



RONAN MOORE

FIONN AND THE FIANNA

Teacher's Guide

INTRODUCTION

Fionn and the Fianna by Ronan Moore is a novel suitable for readers 8 – 13. For teachers who chose it as a class reader or have shared video extracts of the books – available on ronanmoore.ie – the following is a list of stimulus questions for classes as well as activities across a broad range of topics to engage the young reader.

FIONN AND THE FIANNA

In the second book from Ronan Moore, we meet the teenage Fionn McCumhall who now leads the legendary Fianna warriors. However, not everything is as it should be. The Fianna are not the force they once were, and they are now facing many threats. There are stories of Fionn's arch-enemy – Áed 'Goll' MacMorna – raising an enemy force overseas, while rumours abound of Fionn's evil grandfather – the old chief Druid Tadg – raising an army from the Otherworld below.

Accompanied by his loyal Irish wolfhound Conbec and his closest friends – Cana, Cnes and Iollan – Fionn and his band of warriors must survive a series of incredible adventures which culminate in an epic final battle where they fight for the future of Ireland.

Inspired by a collection of ancient Irish manuscripts, Fionn and the Fianna is the thrilling tale of Ireland's most legendary hero – one that breathes life into well-known stories such as 'The Giant's Causeway' and 'The Enchanted Deer' as well as introducing us to the magical, mystical world of the Fianna, all reimagined and beautifully illustrated to excite young readers.

STIMULUS & GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Describe the characters of Fionn and Cana in the first scene of this book. To help your answer, use their actions, what they say, how they say it, and what they think.
2. How does Fionn manage to convince his uncle Crimmal that women should be allowed to become members of the Fianna in the first chapter?
3. Similes compare two things using the words like, as or than. In the Giant's Causeway, the giant's 'dark hair, moustache and beard, still dripping with seawater, were like overgrown bushes filled with briars' (pg 48). Can you find other similes in the book or make up your own to describe someone who is very strong, fast, tall or small?
4. A cliff-hanger is a dramatic and exciting ending to a chapter leaving the reader in suspense and excited to read what happens next. Can you find an example of a cliff-hanger from the end of one chapter in the book? Explain how it left you in suspense or excited to read on.
5. What sort of images (visual pictures) does the author create when describing Goll's camp in Cymru in the third chapter', pg 24-36?
6. Explain how the characters of Fionn and Sadb are similar, and how they are different? (Compare and contrast).
7. How does the author create tension in Chapter 5, in the lead up to the deaths of Raigne and Úaine?
8. How does Tadg know what is happened around Rathcroghan while he is inside in the sidhe?
9. How does the weather (the squall) add to the end of Chapter 6?
10. Justice and revenge. What is the difference? And how do they come up in the book? Is Goll seeking justice or revenge? Explain why?
11. Would you like to live during this time in Irish history? Why or why not?
12. Return to the end of Chapter 8, pg 124. Write out a section explaining what happens to Cana as the phantom cavalry of the sidhe approach.

13. Pretend you are Eitne and write a series of diary entries based on the hunt for the Lake Monster in the second chapter. For ideas –

- Write about what you have heard after you arrive to the villages surrounding the lake.
- Write about what happens after you and your fellow Fianna warriors become stranded on the island after the lake monster attacks your boat.
- Write about the night before the King of the Otters blocks the underground channel.
- Write about what happens after you defeat the lake monster.

BE INSPIRED!

Did you know that part of the lake monster story is inspired by the real Loch Fuinseann (Funshinagh)?! Check it out on Google Maps! Have a look at other parts of Ireland or the world and come up with a short story involving how they look from above.

MEDIA & FILM

1. Pretend you are a news reporter. Write a news report about one of the hurling matches the Fiannaplay.

2. Pretend you are pitching Fionn and the Fianna to a production company so it might be made into a film. Write out a 25 word (or less) 'log-line' to describe and sell the story.

BE INSPIRED!

Fiacha and Cnes's holding of the Bearna Baoil against Goll's men is partly inspired by the Battle of Thermopylae from Ancient Greece. Google this battle and find out how a small group of Spartan warriors held back a much greater force!

