

Oonagh and Finn McCool

A folktale from Ireland

Recommended Key Stage: KS1 & KS2

Synopsis

Finn begins an argument with Benandonner, a giant who lives across the Irish Sea in Scotland. The two giants throw rocks at each other, finally creating a causeway. When Benandonner comes across the causeway to fight Finn, Finn runs home and asks Oonagh for help. She puts him in the bath and covers him with a sheet. She tells Benandonner that Finn is off beating up another giant but suggests that he can wait for Finn to return. As they are waiting Oonagh sets Benandonner several tasks which she explains Finn does every day to help her with her tasks. Benandonner begins to wonder how strong Finn is and eventually decides that Finn McCool is a giant he doesn't want to mess with and runs off back across the Irish Sea.

Part 1: Share the Story

Show the class the Giant's Causeway - **Resource A**. Use **Resource B** for pictures of an iron griddle and a cooking pot.

Watch **Stories from the Woodshed: Oonagh and Finn McCool**

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

KS1 Questions	KS2 Questions
- What are your favourite parts of this story? Why? - In this story Oonagh tricks Benandonner into completing the jobs that she needs doing. How does she manage this? E.g. How does Oonagh trick Benandonner into getting rid of the cold draughts that blow under the door? - How would you describe Finn McCool at the beginning of the story? What about at the end? Has he learned his lesson? How do you know? - If you were Oonagh, what would you say to Finn after Benandonner has left? - Look at photos of the Giant's Causeway (see Resource A) and think about the story. Do you think the causeway was created as it says in the story? If you don't think the story is correct, why does it tell us this in the story? Can you explain your idea to someone else?	- Did you enjoy any particular sections of this story? Why? - Think of three words to describe each of the three characters: Oonagh, Finn and Benandonner. Can any of your words be applied to more than one character? Why do you think Oonagh helps Finn out? Is it just because she is his wife or do you think there may be a different reason? - In this story Oonagh shows herself to be very clever. Can you think of one time when she is clever? How does your example demonstrate how clever Oonagh is? Tell someone else. Do they have the same example? Do you agree with their ideas? - What advice would you offer to Finn after hearing this story? Would you give the same advice to Benandonner? Why

Part 3: Play the Story

KS1 activities	KS2 activities
Story walk - Students find a partner. - The partners stand in their own space around the room. They have each become Oonagh and Benandonner in their own story worlds. - Read out Resource C line by line. As you read, the students use the space to mime the story as Oonagh and as Benandonner. - Encourage them to think about facial expressions as well as what they can do with their bodies	Tell me more - Divide into pairs. One person is the storyteller, and the other is the listener. - The storyteller says a sentence from part of the story: e.g. 'So off he wandered to the shore to see if there weren't any sea monsters that needed a good beating or two when lo and behold who should be on the other side of the Irish Sea, but a big strapping giant named Benandonner thinking the very same thing.' - The listener then chooses something that they'd like to know more about: 'Tell me more about the sea monsters' or 'Tell me more about the giant named Benandonner'. - The storyteller gives another sentence or two about the chosen aspect: e.g. 'The sea monsters have long slimy green tentacles and they have ten eyes;' or, 'Benandonner has wild red hair and squinty blue eyes set too close together in his head.' - The listener then picks something else from what has just been said to ask about, for example: 'Tell me more about the ten eyes.' - Responses can be kept basic or the challenge could be to bring out the feelings and thoughts of the characters in the story.
Freeze frame - Choose a section of the story to focus on. For example, the moment when Finn first sees Benandonner across the Irish Sea. - Ask for volunteers to be the characters and retell the scene while the students act it out. At the chosen point they freeze. - Encourage everyone else to consider the feelings, thoughts and speech for each of the characters. Feelings can be recorded onto heart shaped paper, thoughts onto cloud shapes and speech onto speech bubble shapes. - These could be pinned/stuck to the characters' clothing and then the scene is photographed. - Groups of students can continue with other sections of the story and feedback ideas to each other during share time.	
Phone call - In pairs, one student is a character from the story – Finn, Oonagh or Benandonner. The other student is a friend or relative (students can take it in turns to be the story character and the friend/ relative) - The story character is going to phone their friend/ relative to tell them all about what has happened to them. - The friend/relative can ask questions, just as in a normal conversation. - Possible questions or question starters could include: - What happened today?	News Interview - In pairs the students carry out interviews as if they were filming a news report for the TV news. - One student is a character who saw what was going on with Oonagh, Finn and Benandonner – an onlooker. The other is the reporter for the TV news. - The reporter asks the onlooker questions about what they saw and what they think was happening. - For example:

