 4 How it relates to other legends/Irish history.
- 5 Introduce the topic of your character analysis.

V CONCLUSION

- 1 Conclusion: Restate topic.
- 2 Explain the topic's importance.
- 3 Personal feelings on the topic.
- 4 What is most significant from the story/character and why?
- 5 Idea for the final sentence.

Sample Essay II: The Cattle Raid of Cooley

Character Analysis of Cuchullin in 'The Cattle Raid of Cooley'

The story of 'The Cattle Raid of Cooley' is a cornerstone of Irish mythology, showcasing the heroic feats and internal struggles of Cuchullin, the legendary warrior of the Ulster Cycle. As a key figure in Irish folklore, Cuchullin embodies the ideals of bravery, loyalty, and sacrifice. This tale not only reflects the cultural values of ancient Ireland but also draws parallels to other heroic epics across cultures, emphasising the timeless nature of his character. This analysis focuses on one remarkable aspect of Cuchullin's character—his unwavering sense of honour, even when faced with immense personal loss.

INTRODUCTION

'The Cattle Raid of Cooley' centers around the tragic and intense confrontation between Cuchullin and his childhood friend, Ferdia. Both warriors were trained under Scathach, the renowned warrior-woman, and shared a bond of deep friendship. However, the conflict between Ulster and Connacht, orchestrated by Queen Maeve, pits them against each other. Queen Maeve manipulates Ferdia into facing Cuchullin, despite his reluctance. Their battle spans several days, filled with immense skill and ferocity, culminating in Cuchullin's reluctant but necessary use of the Gae Bolga to defeat Ferdia. The chapter showcases themes of loyalty, betrayal, and the devastating cost of war.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1:
Story Summary

Cuchullin's unwavering honour is a defining trait that permeates his confrontation with Ferdia. Despite their opposing roles in the war, Cuchullin expresses profound sorrow at the thought of battling his dearest friend. He laments, 'It is not such an encounter as I would wish with my friend; not out of fear but out of love and affection for him' (p. 71). This internal conflict highlights his struggle between duty to his people and personal loyalty to Ferdia. Even after emerging victorious, Cuchullin mourns Ferdia's death deeply, carrying his body across the ford and lamenting in a poignant elegy. This illustrates his deep sense of respect, love, and the emotional toll of his sense of duty.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2:
Character Analysis

'The Cattle Raid of Cooley' portrays Cuchullin as a hero of immense strength and profound humanity. His unwavering honour in fulfilling his duty, even at the cost of personal anguish, underscores the themes of sacrifice and loyalty that resonate deeply in Irish mythology. Personally, Cuchullin's story inspires admiration and empathy, as it reflects the heavy burden of heroism. The tale of Cuchullin and Ferdia serves as a timeless reminder that true heroism encompasses not only physical might but also emotional resilience and moral integrity. This enduring legend continues to captivate audiences with its poignant exploration of honour, love, and sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

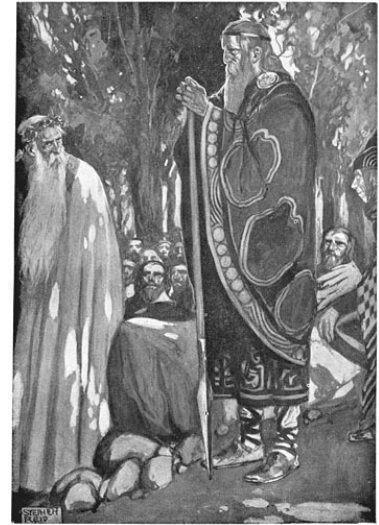
The Fate of the Sons of Usnach

Summary

The chapter tells the tragic tale of Deirdre and the Sons of Usnach. Cathbad, the druid, prophesies that Deirdre's beauty will bring ruin to Ulster. King Conor raises her in secret, intending to make her his wife. However, Deirdre falls in love with Naisi, one of the Sons of Usnach, and they flee to Scotland to escape Conor's wrath. King Conor sends Fergus to bring them back under the guise of safety, but he betrays them, leading to their tragic downfall.

Character List

1. **Deirdre:** A woman of great beauty, whose life is marked by tragedy. Her beauty is prophesied to bring ruin to Ulster, and she falls in love with Naisi, one of the Sons of Usnach.
2. **Naisi:** One of the Sons of Usnach, he falls in love with Deirdre and flees with her to escape King Conor's wrath. He is a brave warrior, devoted to Deirdre.
3. **King Conor:** The King of Ulster who, upon hearing the prophecy of Deirdre's beauty, raises her in secret with the intent to marry her. His jealousy leads to betrayal and the eventual death of the Sons of Usnach.
4. **Cathbad:** A druid who foretells Deirdre's beauty and the misfortunes it will bring to Ulster.
5. **Fergus:** A trusted friend of the Sons of Usnach, whom King Conor uses to deceive them into returning to Ulster under the false promise of safety.



Cathbad prophesies at the birth of Deirdre.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What prophecy did Cathbad, the druid, make about Deirdre?**
Cathbad prophesied that Deirdre would be extraordinarily beautiful, but her beauty would cause great ruin and tragedy for Ulster as kings and heroes would fight over her.
2. **Why did King Conor decide to raise Deirdre in secret?**
King Conor wanted to raise Deirdre in secret so that no one else could see her beauty, planning to make her his wife when she was of age.
3. **What caused Naisi and Deirdre to flee from Ulster?**
Naisi and Deirdre fled from Ulster because they had fallen in love, and Naisi feared King Conor's wrath if he discovered their relationship.
4. **Where did the Sons of Usnach take refuge after fleeing from Ulster?**
The Sons of Usnach fled to Scotland, where they lived in the wild glens and offered their swords to the King of Scotland for service.
5. **What treacherous plan did King Conor devise to lure the Sons of Usnach back to Ulster?**
King Conor sent Fergus to invite the Sons of Usnach back to Ulster under the pretense of safety, though he secretly planned to betray them.

Discussion Questions

1. Deirdre's beauty is both a blessing and a curse, leading to tragedy for many characters. How does the concept of fate versus free will play out in this story? Could the characters have altered their fate, or were they bound by prophecy?

2. The loyalty of the Sons of Usnach, especially Naisi, to Deirdre contrasts sharply with King Conor's betrayal. How do themes of honor and betrayal shape the relationships and ultimate outcomes in the story?



Deirdre of the Sorrows.

The Death of Cuchullin

Summary

In 'The Death of Cuchullin,' Queen Maeve of Connacht gathers the enemies of Cuchullin to orchestrate his demise, knowing that she cannot defeat Ulster while he is alive. Cuchullin's friends urge him to hide in a secluded glen to avoid the magical tricks of his enemies, but Cuchullin cannot resist the call of honour. Despite a series of ominous visions, he sets out to face Maeve's forces. In the ensuing battle, Cuchullin is struck by a spear from Luga. Mortally wounded, he ties himself to a standing stone to face his enemies as he died, and his life ended with a great sigh that split the stone behind him.



The death of Cuchullin.

Character List

1. **Cuchullin:** The heroic warrior of Ulster, known for his strength and bravery. He faces his inevitable death with courage, even tying himself to a stone to die standing.
2. **Queen Maeve:** The ruler of Connacht, who orchestrates Cuchullin's downfall by gathering his enemies to strike at Ulster.
3. **The Children of Celatín:** Six siblings who seek vengeance on Cuchullin for the death of their father, allying with Maeve to bring about his death.
4. **Emer:** Cuchullin's wife, who appears in his visions as he faces his final battle. She represents his personal loss amidst the larger conflict.
5. **Luga:** One of Maeve's allies, who delivers the fatal blow to Cuchullin with a spear.
6. **Cathbad the Druid:** A wise figure who advises Cuchullin to avoid the battle, foreseeing the magical nature of his enemies' tactics.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What was Queen Maeve's plan to defeat Cuchullin?**
Queen Maeve gathered Cuchullin's enemies and formed an alliance to bring about his death, knowing that as long as Cuchullin was alive, she could not defeat Ulster.
2. **Who were the children of Celatín, and why did they join Maeve's cause?**
The six children of Celatín joined Maeve's cause because their father had been slain by Cuchullin, and they sought revenge for his death.
3. **What did Cuchullin's friends do to try to protect him from his enemies?**
Cuchullin's friends persuaded him to retreat to the Glen of the Dark Pool, where they believed the magical powers of his enemies could not reach him, and they kept him company to soothe his spirit.
4. **How did Cuchullin finally decide to confront his enemies?**
Despite the pleas of his friends, Cuchullin could not resist the call of battle. He believed that honour demanded he face his enemies, and he set out with his chariot to defend Ulster.
5. **What visions did Cuchullin experience as he headed into battle?**
Cuchullin saw a series of haunting visions, including his own fort destroyed, the burning corpse of his wife Emer, and the devastation of Ulster by his enemies.
6. **How did Cuchullin die?**
Cuchullin was mortally wounded by a spear thrown by Luga, one of Maeve's allies. He tied himself to a standing stone to face his enemies as he died, and his life ended with a great sigh that split the stone behind him.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Cuchullin's sense of honour and duty contribute to his tragic downfall?
2. What role do visions and supernatural elements play in shaping Cuchullin's final moments?
3. How do the themes of revenge and loyalty intersect in the motivations of Cuchullin's enemies and allies?
4. What does Cuchullin's death signify for Ulster, and how does it affect the power dynamics between Ulster and Connacht?

King Fergus Mac Leide and the Wee Folk

Summary

In this chapter, King Fergus Mac Leide, a warrior king of Ulster, is known for a battle with a river monster that left him with a disfigured mouth. The tale begins with a feast hosted by King Iubadan of the Wee Folk, where Eisirt, the chief poet, boasts that an Ulster warrior could defeat all the Wee Folk's champions. Eisirt sets off to Ulster to prove his claim. Along the way, he and Hugh the Dwarf travel to the Land of Faylinn on the magical steed of the Wee Folk. Meanwhile, Iubadan and his wife Bevo are captured by Fergus, who suspects they may be plotting against him. Fergus later discovers his facial disfigurement when a bonds-woman rebukes him, leading him to seek revenge on the river monster that caused his injury.