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DRAMA

1. Imagine you are directing a drama version in a theatre. How would you set up the very first scene on-stage, where Fionn is preparing for his ceremony where he becomes the Champion of the Fianna?
2. Carry out a mock post-conflict interview from the Monsters of Sidhe chapter with one of the Fianna warriors. Someone pretend to be the interviewer, and the other could be a Fianna warrior. Check out a few post-match interviews online for some ideas.
3. Pretend you are a member of the Fianna. Present a 'Crime-Call' episode where you are looking for information leading to the whereabouts of Tadg, Lachtna and their accomplices after the deaths of Úaine and Raigne.
4. Pretend you are a news reporter at the scene of the Battle of Ventry and describe events that are taking place. Have someone pretend to be live in-studio asking the questions.
5. Choose a few lines of your favourite dialogue between at least two characters and act out the scene. Try it again, but this time change the tone of your voice. Does this change anything?
6. Choose a scene where just one character is present and write and act out a few lines, which will show the audience how they are thinking.

HISTORY

- Ogham was an early form of writing used in Celtic times. It was mostly seen in a series of notches cut into standing stones. But it is also believed that such notches could be cut into pieces of wood to help communicate basic messages. Google 'Ogham writing' and design a secret Ogham message.
- Many place names in Ireland have an interesting history behind them. For example, the original meaning of the village of 'Annascual' on the Dingle Peninsula is the 'River of the Shadows', which is where a battle takes place in the final chapter. Can you find any interesting place names and their origin near where you live or go to school?
- Ringforts, cashels, crannógs, cist graves, standing stones, ogham stones are just some of the types of places associated with the Celts. Are there any Celtic remains near you or in your county?
- Imagine you are on an archaeological dig at Rathcroghan. What do you think you might find?

GEOGRAPHY

- Print out a blank map of Ireland and fill it in with all the rivers, lakes, mountains and locations mentioned in Fionn and the Fianna.
- Draw out the sea voyage that Tadhg makes from the Bay of Leathros to the Isle of Manau, and then around the south-west and up the Shannon. Stick in where you think Ernemis fought her sea-battle; and Ventry Beach.
- Aside from Loch Fuinseann, which looks very unusual from above, there is something interesting about the lake that also partly inspired the story. It is a 'turlough'. What does this mean?

GAEILGE

- Many of the wolfhounds from ancient Celtic tales are given Irish names that also described the type of wolfhound they were. For instance, the wolfhound Luas was known for being fast; Searc was an affectionate wolfhound (to his friends!), and Fuaim made great noise in battle. Come up with some other wolfhound names in Irish and describe the type of wolfhound they are. Perhaps put them in a short story.

FASHION AND DESIGN

- Draw what a Fianna or Celtic warrior might wear going into battle.
- Design and draw a lunula or torc. Google them for ideas.

ART

- Design a 'Wanted' poster for Tadhg and/or Lachtna
- Have a look at the type of writing (calligraphy) in the Book of Kells and write out the first line of any chapter using similar calligraphy.
- Draw the Suileach.
- Draw any setting from the book.

FOOD

- Design a three-course meal using only food, drink and herbs that could be found in Ireland during Celtic times. Put it onto a menu card.

MUSIC

- Research musical instruments used during Celtic times and do a one-page report on it. Don't forget to draw the musical instrument!

SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)

- Fionn was the son of Cumhall, who was the son of Trénmor. He was also the son of Muirne, who was the daughter of Tadg. Draw out a family tree to show this and your own family tree.
- Many characters give each other advice during the story. Write a letter to your future self. In the letter make sure to include plenty of advice.

CIVIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION (CSPE)

- The Celts had a very well-developed set of laws called Brehon Law. Google it and find a Brehon Law you think makes very good sense. And then find a very strange-sounding Brehon Law.

NATURE

- The Celts celebrated seven types of trees above all others: the oak; the pine; the apple tree; the ash; the yew; the holly; and the hazel. These were referred to as the noble trees. Do a project on one of these trees and don't forget to draw out the leaves of your chosen tree!

BE INSPIRED!

Covey's trick in getting a herd of horses to follow him is partly inspired by a similar tale involving notorious Irish-Australian bushranger, Ned Kelly. Google 'Ned Kelly' to find out some interesting facts about him.

SPORT

- Brandubh and fidchell were like Celtic versions of chess. Design your own fidchell or brandubh board and pieces. Come up with some rules if you can!