Learning Resources

- How were you feeling yesterday before all this happened? - What went through your mind when you....? - Why did you....? - How did you feel when....? - Is there anything you would do differently? - The story character can make things up when they are unsure. For example: Friend: "Oonagh, what did you first think when Finn rushed home and told you what had happened?" Oonagh: "To be honest, I thought Finn was joking but then I saw how scared he looked so I just wanted to help him. He sometimes does things like this without thinking about the consequences."	- Tell me about your life before this all happened. - What went through your mind when you....? - What did you....? - How did you feel when....? - Is there anything you would like to say to....? - The onlooker can reply to the questions as if they had seen the whole thing. - Practise and share interviews, then swap roles. For example: News Reporter: Thank you, Bruce. Here I am on a windy cliff near the Irish Sea talking to XXX (name of the pupil being interviewed) about what they saw happening today. XXX – can you tell us what happened after you saw Finn McCool on the headland? XXX: Well, I saw Finn standing on the cliff top staring over the sea towards Scotland. Then he began jumping up and down, shaking his fist and shouting very loudly. The ground was shaking so much that I nearly fell over! News Reporter: That must have been very scary. How did you feel about that? XXX: I was extremely worried I can tell you. Giants can be so unpredictable, and Finn does not seem particularly clever. News reporter: Can you tell us anything else about the strange occurrences this morning? XXX: Well, suddenly Finn turned and fled for his house and then another enormous giant came splashing out of the sea. At that point I ran back to my house and hid under the covers. News reporter: Thank you XXX. Back to you in the studio Bruce.
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Part 4: Story Stimulus

KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities
A new task for Benandonner - Oonagh needs a new task completing but Finn has not been very helpful – he still hasn't managed to do as she asks. - What could that task be? For example: cleaning the chimney because lots of black soot keeps falling out, washing the windows, taking the giant sheep to a higher meadow... - In groups or independently, think of a new task for Benandonner to complete. Create a story using the suggested story structure and modelled example in Resource D.	A new threat to Oonagh and Finn - Finn has a very quick temper, and he likes to think he is the strongest giant around. How might these get him into more trouble? How can the clever Oonagh save her husband? - Finn has riled up another giant/a dragon/an ogre/a witch who wants to smash and bash him (will he ever learn?) How will Oonagh get rid of the unwelcome guest? - In groups, pairs or individually create a new story using the suggested structure and modelled example in Resource E.

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

Oral stories from Ireland:

The Boyhood of Cú Chulainn

Oisín In Tír Na Nóg

The Shepherd's Dream

Baby Pie

Stories with giants:

Molly Whuppie (England)

Jack and the Beanstalk (England)

Thor and Utgard Loki (Norse)

The BFG by Roald Dahl

The Story Giant by Brian Patten

Wider Curriculum Links

Geography – formation of landscapes and environments

PSHE – managing arguments

Learning Resources

Resource A: The Giant's Causeway



"Giant's Causeway" by Locace is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



"Giants Causeway" by Udri is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Learning Resources

Resource B: Griddle and Cooking Pot



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Resource C: Story Walk

Benandonner: You are pacing around your mountain very angry.

Oonagh: You are tidying the house.

Oonagh: Your husband has just run in shouting! What's he talking about? Calm him down!

Oonagh: Another giant is coming to beat him up!

Oonagh: Scratch your head while you think.

Oonagh: Push Finn into the bathtub. Cover him over with a bed sheet. Tell him to shh!

Benandonner: You are making your huge giant steps towards Finn's house. You bang on the door angrily.

Oonagh: You jump!

Benandonner: You knock more angrily!

Oonagh: Straighten your clothes and smooth your hair before opening the door.

Benandonner: Enter the house and demand to see Finn McCool.

Oonagh: Welcome the enormous giant in and offer him a cup of tea.

Benandonner: Consider this offer, then nod your head and sit down.