Character List

1. **King Fergus Mac Leide:** The king of Ulster, known for his bravery and battle with a river monster that left him disfigured.
2. **Eisirt:** The chief poet of the Leprechauns, who challenges the might of the Wee Folk's warriors, claiming that a single Ulster warrior could defeat them.
3. **Iubadan:** The king of the Wee Folk, who is eventually captured by King Fergus and pleads for his release.
4. **Bevo:** Iubadan's wife, who accompanies him to the court of Fergus and shares in his captivity.
5. **Hugh the Dwarf:** A companion to Eisirt, who appears small in Ulster but is considered large among the Wee Folk.
6. **The River Monster:** A fearsome creature that disfigured King Fergus in battle, leading to his wry mouth.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What injury did King Fergus receive, and how did it happen?**
King Fergus received a wry mouth from a wound inflicted by a river monster during an encounter by the River Boyne.
2. **Who is Eisirt, and why did he laugh at the feast of the Wee Folk?**
Eisirt is the chief poet of the Leprechauns, and he laughed at the feast because he believed that one warrior from Ulster, Cuchullin, could defeat all the champions of the Wee Folk.
3. **What challenge did Eisirt present to King Fergus?**
Eisirt claimed that a warrior from Ulster could defeat the warriors of the Wee Folk, and he offered to prove this by bringing King Fergus back proof from Ulster.
4. **How did the Wee Folk cross the sea to the Land of Faylinn?**
Eisirt and Hugh the Dwarf crossed the sea to the Land of Faylinn on the steed of King Iubadan, which appeared as a small, swift creature resembling a hare.
5. **What did King Iubadan and Bevo face when they arrived at the court of King Fergus?**
King Iubadan and Bevo were taken captive by King Fergus, who suspected they might be plotting against him. Despite their protests, Fergus kept them under watch.



King Fergus Mac Leide and the Wee Folk.

6. **How did King Fergus finally come to know of his facial disfigurement?**

A bonds-woman told Fergus that instead of hitting defenceless women, he should avenge himself on the river-horse that disfigured his mouth. This led him to look in a mirror and realise the extent of his injury.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the dynamic between the Wee Folk and the warriors of Ulster reflect themes of pride and rivalry in the story?
2. In what ways does Fergus' realisation of his disfigurement impact his actions and view of honour?
3. What role does humour, particularly through Eisirt's laughter, play in the development of conflict between the Wee Folk and Fergus?

In the Time of Finn and the Fianna

The Young Finn

Summary

This chapter introduces the Fianna, a legendary group of warriors in Ireland, and the early life of Finn, the son of Cool, their former leader. After Cool's death at the hands of Goll Mac Morna, Finn's mother, Muirna, flees and entrusts her son to two foster mothers to raise in secret. As Finn grows, he becomes highly skilled in hunting and combat, winning games and gaining recognition for his prowess. Goll, now uneasy about Finn's growing reputation, recalls the boy's lineage and begins to see him as a potential threat to his leadership of the Fianna. Meanwhile, Finn prepares himself for the inevitable confrontation with Goll.

Character List

1. **Finn (formerly Demna):** The son of Cool, raised in secret to protect him from his father's enemies. He grows up skilled in hunting and combat, destined to challenge Goll Mac Morna for leadership of the Fianna.
2. **Cool:** Finn's father, the former leader of the Fianna, killed by Goll Mac Morna in battle.
3. **Muirna:** Finn's mother, who fled after her husband's death to give birth in secret and ensure her son's safety.
4. **Goll Mac Morna:** The current leader of the Fianna, who killed Cool and feared that Finn would seek revenge and claim his rightful place as the head of the Fianna.
5. **The Two Foster Mothers:** A druidess and a wise woman who raised Finn in the Slieve Bloom Mountains and trained him in hunting and warfare.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who were the Fianna, and what was their role in Ireland?**
The Fianna were a group of elite warriors in southern Ireland, chosen for their strength, bravery, and skills in battle and hunting. They were sworn to defend the High King against foreign foes and to maintain peace among the local chiefs.
2. **What did Muirna do after the death of her husband, Cool?**
After Cool's death, Muirna fled to the mountains and gave birth to her son, Demna, whom she entrusted to two women to raise in secret to protect him from Goll Mac Morna.
3. **How was Demna raised in the mountains, and what skills did he develop?**

Demna was raised in secret by a druidess and a wise woman in the Slieve Bloom Mountains. He was trained in hunting, fishing, and warfare, becoming highly skilled with weapons, able to bring down birds with his sling and outrun stags.

4. **How did Demna come to be called Finn?**

After defeating a group of boys in athletic games, the chief of the local stronghold noticed Demna's golden hair and named him Finn, meaning 'fair.'

5. **Why did Goll Mac Morna become uneasy upon hearing of Finn's deeds?**

Goll Mac Morna grew uneasy because he remembered killing Cool, Finn's father, and realised that Finn, now fourteen, could challenge him for the leadership of the Fianna.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Finn's upbringing in isolation shape his character and prepare him for leadership?
2. What role does fate play in Finn's journey to reclaim his father's position as the leader of the Fianna?
3. How do Goll's fears about Finn reflect the consequences of past actions and the inevitable return of justice?

How Finn Became the Head of the Fianna

Summary

In this chapter, Finn, the son of Cool, attends the Great Assembly at Tara and offers his service to the High King, Con of the Hundred Battles. Every year, a goblin named Aillen of the Flaming Breath threatens to burn Tara by putting everyone to sleep with magical music and then setting fire to the city. Finn volunteers to face Aillen and, with the help of a magical spear from Fiacha, resists the goblin's music and kills him. In return for his bravery, the High King names Finn the leader of the Fianna, and Goll Mac Morna, the previous leader, swears fealty to him.

Character List

1. **Finn:** The son of Cool, who comes to Tara to offer his service to the High King and ultimately becomes the leader of the Fianna after defeating the goblin Aillen.
2. **Aillen of the Flaming Breath:** A goblin who burns Tara every year by playing magical music that puts people to sleep and then breathing fire.
3. **Con of the Hundred Battles:** The High King of Ireland, who rewards Finn by making him the leader of the Fianna after Finn saves Tara.
4. **Fiacha:** A member of the King's household who helps Finn by giving him a magical spear to defeat Aillen.
5. **Goll Mac Morna:** The current leader of the Fianna, who eventually pledges his loyalty to Finn after he becomes the new head of the Fianna.

Comprehension Questions

1. **How did Finn introduce himself at the Great Assembly in Tara?**
Finn introduced himself as the son of Cool, who once commanded the Fianna of Erin, and offered his sword to the High King, Con of the Hundred Battles, for service.
2. **What was the danger that threatened Tara every year during the Royal Assembly?**
Every year during the Royal Assembly, a goblin named Aillen of the Flaming Breath would come and burn Tara to the ground, putting everyone to sleep with his magical music.
3. **How did Finn defeat Aillen and save Tara?**
Finn used a magical spear given to him by Fiacha, pressed its cold steel against his forehead to resist the goblin's sleep-inducing music, and then killed Aillen by throwing the spear at him as he fled.
4. **What reward did Finn receive for saving Tara?**
For defeating Aillen and saving Tara, Finn was made the leader of the Fianna by the High King, with Goll Mac Morna swearing fealty to him.

Discussion Questions

1. What role does loyalty and fealty play in the relationships between warriors, as seen in Goll Mac Morna's pledge to Finn?
2. Consider the names of the characters in the story (e.g. Con of the Hundred Battles and Aillen of the Flaming Breath). Why do mythological figures often carry names associated with their deeds? What does this tell us about the characters' reputations?

Finn and the Fianna

Summary

In this chapter, Finn's leadership and legacy among the Fianna are highlighted. He was admired for his fairness, generosity, and exceptional bravery, earning loyalty and respect from all, including his former enemies. The Fianna, under Finn's leadership, were a group bound by honour, and Finn's grandson Oscar was considered the bravest of them all. The chapter also introduces other notable Fianna members, such as the handsome Dermot and the honourable Goll Mac Morna. Finn and his warriors lived on the Hill of Allen, and legends of his two faithful hounds, Bran and Sgeolaun, persist in local folklore.



Finn Mac Cool

Character List

1. **Finn:** The leader of the Fianna, known for his bravery, generosity, and sense of justice. He was beloved by his men and respected even by his former enemies.
2. **Oscar:** Finn's grandson, known as the bravest of the Fianna. His death in battle caused great sorrow for Finn.
3. **Dermot of the Love-spot:** A famous warrior of the Fianna, renowned for his handsome appearance, which made women fall in love with him upon seeing him.
4. **Goll Mac Morna:** A famous warrior of the Fianna, who, despite once being an enemy of Finn, respected him and valued honour above life itself.
5. **Bran and Sgeolaun:** Finn's two favourite hounds, known for their loyalty and association with the hunt.

Comprehension Questions

1. **How was Finn regarded by the members of the Fianna?**
Finn was highly respected by all members of the Fianna, even by his former enemies, because he was known for being just, generous, and brave.
2. **Who was Oscar, and what was his relationship with Finn?**
Oscar was Finn's grandson, considered the bravest of all the Fianna. Finn wept at Oscar's death in the Battle of Gowra.
3. **Where did Finn and the Fianna live?**
Finn and the chief men of the Fianna lived in Finn's dun on the Hill of Allen in what is now County Kildare.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the emphasis on honour and loyalty in the Fianna shape the relationships between its members, particularly between former enemies like Finn and Goll Mac Morna?
2. Consider the importance of the hound in Irish mythology. What characteristics of the hound do you think appealed to the Celtic warriors?

Writing Assignment III: Finn and the Fianna

Genre: Narrative Retelling

Assignment: Write a 3-paragraph narrative retelling of Chapters I-III from the section *In the Time of Finn and the Fianna*. In a narrative retelling, you will write your own edition of Chapters I-III of Finn and the Fianna.

As usual, there are four stages of writing that you will follow to complete this assignment:

Stage 1: Create an outline.

Stage 2: Write a rough draft.

Stage 3: Edit your rough draft.

Stage 4: Write a final draft.

In this essay your first paragraph will introduce the characters and setting. Your second paragraph will explain the conflict or problem, and your final paragraph will reveal the climax and resolution of the story. Think of this essay as more of a creative writing assignment than a formal essay. Unlike your previous essays, there is no introduction and conclusion for a narrative retelling. Instead, we will focus on creating vivid descriptions and a compelling story. Before you begin any formal writing, you must complete Stage 1 of the writing process—create an outline.

Stage 1: Create an Outline

Recreate the outline in the right margin in your copybook, answering whichever prompts help retell the story.

Do not use full sentences and keep your outline brief. You are not writing your essay right now. You are simply organising your ideas and making a note of what points you want to cover in your writing later on. You will expand and elaborate when you write your rough draft. (You may need to use more or less lines than this example shows. You may need multiple lines to answer the prompts.) You do not have to answer all of the prompts. Only answer the ones helpful to retelling this story.

Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

A Note on Narrative Retellings

In a narrative retelling, you must retell the story in an exciting and descriptive way. You are not simply telling the reader the facts of the story, and you are not simply summarising the story. You are recreating the setting, characters, conflict, and resolution in your own words. Compare the following descriptions of the setting of the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*:

‘Chapter 1 of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* introduces the four siblings: Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy. They are evacuated from London to the countryside during World War II to stay in the house of an old Professor. The house is large and has many rooms and corridors to explore.’

or

‘The war had cast its long shadow over London, and the sound of distant bombs echoed in the night sky. Four siblings—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—found themselves whisked away from the city,

I BODY PARAGRAPH 1: Characters and Setting

- 1 State when and where the story occurs (setting). Make a note of any important details of the setting.
- 2 Name and describe the important characters. What are they like? Make a note of physical descriptions and their personalities or attitudes.
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

II BODY PARAGRAPH 2: Conflict or Problem

- 1 Tell what the main characters want or need, or what challenges they face.
- 2 Tell what the main characters do, say, and think leading up to the climax.
- 3 Tell how the main characters feel as they approach the climax of the story.
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

III BODY PARAGRAPH 3: Climax and Resolution

- 1 Explain the climax. (The climax is the event that reveals how the conflict will or will not work out.)
- 2 Does anything ‘solve’ the climax?
- 3 Explain the resolution. (The resolution is the outcome for the main characters at the end of the story.)
- 4 Do the characters learn anything in the end?

bundled onto a train bound for the countryside. Their destination was a sprawling, mysterious house belonging to an old Professor. It loomed like a fortress against the surrounding green hills, and its many chimneys poked into the sky like crooked fingers. The house resembled something from a storybook, with its ancient stone walls, creaking wooden floors, and rooms that seemed to stretch on forever.'

Notice that the first description simply states the facts of the story while the second description tells a story by describing the details and events to the reader. Your narrative retelling should sound more like the second description above.

Remember, each paragraph must have a minimum of five strong sentences. Your rough draft will undergo corrections and edits later on.

Using your outline as a guide, write body paragraph 1, body paragraph 2, and body paragraph 3 in your copybook. Skip a line as you write so that an editor has room to write in corrections later.

Stage 3: Edit your Rough Draft

Now that you have completed your outline, follow the guidelines for editing your rough draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 77.

Stage 4: Write a Final Draft

Now that you have completed editing your rough draft, follow the guidelines for editing your final draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 74.

Sample Essay III: Finn and the Fianna

Narrative Retelling of 'Finn and the Fianna.'

The story of Finn and the Fianna unfolds in ancient Ireland, where the emerald hills rolled endlessly under a sky often shrouded in mist. It was a time many centuries after the legendary Cuchullin and the Red Branch Knights, when the Fianna—a band of elite warriors—protected the land with unwavering honour. At the heart of this tale is Finn MacCool, a young warrior with sharp wits, a brave spirit, and a heart as noble as the old oaks. Though his youth led some to underestimate him, Finn's strength and clever mind quickly silenced doubters. His path intertwined with formidable figures: Goll Mac Morna, whose challenge to Finn's leadership crackled with tension; Finnegas, the wise poet who guided Finn in his boyhood; and his devoted mother, Muirna, whose love was a shield against the dangers that stalked him.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1:
Characters and Setting

The conflict began on a dark day in ancient Ireland, when Cool, the leader of the Fianna fell to the blade of Goll Mac Morna in battle, casting a long shadow over his young son, Finn. Out of fear that Goll Mac Morna might try to harm Cool's son as well, Finn was whisked into hiding in the wild forests. As seasons turned and the boy grew, so did his strength and skill. Finn became a master of the hunt, his aim true and his instincts sharp. In games of strength and combat, he moved with a grace and power that drew whispers of admiration. But with every victory, Goll Mac Morna's unease deepened.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2:
Conflict and Problem

The air at Tara buzzed with anticipation as Finn MacCool stepped into the Great Assembly, where the High King, Con of the Hundred Battles, sat upon his throne. His arrival was perfectly timed, for it was the very day the dreaded Aillen of the Flaming Breath returned. Each year, the goblin came with his enchanted music, a haunting melody that lulled Tara's defenders into a deep sleep before he set the halls ablaze. This year, however, would be different. With the help of a magic spear, Finn stood firm as the hypnotic notes filled the air. When the terrifying Aillen drew near, Finn struck. The spear pierced through magic and malice alike, ending the goblin's reign of terror. As the smoke cleared, King Con declared a new leader of the Fianna—Finn MacCool. Even Goll Mac Morna, once a rival, bowed to Finn, his respect and loyalty hard-won and true. Under Finn's leadership, the Fianna became an unbreakable brotherhood, their shared victories forging bonds of steel, and Finn became an enduring symbol of Irish heroism.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3:
Climax and Resolution

The Mother of Oisín

Summary

In this chapter, Finn encounters a mysterious fawn while hunting with his two hounds, Bran and Sgeolaun. The fawn is revealed to be Sava, a maiden of the faery world who had been cursed by a druid for rejecting him. Finn falls in love with Sava, and they live happily together until Finn must leave to fight invaders. When he returns, Sava has disappeared. Finn searches for her for seven years, only to find a young boy, Oisín, who turns out to be their son. Bran and Sgeolaun, the ever-loyal hounds, protect Oisín during this discovery.



Fionn and Sava

Character List

1. **Finn:** The leader of the Fianna, known for his bravery, wisdom, and love for Sava.
2. **Sava:** A faery maiden who was transformed into a fawn by a druid after refusing to marry him. She became Finn's wife and the mother of Oisín.
3. **Bran and Sgeolaun:** Finn's loyal hounds, who protected Sava and later discovered her son, Oisín.
4. **Oisín:** The son of Finn and Sava, found by Finn after a seven-year search.
5. **The Druid:** A cruel figure who transformed Sava into a fawn after she refused his advances.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What happened when Finn chased a fawn with his two dogs, Bran and Sgeolaun?**
Finn's dogs, Bran and Sgeolaun, began to frolic with the fawn instead of attacking it, leading the fawn back to Finn's dun, where it lay at his feet.
2. **Who did the fawn turn out to be, and what was her story?**
The fawn was Sava, a maiden of the faery world who had been turned into a fawn by a druid after she refused to marry him.

3. **How did Finn and Sava live after her transformation back into human form?**

Finn and Sava fell in love, and he made her his wife. They lived happily together for many months until Finn had to leave to fight invaders.

4. **What happened to Sava after Finn left to fight the sea robbers?**

Sava disappeared, and when Finn returned, he searched for her for seven years, but could not find her.

5. **Who did Finn find at the end of his seven-year search, and how did he find him?**

Finn found a young boy with long golden hair, protected by his two hounds, Bran and Sgeolaun. This boy later turned out to be Oisín, Finn's son.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Finn's seven-year search for Sava reveal about his character, and how does it reflect the themes of loyalty and perseverance in Irish mythology?
2. How does the transformation of Sava from a fawn to a woman reflect themes of identity and transformation in Irish mythology, and what might it suggest about the boundaries between the human and faery worlds?
3. What do Finn's loyal hounds, Bran and Sgeolaun, symbolise throughout the story?

The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania

Summary

In this chapter, Finn Mac Cool sends messengers to ask for the hand of Grania, daughter of the High King Cormac. However, Grania finds Finn too old and instead chooses Dermot, a warrior of the Fianna, to be her lover. She places Dermot under a *geis*, compelling him to elope with her. Furious, Finn pursues the pair across Ireland, determined to punish them for their betrayal. Dermot and Grania evade Finn for years, aided by Angus of the Birds, who uses his magic to protect them. Despite the efforts of Finn's men and the Garvas, Dermot remains uncaptured. Oscar, Finn's grandson, tries to convince Finn to forgive Dermot, but Finn refuses to relent.

Character List

1. **Finn Mac Cool:** The leader of the Fianna, who becomes furious when his fiancée, Grania, elopes with his warrior Dermot.
2. **Grania:** The daughter of the High King Cormac, who rejects Finn's marriage proposal and elopes with Dermot, placing him under a *geis*.
3. **Dermot:** A warrior of the Fianna, renowned for his bravery, who flees with Grania and is relentlessly pursued by Finn.
4. **Angus of the Birds:** A magical figure who helps Dermot and Grania evade capture, using his powers to shield them.
5. **Oscar:** Finn's grandson, a brave warrior who defends Dermot and urges Finn to forgive him.
6. **The Garvas:** Warriors seeking vengeance against Dermot, but they are repeatedly defeated in their attempts to capture him.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did Finn send his messengers to Tara?**
Finn sent his messengers to ask the High King Cormac for his daughter Grania's hand in marriage.
2. **How did Grania react to Finn's marriage proposal?**
Grania rejected Finn's proposal, as she found him too old, and instead asked Dermot to run away with her.
3. **What did Grania do to convince Dermot to leave with her?**
Grania put Dermot under a *geis* (an obligation or curse), forcing him to take her away, as she declared that she would not marry Finn.
4. **What was Finn's reaction when he discovered that Grania and Dermot had eloped?**
Finn was furious and pursued Dermot and Grania relentlessly across Ireland, determined to punish them.
5. **How did Dermot and Grania manage to evade Finn and his men for so long?**
Dermot and Grania fled from one place to another, setting up shelters in remote areas, always on the move to avoid being caught by Finn.
6. **Who were the Garvas, and how did they become involved in the pursuit of Dermot and Grania?**
The Garvas were warriors seeking revenge on Dermot for the deaths of their fathers. They tried to capture Dermot but were repeatedly defeated by him.

7. How did Angus of the Birds help Dermot and Grania?

Angus of the Birds used his magical powers to protect Grania and Dermot from Finn's wrath by disguising their enemies and aiding their escape.

8. What was Oscar's stance regarding the pursuit of Dermot and Grania?

Oscar, Finn's grandson, tried to persuade Finn to forgive Dermot, defending him and offering his own protection, but Finn refused to relent.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the *geis* placed on Dermot by Grania challenge the traditional notions of loyalty and honour in Irish mythology?
2. What does Finn's relentless pursuit of Dermot and Grania reveal about his character and leadership as head of the Fianna?
3. How does Oscar's defence of Dermot complicate the dynamics between family loyalty and justice in the story?

Writing Assignment IV: The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania

Genre: Argument Essay

Assignment: Write a 5-paragraph essay discussing who is an example of true loyalty and who is not an example of true loyalty in Chapter V: 'The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania'. In an argument essay, you formulate a thesis statement, which makes a claim about the text, and support your thesis statement with evidence and examples.

What is a Thesis Statement?

Write your thesis statement before outlining and writing your body paragraphs, although you might go back and edit it. A thesis statement is a concise, clear sentence that expresses the main point or argument of the essay. It serves as the foundation for the entire work. A good thesis statement is specific, arguable, and focused. Here are some examples:

'School uniforms should be mandatory in public schools because they reduce peer pressure, promote unity, and improve overall student performance.'

'The architecture of ancient Greece reflects the values of harmony, balance, and beauty, which were central to their society's ideals.'

In Romeo and Juliet, textitShakespeare uses dramatic irony to enhance the theme of fate and the inevitability of tragedy.'

In J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit, textitBilbo Baggins embodies the theme of courage as he steps out of his comfort zone, gradually transforming from a timid hobbit into a brave hero who faces danger for the good of others.'

'In Shakespeare's Macbeth textitthe theme of unchecked ambition is evident through the choices of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.'

Your thesis statement might look like:

In 'The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania,' ... shows true loyalty while ... does not.

What is a Topic Sentence?

A topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph that expresses the main idea or point of the paragraph. It summarises or introduces what the paragraph will discuss, connecting it to the overall argument of the essay. It must be directly related to your thesis statement and help further the argument of your thesis statement. The topic sentence helps the reader understand the purpose of the paragraph and how it supports the thesis statement.

Consider an essay on the importance of regular exercise for an example. An example thesis statement and topic sentences are given in the right margin. Notice how each topic sentence relates directly back to the thesis, furthers the argument of the thesis, and summarises what the rest of the paragraph will be about.

Stage 1: Create an Outline

Recreate the outline in the right margin in your copybook, answering the prompts. Notice that for body paragraph 2 you can decide to write on Dermot and Grania OR Dermot and the other members of the Fianna. A paragraph should only have one main focus, so only choose one option for body paragraph 2. It is a good idea to read through all the prompts in the outline before formulating your ideas and filling in your outline. You only need to use two quotes in this essay, so you may choose one paragraph from the outline section to omit the quote from.

THESIS STATEMENT:

Regular exercise is crucial for one's overall health.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1

Topic sentence: Regular exercise is crucial for maintaining physical health. (The paragraph would then go on to give evidence and examples of this.)

BODY PARAGRAPH 2

Topic sentence: Beyond physical health, exercise also plays a vital role in improving mental health. (The paragraph would then go on to give evidence and examples of this.)

BODY PARAGRAPH 3

Topic sentence: Engaging in consistent physical activity is a key factor in preventing long-term illnesses. (The paragraph would then go on to give evidence and examples of this.)

I INTRODUCTION:

To be completed later.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. *Write your thesis statement about who shows true loyalty and/or who does not in the 'Pursuit of Dermot and Grania.'*

II BODY PARAGRAPH 1:

Present evidence for the presence or lack of loyalty in the relationship between Finn and Dermot.

1. *Topic Sentence: Be sure to mention loyalty and the relationship between Finn and Dermot.*
2. *How does Dermot show loyalty to Finn?*
3. *Why does Dermot feel such loyalty to Finn?*
4. *Does Finn show loyalty to Dermot?*
5. *Quote from the book*

Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

You are now ready to begin writing your rough draft. Remember, a rough draft is the first version of your essay. It is written in full sentences and with all the points and evidence you want to include.

Each paragraph must have a minimum of 5 strong sentences. Your rough draft will undergo edits and revisions later, so that your final draft is a beautiful and polished work. Your rough draft should be written, not typed. Remember to cite the page number of the book for any quotes in your essay.

Recall that a quote must always be introduced by a short phrase and a comma or colon. Recall also that you must always analyse or explain a quote in your essay, and cite the page number in brackets. Using your outline as a guide, write body paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 in your copybook. Skip a line as you write so that an editor has room to write in corrections later.

Introduction

Now that you have written your two body paragraphs, it is time to write the introduction and conclusion.

The introduction should capture the readers' attention and make them want to keep reading. The first sentence of the introduction is called the 'hook' or 'attention grabber'. You will come up with a sentence that grabs the reader's attention. The second to last sentence of the introduction will be your thesis statement, so you want to start leading naturally into your thesis subject. Introduce the story and write a few sentences on what loyalty means and how it plays a significant role in the story. Then write your thesis statement. The final sentence of the introduction is called your *essay map*. The *essay map* gives a clear preview of what the three body paragraphs will cover. Read the example below of an introduction for an essay on the importance of regular exercise. The thesis is in **bold** and the essay map is in *italics*.

Imagine feeling energised, confident, and at ease every day—these are just a few of the benefits that come with incorporating regular exercise into one's routine. In today's fast-paced world, it is easy to overlook the importance of physical activity, but the effects of a sedentary lifestyle are undeniable. From increased risk of chronic diseases to the negative impact on mental health, failing to stay active can have serious consequences. **Regular exercise is crucial for one's overall health.** *Regular exercise maintains physical health, enhances mental well-being, and serves as a preventive measure against chronic illnesses.*

Return to your essay outline and fill in the section left blank for the introduction, following the prompts in the margin.

Conclusion

The first sentence of your conclusion will restate the thesis statement. Then you will briefly summarise each body paragraph (1-2 sentences per body paragraph). Your conclusion will end with a thoughtful or reflective sentence on the topic of loyalty. Read the example below of a conclusion for an essay on the importance of regular exercise.

Regular exercise is crucial for one's overall health. First, it maintains physical health by strengthening the heart, improving circulation, and aiding in weight management, which are all essential for a strong, healthy

III BODY PARAGRAPH 2 (OPTION 1):
Present evidence for the presence or lack of loyalty in the relationship between Finn and Grania.

1. Topic Sentence: *Be sure to mention loyalty and the relationship between Finn and Grania.*
2. *How does Finn show loyalty to Grania throughout the story?*
3. *Why does Finn feel that he must be loyal to Grania?*
4. *Quote from the book:*

III BODY PARAGRAPH 2 (OPTION 2):
Present evidence for the presence or lack of loyalty between Finn and other members of the Fianna.

1. Topic Sentence: *Be sure to mention loyalty and the relationship between Finn and the other members of the Fianna.*
2. *How do the other members of the Fianna show loyalty to Dermot?*
3. *How does Dermot show loyalty to the other members of the Fianna?*
4. *Quote from the book:*

IV BODY PARAGRAPH 3:
Justify characters' choices.

1. Topic Sentence: *State whose choices showed true loyalty and why. Then state whose choices did not show loyalty and why.*
2. *Explain why Finn is or is not truly loyal. Should Finn have shown loyalty to Dermot? Or was he justified in his response since Dermot left with Grania?*
3. *Explain why Dermot is or is not truly loyal to Finn in the end. Was it wrong for him to marry Grania?*
4. *If Body Paragraph 2 is on Grania: Explain the conflict between Dermot's loyalty to Grania and to Finn. Do you think he should have sided with Grania over Finn? Do you think he should have gotten the berries for Grania?*
5. *If Body Paragraph 2 is on the Fianna: Were the Fianna members being disloyal to Finn by helping Dermot? Were they disloyal to Dermot by staying with Finn? Should they have left Finn to help Dermot?*
6. *Quote from the book:*

V CONCLUSION.

1. To be completed later.
2. _____
3. _____

body. Secondly, exercise plays a significant role in enhancing mental well-being, helping to reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, and improve mood. Finally, staying active is a powerful preventive measure against chronic illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, protecting one's health in the long term. Embracing a lifestyle that prioritises regular physical activity is not just an investment in the present but a commitment to a healthier, happier future.

Notice that the conclusion does not simply restate the topic sentences. It reminds the reader of the evidence/examples discussed in the body paragraphs. Complete your outline by adding section V for the conclusion, following the prompts.

Sample Essay IV: *The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania*

Loyalty in 'The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania.'

Loyalty is a central theme in Irish mythology, often reflecting the bonds of kinship, love, and honour. In 'The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania,' this concept is explored through the tumultuous relationships between Finn, Dermot, and Grania. These characters embody complex and conflicting loyalties, where personal desires and duty often clash. Dermot exemplifies true loyalty despite his choices, while Finn falls short of this virtue, allowing personal vengeance to override any sense of justice or fidelity.

The relationship between Finn and Dermot represents the story's tension between loyalty and betrayal. Dermot demonstrates steadfast loyalty to Finn by consistently protecting him and fighting alongside him in many battles. Despite his elopement with Grania, Dermot feels bound by honour to uphold his allegiance to Finn. For instance, Dermot's reflection on his loyalty is evident when he laments the sacrifices he made for Finn: 'I have made enemies for myself throughout the wide world fighting for you' (p. 161). Here Dermot gives solid evidence of his loyalty to Finn. Conversely, Finn fails to reciprocate this loyalty, allowing his anger over Grania's betrayal to dictate his actions. Instead of valuing Dermot's sacrifices, Finn relentlessly pursues him, showcasing a lack of true loyalty to his comrade.

Loyalty plays a complex role in the relationship between Dermot and Grania, highlighting both devotion and inner conflict. Throughout the story, Dermot remains fiercely loyal to Grania, even as their love puts him at odds with Finn MacCool and the Fianna. From the moment Grania places him under a *geis*—a binding vow—Dermot feels an unshakable duty to protect her. His loyalty is not just born of love but also from a sense of honour and obligation, as breaking a *geis* in Irish mythology carries dire consequences. Despite the dangers, Dermot stands by Grania through their years of wandering, shielding her from harm and sharing in her hardships. His loyalty is evident when he says, 'I swore to keep you safe, and I will not go back on my word, no matter the cost' (page 102). Dermot upholds this oath even when Finn's jealousy turns dangerous. Dermot's commitment to Grania never wavers, demonstrating his true loyalty to her.

Dermot's choices ultimately reveal his true loyalty, while Finn's actions expose his lack of it. Despite the personal risk, Dermot remains committed to protecting Grania, even engaging in combat with Sharvan the Surly to retrieve the berries Grania desires. His decision to honour Grania's wishes, despite knowing it would provoke Finn further, underscores his integrity. Conversely, Finn allows his vengeance to cloud his judgment, disregarding the camaraderie he shared with Dermot. While Finn's anger may be understandable given the circumstances, his relentless pursuit of revenge diminishes his character, portraying him as vindictive rather than loyal. The Fianna members' assistance to Dermot also reflects the complexity of loyalty, as they risk Finn's wrath to support a fellow warrior.

Loyalty, as portrayed in 'The Pursuit of Dermot and Grania,' is a multifaceted theme that reveals the strengths and weaknesses of its characters. Dermot emerges as a paragon of loyalty, balancing his love for Grania with his enduring sense of duty to Finn. In contrast, Finn's inability to forgive and prioritise relationships over vengeance marks him as a tragic figure, consumed by his own grievances. This tale serves as a timeless reflection on the complexities of human relationships, urging readers to consider the true meaning of loyalty in their own lives.