Oonagh: Slap your head, you've just remembered you have no fresh water.

Oonagh: Point out of the window at the mountain top where the spring is. Give him a giant pail (bucket) to fill up.

Benandonner: Stride out of the house with the bucket.

Oonagh: Stand at the door and watch with a secret smile on your face!

Benandonner: Heave the top of the mountain off. There's a huge lake of water. Look frightened – Finn must be very strong if he has to do this every time he needs water for a cup of tea!

Benandonner: Scoop up water into your pail. Walk giant steps back to the house.

Oonagh: Thank Benandonner and take the pail.

Learning Resources

Benandonner: Sit down, exhausted.

Oonagh: Slap your head. You need the house turning!

Oonagh: Ask Benandonner to turn the house round while you make the tea. Show him what you mean.

Oonagh: Make some tea and put it in a big iron cooking pot for Benandonner.

Benandonner: Get up, very slowly with tiredness. Go outside the house.

Benandonner: Grab the house with both hands. Wrench it from the ground. Lift it up and turn it around.

Benandonner: Walk back into the house and sit down on the sofa, exhausted.

Oonagh: Stagger over with the big iron cooking point to where Benandonner is now sitting to give him the tea.

Oonagh: Slap your head again; you forgot to offer a cake!

Oonagh: Push an iron griddle into the cake before turning round to give the giant the cake.

Benandonner: You are starving! Have a big bite of the cake.

Benandonner: Argh! There's something very hard in it that has broken your tooth! Spit out your teeth one by one.

Oonagh: Look puzzled as Benandonner spits out teeth then pretend to rock a baby and point to Finn in the bathtub.

Benandonner: A baby?! Look shocked!

Oonagh: Tiptoe over to the bathtub and shush Benandonner with a finger on your lips.

Oonagh: Give the baby (Finn) a cake to eat. Smile proudly at your baby.

Benandonner: Scream and run away!

Oonagh: Hold Finn back as he rushes after Benandonner shouting at him.

Oonagh: Hands on your hips while you tell Finn off for his silly behaviour.

Resource D: Story Plan KS1

Story structure	Notes for my story plan	Modelled example
Benandonner has completed the task Oonagh set for him and she sets a new one.		When Benandonner returned with the pail of water Oonagh thanked him for collecting the water and asked if he would help her by lighting the fire so she could make the tea.
He agrees to complete the task because Oonagh asks so nicely.		Benandonner leant into the fireplace to light the logs when suddenly a great clump of soot landed on his head. As he looked up into the chimney another large clump fell right onto his face making him cough and choke
Oonagh explains how Finn usually does the task and he tries to copy but it doesn't work.		Oonagh was very apologetic as she explained that Finn usually gently blows the soot out every day. Benandonner had a go but only ended up with more soot in his eyes.
Benandonner then completes the task		So he stomped out of the house, clambered up onto the roof, pulled the chimney off and shook all the soot out of it.
Oonagh is very pleased.		When Benandonner had climbed back down he lit the fire and Oonagh began making the tea.

Resource E: Story Plan KS2

Story structure	Notes for my story plan	Modelled example
Finn runs home to tell Oonagh what has happened and he hides.		Finn came tearing into the house yelling that a wicked old witch was following him, trying to curse him. He dove under the bed to hide. Oonagh dashed into the garden, grabbed one of their garden gnomes and went back inside.
The creature arrives and Oonagh invites them in.		When the door of their house bust open in a flash of blue flame Oonagh calmly and quietly welcomed the wicked old witch into the house and offered her some tea.
Oonagh sets a task for the creature to complete.		While making the tea Oonagh showed the witch the gnome and asked if she would take it outside to put it with the others, explaining that Finn is very good at turning people who anger him into gnomes.
The creature becomes worried that Finn is stronger than they thought.		The witch took the gnome out to the garden and found lots of others! Some fishing, some reading and one even riding a broomstick. She became worried that if she kept trying to put a spell onto Finn then he would turn her into a garden gnome.
The creature leaves and Finn comes out of hiding.		The wicked old witch went back into the house and thanked Oonagh for her kind offer of tea but time was getting on and she had lots to do. As the wicked old witch left in a hurry, Finn scrambled out from under the bed and ran to the door shouting that she should never come back