INTRODUCTION

BODY PARAGRAPH 1:
Loyalty between Finn and Dermot

BODY PARAGRAPH 2:
Loyalty between Dermot and Grania

BODY PARAGRAPH 3:
Justification of Choices

CONCLUSION

Oisín in the Land of the Ever Young

Summary

In this chapter, Oisín, son of Finn Mac Cool, is swept away by Niav of the Golden Hair to live in the Land of the Ever Young, where no one ages and life is filled with joy and beauty. Oisín spends many years in blissful happiness, but he often dreams of his former life with the Fianna, longing for the hunts and companionship he left behind. Eventually, Oisín decides to return to Ireland, but upon setting foot on Irish soil, he instantly ages, realising that hundreds of years have passed. The magical life he once knew is gone, and Oisín is left an old, frail man.



Oisín and Niav ride to *Tír na nÓg*, the Land of the Ever Young.

Character List

1. **Oisín:** A warrior and poet of the Fianna, who is taken by Niav to the Land of the Ever Young, where he lives a life of bliss until he decides to return to Ireland.
2. **Niav of the Golden Hair:** A faery maiden from the Land of the Ever Young, who invites Oisín to live with her in a land where no one grows old.
3. **Finn Mac Cool:** Oisín's father and the leader of the Fianna, whom Oisín leaves behind when he departs for the Land of the Ever Young.
4. **The Fomor:** A monster and giant who Oisín fights and defeats to free a maiden in captivity during his time in the Land of the Ever Young.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Where was Finn and the Fianna hunting when Oisín met Niav?**
Finn and the Fianna were hunting in the woods around Loch Lene near Killarney.

2. **Who was Niav of the Golden Hair, and what did she ask of Oisín?**

Niav of the Golden Hair was a faery maiden who came from the Land of the Ever Young. She asked Oisín to come with her to live in the Land of the Ever Young.

3. **How did Oisín feel as he rode away with Niav?**

Oisín felt as though he were in a dream, and though he looked back at his father Finn and his comrades, he waved farewell and left them behind.

4. **What was life like for Oisín in the Land of the Ever Young?**

In the Land of the Ever Young, Oisín lived a life of eternal beauty and joy, surrounded by music, feasts, and endless youth.

5. **What happened when Oisín began to miss his old life with the Fianna?**

Oisín often dreamed of his life with the Fianna, longing to return to the hunts, feasts, and companionship of his mortal days.

6. **What was the consequence of Oisín returning to Ireland after many years in the Land of the Ever Young?**

When Oisín returned to Ireland, he found that hundreds of years had passed, and upon touching the ground, he instantly aged and became a frail, old man.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Oisín's decision to leave the Land of the Ever Young reflect the human desire for connection to the past and one's roots?
2. What does Oisín's transformation from youth to old age upon returning to Ireland symbolise about the passage of time and the price of leaving behind immortality?
3. In what ways does the contrast between the Land of the Ever Young and Ireland highlight the themes of impermanence and longing in Irish mythology?



Oisín falls from his steed.

Writing Assignment V: Oisín in the Land of the Ever Young

Genre: Literary Theme Essay

Assignment: Write a 5-paragraph essay discussing the theme of beauty and immortality in ‘Oisín and the Land of the Ever Young.’ In a theme essay you make a statement on what the theme of the story is and show how the story conveys that theme.

In your essay, consider the following: What prompted Oisín’s decision to go to the Land of the Ever Young? What drew him there? Discuss the pros and cons of living in the Land of the Ever Young and the pros and cons of living in Erin. Consider Oisín’s statement: ‘If the leaf dies, and the birds are muted by winter’s cold, their coming with the spring is all the more beautiful when hope is born anew, and if the young and the beautiful grow old, they grow, too, in wisdom’ (p. 172). Is it better to live in the Land of the Ever Young or Erin? Why? Should Oisín have stayed in Erin? Should he have returned to Erin? Why or why not? What do you think the story is saying overall about what man desires?

You will follow the 4 stages of writing an essay:

Stage 1: Create an outline.

Stage 2: Write a rough draft.

Stage 3: Edit your rough draft.

Stage 4: Write a final draft.

In this 5-paragraph essay, the first paragraph will be an introduction. The second, third, and fourth paragraphs will be your three body paragraphs. Each body paragraph will discuss and analyse the questions above and have one quote from the book. Your final paragraph will be a conclusion. As usual, you will outline and write the body paragraphs (paragraphs 2, 3, and 4) before outlining and writing the introduction and conclusion, with the exception of your thesis statement.

Stage 1: Create an Outline

Recreate the outline shown into your copybook, answering the prompts. It is a good idea to read through all the prompts in the outline before formulating your ideas and filling in your outline.

Recall that a thesis statement is a concise, clear sentence that expresses the main point or argument of the essay. It serves as the foundation for the entire work, guiding both the writer and the reader by outlining what the essay will discuss or prove.

Recall also that a topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph that expresses the main idea or point of the paragraph. It summarises or introduces what the paragraph will discuss, connecting it to the overall argument of the essay.

Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

You are now ready to begin writing your rough draft. Remember, a rough draft is the first version of your essay. It is written in full sentences and with all the points and evidence you want to include. Each paragraph must have a minimum of 5 strong sentences. Your rough draft will undergo edits and revisions later, so that your final product (the final draft) is a beautiful and polished work. Your rough draft should be written, not typed. Remember to cite the page number of the book for any quotes in your essay.

I INTRODUCTION:

Leave about 6 lines blank.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. Thesis Statement: *Overall, what is the story saying about what man desires?*

II BODY PARAGRAPH 1:

The attractiveness of the Land of the Ever Young.

1. Topic Sentence: *What does the Land of the Ever Young promise?*
2. *What prompted Oisín’s decision to go to the Land of the Ever Young?*
3. *What drew him there? (Look at the song Níav sings for inspiration.)*
4. *Quote from book:*

III BODY PARAGRAPH 2:

The reality of Erin and the Land of the Ever Young

1. Topic Sentence: *Oisín loves living in the Land of the Ever Young because, but he misses living in Erin because*
2. *Discuss the pros and cons of living in the Land of the Ever Young.*
3. *What does Oisín love about the Land of the Ever Young? What does it give him?*
4. *Discuss the pros and cons of living in Erin.*
5. *What does Oisín miss about the land of Erin?*
6. *Consider Oisín’s quote from p. 172.*
7. *Quote from book:*

Recall that a quote must always be introduced by a short phrase and a comma or colon. Recall also that you must always analyse or explain a quote in your essay, and cite the page number in brackets.

Using your outline as a guide, write body paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 in your copybook. Skip a line as you write so that an editor has room to write in corrections later.

Introduction

Now that you have written your two body paragraphs, it is time to write the introduction and conclusion.

The introduction should capture the readers' attention and make them want to keep reading. The first sentence of the introduction is called the 'hook' or 'attention grabber'. You will come up with a sentence that grabs the reader's attention. The second to last sentence of the introduction will be your thesis statement, so you want to start leading naturally into your thesis subject. Introduce the story and write a few sentences on beauty and immortality (or some other prevalent theme) and how it plays a significant role in the story. Then write your thesis statement. The final sentence of the introduction is called your *essay map*. The *essay map* gives a clear preview of what the three body paragraphs will cover.

Go back to your essay outline and fill in the section left blank for the introduction, following the prompt.

Conclusion

The first sentence of your conclusion will restate the thesis statement. Then you will briefly summarise each body paragraph (1-2 sentences per body paragraph). Your conclusion will end with a thoughtful or reflective sentence on the theme(s) you chose to discuss and what it says about human desires. Remember that the conclusion does not simply restate the topic sentences. It reminds the reader of the evidence/examples discussed in the body paragraphs.

Complete your outline by adding section V for the conclusion, following the prompts.

Now that you have outlined the introduction and conclusion, write your introduction and conclusion in paragraph form. It is fine if your introduction and conclusion are on a different page than the body paragraphs since this is only your rough draft. Clearly label your introduction and conclusion so that you know where to locate them when you begin the editing process. Remember to skip a line as you write so that an editor has room to make corrections.

Stage 3: Edit your Rough Draft

Now that you have completed your rough draft, follow the guidelines for editing your rough draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 77.

Stage 4: Write a Final Draft

Now that you have completed editing your rough draft, follow the guidelines for creating your final draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 74.

IV BODY PARAGRAPH 3:

The Representation of Man's Desires.

1. Topic Sentence: Answer the question: Does one land represent the satisfaction of man's desires (as stated in your thesis statement) more than the other?
2. Is it better to live in the Land of the Ever Young or Erin? Why? (Relate your answer back to your thesis statement.)
3. Should Oisín have ever left Erin? Why or why not? (Relate your answer back to your thesis statement.)
4. Once he was living in the Land of the Ever Young, should Oisín have returned to Erin? Why or why not? (Relate your answer back to your thesis statement.)
5. Quote from book:

I CONCLUSION:

1. Leave blank for now.
2. _____
3. _____

I INTRODUCTION:

1. Attention grabber.
2. Briefly introduce the story.
3. Mention important themes in the story such as immortality and beauty.
4. Mention the significance of those themes in this story.
5. Thesis Statement: (Already written).
6. Essay Map: Briefly and clearly mention your 3 topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

V CONCLUSION:

1. Restate thesis statement.
2. Summarise body paragraph 1 in 1-2 sentences.
3. Summarise body paragraph 2 in 1-2 sentences.
4. Summarise body paragraph 3 in 1-2 sentences.
5. Thoughtful/reflective closing sentence on the theme(s)/human desire.

Sample Essay V: Oisín in the Land of the Ever Young

Beauty and Immortality in 'Oisín in the Land of the Ever Young'

The legend of 'Oisín and the Land of the Ever Young' is a captivating tale that explores humanity's yearning for beauty and immortality. This timeless theme is intricately woven into the narrative, reflecting the tension between the allure of eternal youth and the longing for the familiar world of mortal life. Through Oisín's journey, the story delves into the duality of human desires—between the pursuit of perfection and the acceptance of life's imperfections. While the Land of the Ever Young offers idealised versions of immortality and beauty, it is the impermanence and richness of mortal life that ultimately fulfills human longing for beauty.

INTRODUCTION

The Land of the Ever Young is presented by Niav as a paradise of unending beauty, joy, and immortality. It promises a life free from pain, aging, and sorrow, an irresistible allure to Oisín. His decision to leave Erin is influenced by Niav's enchanting song, which paints a vivid picture of a land where 'no one grows old, and joy is everlasting' (p. 163). The song's imagery draws Oisín into a dreamlike realm, symbolising humanity's desire to escape mortality and attain perfection. This idealised vision captivates Oisín, illustrating how the promise of immortality and beauty can overshadow the value of the transient world.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1:
The Attractiveness of the Land of the Ever Young

Despite the allure of the Land of the Ever Young, Oisín begins to yearn for the mortal world of Erin. While he enjoys the unending beauty and bliss of the Ever Young, he misses the camaraderie, struggles, and joys of life with the Fianna. Oisín's longing for Erin is encapsulated when he says, 'Though beauty surrounds me, I cannot forget the hunts and battles of my youth' (p. 167). This attraction highlights the limitations of the Land of the Ever Young. While Erin is a place of fleeting beauty and inevitable loss, it provides an authentic beauty through friendships, challenges, and personal growth—qualities absent in the static perfection of the Ever Young.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2:
The Reality of Erin and the Land of the Ever Young

The contrast between Erin and the Land of the Ever Young reflects the complex nature of human desires. Oisín's ultimate decision to return to Erin signifies his recognition that true beauty may lie not in immortality but in the experiences and relationships that define mortal life. However, his transformation into an aged man upon touching Erin's soil symbolises the irrevocable cost of pursuing idealised perfection. This moment underscores the bittersweet nature of human longing, as Oisín is left to reflect on what he gained and lost in both worlds. The story suggests that while beauty and immortality are enticing, it is the impermanence of life that gives it meaning.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3:
The Representation of Man's Desires

The tale of Oisín and the Land of the Ever Young masterfully explores the themes of beauty and immortality, presenting them as both alluring and ultimately incomplete. Through Oisín's journey, the story reveals the tension between man's desire for perfection and the intrinsic value of mortal experiences. While the Land of the Ever Young offers eternal beauty and joy, it is the struggles and friendships of Erin that provide true fulfillment. The legend serves as a timeless reminder that the fleeting nature of life is what makes it precious, urging readers to cherish the beauty found in impermanence.

CONCLUSION

Tales for the Chimney Corner

The Black Thief

King Conal's Horses

Summary

This chapter recounts the tale of the three brothers sent by their father, the King, to fetch the horses of King Conal. They encounter a lame man who offers to guide them but are ultimately caught when trying to steal the horses. The story reflects themes of envy, family loyalty, and the perils of dangerous quests.

Character List

1. **The Queen:** The late Queen who made the King promise to protect their sons from a stepmother's influence.
2. **The King:** The ruler who remarries after mourning his Queen and is convinced by his new wife to send their sons on a dangerous quest.
3. **The Three Brothers:** The sons of the King and Queen, sent on a dangerous quest to retrieve King Conal's horses.
4. **The Lame Man:** A mysterious figure who offers to guide the three brothers to King Conal's castle.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What did the Queen ask of the King before she died?**
The Queen asked the King to promise that if he remarried, he would send their three sons to a distant part of the kingdom so they would not be under the control of a strange woman until they reached manhood.
2. **What did the King do after mourning the Queen for a few years?**
After mourning for a few years, the King remarried, and soon the new Queen grew envious of the three sons and demanded that the King send them on a difficult quest to fetch the horses of King Conal.
3. **Who did the three brothers meet on their journey, and what did he offer?**
The three brothers met a lame man wearing a black cap, who invited them to stay the night and offered to help guide them to King Conal's castle to retrieve the horses.
4. **What happened when the brothers tried to steal King Conal's horses?**
When the brothers tried to take the horses, the animals whinnied loudly, which alerted King Conal, leading to their capture.

Discussion Questions

1. The King's decision to send his sons on a dangerous quest was influenced by his new Queen's jealousy. How does this reflect the role of manipulation and control?
2. The three brothers trusted the guidance of a mysterious stranger. How does this theme of trust and deception play out in the story, and what lessons might it convey about judgment and caution?

The Three Enchanted Maidens

Summary

In this chapter, the Black Thief encounters three enchanted maidens, who are beautiful during the day but become hideous witches at night due to a wizard's spell. The witches steal all of the Black Thief's turf over the course of a winter, and when he tries to stop them, they begin boiling a bullock in a pot. The Black Thief rolls a boulder down on them, breaking their pot and scattering their meal. In retaliation, the witches chase him, forcing him to climb a tree. However, the eldest witch turns one of the others into an axe and begins chopping the tree down, threatening the Black Thief's escape.

Character List

- **The Black Thief:** A cunning man known for his cleverness, who tries to stop the three witches from stealing his turf and later escapes from them by climbing a tree.
- **The Three Enchanted Maidens/Witches:** Daughters of a king who are beautiful by day and turn into hideous witches by night. They steal the Black Thief's turf and try to capture him after he disrupts their plans.
- **The Wizard:** A figure mentioned as having cast a spell on the three maidens, turning them into hags by night.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who were the three enchanted maidens during the day, and what happened to them at night?**
The three enchanted maidens were daughters of a king in Erin, who were beautiful during the day but transformed into hideous hags at night due to a wizard's spell.
2. **What did the three witches do to the Black Thief's turf?**
The three witches stole all of the Black Thief's turf, carrying it away in *creels* on their backs until they had taken every bit of it.
3. **How did the Black Thief try to stop the witches from boiling a bullock in a pot?**
The Black Thief rolled a huge boulder down on them, breaking their pot and spilling the broth into the ashes.
4. **What happened when the Black Thief climbed a tree to escape the witches?**
The eldest witch turned the second hag into a sharp axe, and with it, she began to chop the tree the Black Thief had climbed.

A *creel* is a wicker basket used to carry turf.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the Black Thief's cunning and resourcefulness suggest about his role as a hero or anti-hero in the story?

2. How does the witches' ability to change form and use magical tools like an axe illustrate the power dynamics in their conflict with the Black Thief?

The Thirteen Enchanted Cats

Summary

In this chapter, the Black Thief recounts his narrow escape from death after encountering thirteen enchanted cats. Driven to thievery after witches ruined his livelihood, the Black Thief takes refuge in the woods, where he is surrounded by the giant cats. Using his wits, he tricks the cats by disguising a log as himself and climbing a tree. The cats pursue him from tree to tree, but before they can catch him, a pack of wolves arrives and engages in a fierce battle with the cats. Both groups are eventually killed, allowing the Black Thief to escape unharmed.

Character List

- **The Black Thief:** A clever man who takes to thievery to support his family after being impoverished by witches. He narrowly escapes death when pursued by thirteen enchanted cats.
- **The Thirteen Enchanted Cats:** A group of giant, fearsome cats, led by a larger red cat, who threaten the Black Thief.
- **The Pack of Wolves:** A group of twelve wolves, led by a fierce wolf, who ultimately save the Black Thief by fighting and killing the enchanted cats.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did the Black Thief take to the roads as a thief?**
The Black Thief took to the roads as a thief because the witches had stolen his turf, killed his livestock, and left him too poor to support his family.
2. **What did the Black Thief encounter while resting in the woods?**
While resting in the woods, the Black Thief encountered thirteen giant enchanted cats, with the largest one being their leader.
3. **What trick did the Black Thief use to avoid being attacked by the cats?**
The Black Thief wrapped his coat around a log and placed his hat on top to make it look like himself, then climbed a tree to escape the cats.
4. **How was the Black Thief finally saved from the cats?**
The Black Thief was saved when a pack of wolves, led by a great fierce wolf, attacked the cats. The wolves and cats fought until only the leaders remained, and they killed each other.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the Black Thief's resourcefulness reflect traditional qualities of a folk hero, and how does it shape his encounters with magical creatures?
2. What might the conflict between the enchanted cats and the wolves symbolise in the context of good versus evil or nature versus magic?

The Faithless Apprentice

Summary

In this chapter, the Black Thief recounts how he was betrayed by his apprentice while attempting to steal gold from a giant's den. The apprentice, having learned all the Black Thief's skills, left him trapped in the den after taking the treasure for himself. The Black Thief cleverly pretended to be dead to avoid being cooked by the giant and escaped by using the giant's ladder. Despite the betrayal, the Black Thief outwitted both the apprentice and the giant, escaping with his life.

Character List

- **The Black Thief:** A clever and skilled thief who is betrayed by his apprentice but manages to escape from a dangerous situation in the giant's den.
- **The Apprentice:** A former student of the Black Thief, who becomes overconfident in his skills and betrays his master during their heist.
- **The Giant:** A fearsome creature who hoards stolen treasures and unknowingly lets the Black Thief escape from his den.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did the Black Thief decide to steal from the giant?**
The Black Thief decided to steal from the giant because the giant's den was known to be full of gold and riches that had been pillaged from the nobles.
2. **How did the Black Thief's apprentice betray him?**
The apprentice betrayed the Black Thief by refusing to pull him up from the giant's den after receiving the treasure, claiming he had become a better thief than his master.
3. **How did the Black Thief escape from the giant's den?**
The Black Thief escaped by pretending to be dead and hiding under a basket after the giant threw him into a pile of bodies. He later found the giant's ladder and climbed out of the den while the giant was asleep.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the apprentice's betrayal reflect the themes of loyalty and ambition in the master-apprentice relationship, and what might this tell us about human nature?

The Three Giants

Summary

In this chapter, the Black Thief encounters a young woman held captive by three giants who plan to marry her once she turns eighteen. The giants also intend to eat a child for their supper. The Black Thief helps the woman by substituting a pig for the child in the pie and then kills the three giants one by one with the woman's assistance. The young woman heals the Black Thief's wounds with a cauldron of healing water. It is later revealed that the child was the king, who rewards the Black Thief for saving his life.

Character List

- **The Black Thief:** A clever and brave hero who saves the young woman and a child from three murderous giants.
- **The Young Woman:** A maiden kidnapped by the giants, who assists the Black Thief in defeating them.
- **The Three Giants:** Three brothers who kidnapped the young woman and planned to eat a child and marry the woman.
- **The King (child):** The child that the giants intended to eat, who later grows up to become the king and rewards the Black Thief for saving his life.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What did the young woman tell the Black Thief about the three giants?**
The young woman told the Black Thief that the three giants had kidnapped her from her family and intended for her to marry the eldest giant once she turned eighteen.
2. **How did the Black Thief save the young woman and the child from the giants?**
The Black Thief killed the eldest and second giants by stabbing them when they tried to carry him, and with the help of the young woman, he killed the youngest giant as well.
3. **What was in the giant's cauldron that saved the Black Thief's life?**
The cauldron contained healing water that the young woman used to heal the Black Thief's wounds after the battle with the giants.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the Black Thief's bravery and quick thinking in the face of danger define his role as a hero in this story?
2. What does the young woman's resourcefulness and bravery in helping the Black Thief defeat the giants suggest about the importance of partnership in overcoming adversity?

The Palace in the Rath

Summary

In this story, a humble little man of straw enters a magical rath and sees fairies dancing and singing. He enjoys their performance and, at the right moment, contributes a witty addition to their song, earning their gratitude. As a reward, the fairies remove the hump from his back. Hearing of his success, another humpback, who is cross and selfish, attempts to follow in his footsteps. However, he is rude and ungrateful, so the fairies punish him by adding another hump to his back. The story highlights the virtues of kindness and humility.

Character List

- **The Little Man of Straw:** A poor, honest man skilled in making straw crafts. He encounters fairies in a rath and is rewarded for his kindness and good attitude.
- **The Fairies:** Magical beings who live inside the rath. They reward or punish based on how the visitors interact with them.

- **The Second Humpback:** A cross and selfish man who visits the fairies after hearing about the first man's success but is punished for his rude behaviour.
- **The Fairies' King:** The leader of the fairies, who ultimately decides to reward or punish visitors.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What did the little man of straw witness inside the rath?**
The little man of straw witnessed a great vaulted room filled with fairies dancing and singing to music, all while wearing colourful coats and caps.
2. **How was the little man rewarded by the fairies for helping improve their song?**
The fairies removed the hump from his back as a reward for helping improve their song.
3. **What happened to the second humpback when he visited the fairies and tried to join in the song?**
The second humpback was punished by the fairies for his bad attitude and wrong contribution to the song. They added a second hump to his back.
4. **How did the little man feel when he woke up after his encounter with the fairies?**
He woke up feeling light and strong, delighted that his hump had been removed and that he was fully healed.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the difference in the attitudes of the two humpbacks reflect the story's moral about kindness and humility?
2. What role do the fairies play in teaching lessons about how humans should interact with magical or supernatural forces?
3. How does the magical removal of the hump serve as a symbol for the burdens we carry, and how might kindness and optimism help relieve those burdens in real life?

The Three Sons of the King of Antua

Summary

In this chapter, Cod, the eldest son of the King of Antua, is placed under a bond by a maiden who challenges him to find her and make her his wife within a year and a day. Cod, along with his brothers Cead and Michead, embarks on a journey across seas and lands, facing giants, enchanted creatures, and magical challenges. After numerous battles, Cod eventually defeats the King of the Forest, who had placed a spell on the maiden, and recovers the Healing Water to revive his brothers. The maiden is freed from her enchantment, and Cod returns home to be crowned as king by his father.

Character List

- **Cod:** The eldest son of the King of Antua, placed under a bond to find and marry a maiden. He embarks on an adventure with his brothers, facing numerous challenges.

- **Cead and Michead:** Cod's two brothers who accompany him on his quest and assist him in battling various foes.
- **The Maiden/Cat of Endless Tales:** A beautiful woman who places a bond on Cod. She changes forms between a cat, hound, and swan and is ultimately revealed to be enchanted by the King of the Forest.
- **The Small Giant and the Big Giant:** Two giants who possess Healing Water. Cod fights and kills them in his quest to retrieve the water and save his brothers.
- **The King of the Forest:** A powerful figure who had placed the enchantment on the maiden and is later defeated by Cod.
- **The King of Antua:** The father of Cod, Cead, and Michead, who sends them on their journey and later crowns Cod as king.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What bond was placed upon Cod by the maiden who came from the sea?**

Cod was placed under a bond by the maiden to find her and make her his wife within a year and a day, or else lose his head and all his property.

2. **What forms did the maiden take during different years?**

The maiden transformed into a cat for one year, a hound for another, and a white-feathered swan in the third year.

3. **What happened when Cod and his brothers stayed in the castle with the cat?**

The cat stayed with them for three days and nights, sitting on Cod's breast while he slept. On the fourth day, despite the cat's attempt to stop them, they left the castle.

4. **How did Cod defeat the giants?**

Cod fought the giants one by one, using his sword to kill them after they tried to attack him. He eventually received aid and used healing water to recover.

5. **What did Cod discover when he wore the water-clothes gifted by the maiden?**

When Cod wore the water-clothes, he could walk under water without drowning, which allowed him to reach a castle at the bottom of a lake.

6. **Who were the six men who transformed into balls of fire during the battle?**

The six men were the sons of the King of the White Peaks and the King of the Spotted Peaks. They transformed into balls of fire and disappeared into the clouds after losing the battle to Cod and his brothers.

7. **What did the King of the Forest tell Cod about the Healing Water?**

The King of the Forest informed Cod that the Healing Water had been stolen from him by the Cat of Endless Tales.

8. **How was the maiden freed from her enchantment?**

The maiden was freed from her enchantment after the King of the Forest, who had cast the spell, was defeated. She was revealed to be the Cat of Endless Tales.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Cod's quest to find the maiden reflect themes of perseverance and loyalty in mythology?

2. What role does transformation play in the story, particularly with the changing forms of the maiden and the enchanted creatures Cod encounters?
3. How does the bond placed on Cod at the beginning of the story shape his actions and decisions throughout his journey?
4. How do Cod's brothers, Cead and Michead, contribute to the overall success of the quest, and what does their relationship reveal about sibling loyalty?
5. What might the recurring theme of water—whether in the lake, Healing Water, or water-clothes—symbolise in Cod's journey?

The Haughty Princess

Summary

In this story, a proud princess refuses to marry any of the noblemen her father presents to her, mocking them all with insulting nicknames. Tired of her arrogance, the King forces her to marry the first beggar who comes to the palace. The beggar takes her away, and she lives a life of poverty, learning to cook, clean, and sell goods at the market. She later discovers that her husband is actually King Whiskers, the very suitor she had insulted earlier. Realising her folly, the princess is ashamed but also relieved, and they are reunited in happiness as she is crowned Queen.

Character List

- **The Haughty Princess:** The proud daughter of a king, who refuses to marry any of her noble suitors and mocks them with cruel nicknames. She is humbled after being forced to marry a beggar.
- **The King (her father):** A weary father who, frustrated by his daughter's pride, forces her to marry a beggar.
- **King Whiskers:** The handsome king whom the princess insults. He disguises himself as a beggar to teach her a lesson in humility.
- **The Beggar/Disguised King:** The disguise taken by King Whiskers to humble the proud princess and help her learn the value of humility.
- **The Cook:** A kitchen servant who protects the princess when she starts working in the palace and teaches her the basics of domestic chores.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Why did the King invite all the princes and noblemen to his court?**
The King invited all the princes and noblemen to give his daughter, the proud princess, another chance to choose a husband.
2. **What was the princess's attitude towards the suitors presented to her?**
The princess was extremely arrogant and mocked each of the suitors, giving them insulting nicknames based on their appearance.
3. **Who did the King ultimately decide the princess would marry, and why?**
The King decided to marry the princess to the first beggar or singer who came to the palace because he was frustrated with her pride and refusal to marry any nobleman.
4. **What kind of life did the princess live after marrying the beggar?**
After marrying the beggar, the princess lived a poor and humble life, learning to cook, clean, make baskets, and sell goods at the market.

5. **How did the princess react when she discovered her husband was actually King Whiskers?**

She was shocked, ashamed, and overjoyed when she realised her husband was King Whiskers in disguise, the very man she had insulted earlier.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the princess change from the beginning to the end of the story?
2. What role does the beggar's disguise as King Whiskers play in teaching the princess about the value of character over appearance?
3. How might the story's themes of social class and humility be relevant in today's society?

The Bird of the Golden Land

Summary

In this chapter, a king from Erin, worried about how to divide his crown among his three sons, sets them on a quest to retrieve the Bird of the Golden Land. The sons set out with guidance from an old man, but only the youngest brother, with the help of an enchanted mare, reaches the Golden Land. There, he must complete a series of challenges set by the King of the Golden Land to win the bird. The eldest and second brothers betray him, but the Queen of Three Crowns, who was the bird in disguise, helps the youngest brother escape. He returns home, reveals the truth, and is crowned king by his father.

Character List

- **The King:** A ruler of Erin with three sons, who offers his crown to the son who brings him the Bird of the Golden Land.
- **The Eldest Brother:** The eldest of the three sons, who fails to complete the quest and later betrays the youngest brother.
- **The Second Brother:** The middle son, who also fails to complete the quest and conspires with the eldest brother to betray the youngest.
- **The Youngest Brother:** The hero of the story, who successfully finds the Bird of the Golden Land and wins the King's crown through bravery and resourcefulness.
- **The Old Man:** A guide who helps the brothers by showing them the path to the Golden Land.
- **The Enchanted Mare:** A magical mare who advises and assists the youngest brother on his journey.
- **The Queen of Three Crowns (Bird of the Golden Land):** A powerful queen under an enchantment who becomes the youngest brother's ally and helps him escape from the pit.

Comprehension Questions

1. **What was the King's only valuable possession, and why did he worry about it?**
The King's only valuable possession was his crown, and he worried that his sons would quarrel over it because it was worth more than his lands.

2. **What quest did the King give to his three sons, and why?**

The King told his three sons to retrieve the Bird of the Golden Land, promising to reward the one who brought it back with his crown, hoping to prevent them from fighting over his inheritance.

3. **How did the old man help the brothers on their journey?**

The old man gave them advice and told the eldest brother to use a sledgehammer to break a rock, revealing the path to the Golden Land.

4. **What challenge did the youngest brother face in the Golden Land?**

The youngest brother had to find and rescue the Bird of the Golden Land by successfully finding the hidden King in three increasingly difficult tasks.

5. **What role did the enchanted mare play in helping the youngest brother?**

The enchanted mare gave the youngest brother advice on how to complete the challenges, including telling him where to find the hidden King.

6. **How did the two older brothers betray the youngest brother?**

The two older brothers left the youngest brother behind and took credit for finding the Bird of the Golden Land, planning to claim the crown for themselves.

7. **How did the youngest brother eventually escape and return home?**

With the help of the Queen of Three Crowns, who was originally the Bird of the Golden Land, the youngest brother escaped the pit and returned home.

8. **What was the final outcome for the King and his sons?**

The King, upon learning the truth, was furious but forgave his older sons. He gave his crown to the youngest son, who had truly brought back the Bird of the Golden Land.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the theme of sibling rivalry and betrayal influence the development of the story?
2. What does the youngest brother's journey to the Golden Land reveal about the role of perseverance and courage in overcoming difficult challenges?
3. In what ways does the youngest brother's relationship with the enchanted mare reflect the importance of trust and guidance in achieving success?
4. How does the King's decision to forgive his two older sons shape the moral lesson of the story?

The Enchantment of Gearoidh Iarla

Summary

In this story, Gearoidh Iarla (Earl Gerald), a leader of the Fitzgerald family in Ireland, possessed the magical ability to transform into different forms. His wife, curious about his powers, persuaded him to change into a goldfinch. While in this form, Gearoidh was killed by a hawk. Legend has it that every seven years, Gearoidh rides a silver-shod steed around the Curragh, awaiting the time when he and his knights will awaken to fight for Ireland's freedom once more.

Character List

- **Gearoidh Iarla (Earl Gerald):** A powerful Irish leader with magical abilities, capable of transforming into different forms.
- **Gearoidh's Wife:** A curious and persistent woman who convinces Gearoidh to show her his transformation powers.
- **The Hawk:** The bird that kills Gearoidh when he transforms into a goldfinch.
- **The Knights:** Warriors who sleep in a cave with their horses, awaiting the day they will be awakened for battle.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who was Gearoidh Iarla, and what special power did he possess?**
Gearoidh Iarla, also known as Earl Gerald, was a great leader from the Fitzgerald family in Ireland. He had the power to change his form into anything he wished.
2. **What did Gearoidh's wife want him to do, and why?**
Gearoidh's wife wanted him to show her one of his transformations because she was curious to see him in another form.
3. **What happened when Gearoidh turned into a goldfinch?**
When Gearoidh transformed into a goldfinch to please his wife, a hawk appeared suddenly and killed him before he could change back.
4. **What is said to happen every seven years in relation to Gearoidh Iarla?**
It is said that every seven years, Gearoidh Iarla rides a silver-shod steed around the Curragh, waiting for the day when he will be restored to lead the people of Ireland again.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Gearoidh's tragic transformation into a goldfinch symbolise the dangers of curiosity and meddling with the unknown?
2. What does the legend of Gearoidh Iarla's return every seven years reveal about the Irish belief in heroes returning to lead their people in times of need?

Finn Mac Cool, the Giants and the Small Men

Summary

In this story, Finn Mac Cool is approached by a giant from the Land of the Big Men, whose king seeks Finn's help in guarding his newborn child from a thief who has already stolen his other two sons. Finn agrees and enlists the help of the Small Men, a group of tiny warriors with special abilities. The group discovers that the thief is a witch, the king's sister, who uses invisibility to steal the children. After a battle, the witch is killed by Bowman's arrow. The king is overjoyed and rewards Finn and the Small Men with a great feast and treasures for saving his sons.

Character List

- **Finn Mac Cool:** A legendary Irish warrior and leader of the Fenians, tasked with protecting the newborn child of the King of the Big Men.

- **The King of the Big Men:** A ruler whose children are being stolen by a magical thief. He seeks Finn's help to protect his newborn.
- **The Small Men:** A group of eight small warriors, each possessing unique powers, who assist Finn on his mission.
- **The Witch (King's Sister):** A magical being who, out of spite, steals her brother's children using invisibility.
- **Bowman:** One of the Small Men, whose expert archery allows him to kill the witch and save the children.

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who approached Finn Mac Cool with a message from the King of the Big Men?**
A giant from the Land of the Big Men approached Finn Mac Cool with a message from his king, asking for Finn's help in protecting the king's newborn child from a mysterious thief.
2. **What did the King of the Big Men want from Finn Mac Cool?**
The King of the Big Men wanted Finn to guard his newborn son from the thief who had already stolen his two older sons.
3. **Who were the Small Men, and what special abilities did they have?**
The Small Men were a group of eight tiny warriors, each with unique abilities such as extraordinary hearing, feeling, climbing, and knowing future events.
4. **How did the witch steal the king's children?**
The witch, who was the king's own sister, used magic to become invisible and climbed down the chimney to steal the children.
5. **How did Finn and the Small Men eventually stop the witch?**
They stopped the witch when Bowman, one of the Small Men, shot an arrow into her eye, killing her instantly as she tried to retrieve the stolen children.
6. **What was the outcome for the King of the Big Men after Finn and his team rescued his children?**
The king was overjoyed and rewarded Finn and the Small Men with a great feast and many riches for saving his three sons.

Discussion Questions

1. How do the unique abilities of the Small Men contribute to the success of Finn's mission, and what does this suggest about the value of teamwork?
2. What role does family play in the motivations of the witch, and how does this affect the dynamics between the characters in the story?
3. How does Finn's leadership in protecting the children reflect traditional heroic qualities in Irish folklore?
4. What might the contrast between the giant and Small Men symbolise in terms of strength, skill, and cleverness in facing magical threats?

A Short Guide to Essay Writing

Editing your Rough Draft

Writer Robert Graves said, "There is no such thing as good writing, only good rewriting." To begin the rewriting process, you must edit your rough draft. The editing process is comprised of 3 steps:

1. Add elements to enhance and improve your writing.
2. Correct errors in your writing.
3. Give your rough draft to an editor to double-check for errors in your writing.

You will edit your draft as much as possible on your own, then give it to an editor to make more corrections for you. The first step in editing is to add some style elements to vary your sentences and make your essay more interesting to read.

Vocabulary Requirements

One way we can enhance our writing is through our vocabulary. Read through the checklists below for guidance on how to enhance your writing through vocabulary.

1. Identify a weak or overused verb and replace it with a strong verb: e.g. Replace 'went' or 'said' with more descriptive verbs.
2. Identify a weak or overused adjective and replace it with a quality adjective or extended description.
3. Add an *-ly* adverb: An *-ly* adverb often fits best with a verb.

Sentence Variation Requirements

Another way to improve our writing is by varying sentence style and structure. Read the checklist below for guidance on how to improve your writing through sentence style and structure.

1. Add detail or combine sentences using a *who* clause or a *which* clause.
2. Use a clausal opener by beginning a sentence with one of the following words: when, while, where, as, since, if, although/though, because etc.
3. Use a prepositional opener by beginning a sentence with one of the following words: above, across, around, after, by, during, for, from, in, inside, into, near, of, off, on, outside, over, past, through/throughout, to, under, up, with, without etc.

Read through your rough draft and add the vocabulary and sentence variation guidelines. In each paragraph you must add the vocabulary requirements listed above (strong verb, quality adjective, *-ly* adverb). In each paragraph you must also add the sentence variation requirements listed above (*who/which* clause, clausal opener, prepositional opener).

WEAK/STRONG VERBS: "It was said that they went to Lough Gur" might become 'It was rumoured that they journeyed to Lough Gur.'

AVOID OVERUSED ADJECTIVES: "The dinner looked nice" might become "The soft, steaming rolls and mouthwatering scent of the roast drew everyone to the finely set table."

USE ADVERBS: "As the time dwindled, he scribbled down his answers furiously."

CLAUSES "Peter has played the violin since he was four years old. He competes in many competitions." You can combine these sentences with a *who* clause: "Peter, who has played the violin since he was four, competes in many competitions."

CLAUSAL OPENERS: "Though she had never skied before, Maria was a natural on the slopes."

PREPOSITIONAL OPENER: "After much hard work, they finally completed the project."

Now that you have improved your rough draft through structural and stylistic edits, you can go through your rough draft and eliminate or correct any errors you find. Read through the list below for guidance on what to watch out for in your writing.

Errors to Avoid

1. *Spelling:* Check for any spelling errors.
2. *Subject-Verb Agreement:* Ensure that subjects and verbs agree in number (singular/plural).
3. *Punctuation:* Check for the proper use of commas, semicolons, quotation marks, and full stops.
4. *Capitalisation:* Check proper nouns and the beginning of sentences for capitalisation.
5. *Run-On Sentences and Fragments:* Avoid long, confusing sentences. Make sure every sentence is complete.
6. *Ambiguity:* Avoid vague or unclear language.
7. *Active versus passive Voice:* Use the active voice whenever possible. It is clearer and more direct.
8. *Informal Language:* Avoid slang or colloquial language. Use a formal tone.
9. *Contractions:* Do not use contractions like don't, can't, couldn't etc. Apostrophes should only be used to show possession in formal writing.
10. *Tense Consistency:* Use the same verb tense throughout the essay unless there is a logical reason to switch.
11. *Third Person Writing:* Do not use the first person (I, we, my, our) or second person (you, us).

Read through each paragraph of your rough draft carefully, correcting any errors from the list above.

Finding an Editor

You are now ready to begin the final part of the editing process. You will need to find an editor. Your editor should be somebody in the same class as you or older than you. Give your rough draft to your editor along with the list of errors to avoid. Your editor will read through your rough draft and add additional corrections to it in red pen.

Give your rough draft to an editor. Ask your editor to consult the list of errors to avoid and mark any corrections in a red pen.

Writing the Final Draft

Once you receive your corrected rough draft back from your editor, you are ready to begin your final draft. The final draft is the polished, complete version of your essay that is ready for submission or presentation. The final draft is the most refined version of the work, with minimal mistakes, and should fully communicate the intended message or argument in a cohesive and polished manner.

To write your final draft, you will copy your rough draft in neat handwriting, adding in all your own edits and the corrections from your editor. It is important to use proper formatting when writing your final draft. Formatting is the way that you arrange and present the text of your essay. Read through the guidelines below for a hand-written final draft.

Hand-Written Formatting Requirements:

1. *Write a heading in the top left margin of the first page. The heading is made up of 4 lines. The first line is your name. The second line is the subject. The third line is the assignment. The fourth line is the date.*
2. *Come up with a short title for your essay and write it on top of the first line in the centre of the first page. Remember to CAPITALISE the main words of the title.*
3. *Write in blue or black pen.*
4. *Write in your best handwriting.*
5. *You do not have to skip a line, but you may if you prefer.*
6. *Write all the way to the end of the line (stop where the margin is marked). Do not begin a new line when beginning a new sentence.*
7. *Start a new line when beginning a new paragraph.*
8. *Indent the first line when beginning a new paragraph. To indent a paragraph means to leave a blank space (about 1cm or one finger space) between the left margin and the beginning of the first sentence of your paragraph. It is important to indent a paragraph because it shows the reader that a new paragraph is beginning.*
9. *Number your pages in the top right margin.*

EXAMPLE HEADING:

Mary O'Connor
 English Literature
 Essay on "The Children of Lir"
 23/10/2025

Write your final draft, using your edited rough draft as a guide. Consult the formatting requirements and follow them meticulously.

Glossary

<i>Angashore</i>	a pitiable wretch
<i>Bawn</i>	the pleasure grounds of a castle or noble dwelling
<i>Birredh</i>	a cap
<i>Bothy</i>	a simple shelter or hut in the woods
<i>Cantred</i>	a division of land
<i>Cruith</i>	a form or shape
<i>Currac</i>	a boat made of hides, still used in the west of Ireland
<i>Curragh</i>	the great plain of Kildare, famous for horse racing from earliest times
<i>Dun</i>	a fortified dwelling
<i>Eric</i>	a penalty, usually a fine, imposed by a dead man's family on the one who has caused his death
<i>Keeve</i>	a vat for holding liquid in brewing
<i>Ogham</i>	ancient Irish alphabet, generally used on stone monuments
<i>Ounkran</i>	a cranky, diminutive creature
<i>Rath</i>	a circular dwelling within a fort
<i>Reek</i>	a large pile of turf built up in the shape of a haystack
<i>Samain time</i>	November in the modern calendar. In ancient times, it was the time of an old pagan festival
<i>Sheiling</i>	a bower or shelter in the woods, made of interwoven branches
<i>Sthronshuch</i>	a stranger
<i>Torc</i>	a neck ornament of thin strands of gold twisted in the form of a chain.

Artwork Acknowledgements

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