



RONAN MOORE

YOUNG FIONN

Teacher's Guide

INTRODUCTION

Young Fionn 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.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Discover the boy who became a legend.

He is Ireland's most famous warrior, a legendary figure who has enchanted children for millennia. But who really was Fionn MacCumhail? And what was he like when he was a child?

inspired by an ancient twelfth-century manuscript, Ronan Moore brings young Fionn to life in a series of wild adventures, including the well-known myths of the Salmon of Knowledge and the Dragon of Tara.

Cheeky Fionn is on the run from his father's enemies – who want him dead. Travel with him as he journeys throughout Ireland, outwitting adults, evading capture and training to become the greatest leader Ireland has ever known.

GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the characters of Tadg and Muirne 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. What does Muirne do to turn off her 'would-be' husbands in the first chapter.
3. How does the author use the dreams of Cumhall throughout the second chapter to help create tension (suspense)?
4. What sort of images (visual pictures) does the author create when describing Tadg in the second chapter, pg 28-30?
5. How did Bodhmall and Breac know Fionn was in danger in the chapter 'The Three Blind Smiths'?
6. If you had to leave home immediately because you were no longer safe, what ten things would you bring with you?
7. Explain how the characters of Bodhmall and Breac are similar, and how they are different? (Compare and contrast).
8. A cliff-hanger is a dramatic and exciting ending to a chapter that leaves 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?
9. Similes compare two things using the words like, as or than. For example, Beirgín is 'stronger than five men and faster than the western wind', pg 67. Can you find other similes in the book or make up your own to describe someone who is very strong, fast, tall or small?
10. How does the weather (the rain) and time of day (night-fall) add to the chapter, 'The Grey of Luachra'?
11. What is the difference between justice and revenge? And how do they come up in the book? Is Fionn seeking justice or revenge? Explain why?
12. Would you like to live during this time in Irish history? Why or why not?
13. Imagine you are trying to promote one or all of the Kingdoms of Kerry. Design a tourist brochure that will invite people to stay.
14. Return to the end of Chapter 3, pg 75. Write out one final section explaining what happens next with Bodhmall and Breac.
15. Pretend you are Cana and write a series of diary entries based on the chapter 'The Hurlers of Donard'. For ideas:
 - Write about how you feel that someone is watching the training.
 - Write about what happens after your brother Iollan is injured in training.
 - Write about the first time you meet Fionn.
 - Write about the night before or after your first match.

MEDIA & FILM

1.Pretend you are a news reporter. Write a news report about one of the hurling matches that Clan Donard play.

2.Pretend you are pitching Young Fionn 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!

DRAMA

1.Imagine you are directing a drama version in a theatre. How would you set up the very first scene on-stage, where Tadg is looking for Muirne? What would the characters be wearing? What sort of set or props would you have? What sort of lighting on stage? Any sound effects?

2.Pretend you are a news reporter at the scene of the Battle of Cnucha or the Dragon of Tara final conflict. Describe the events that are taking place. Have someone pretend to be live in-studio asking the questions!

3.Carry out a mock post-match interview after one of the hurling matches in the chapter 'The Hurlers of Donard'. Have someone pretend to be the interviewer, and the other could be Fionn or Cana. Check out a few post-match interviews online for some ideas!

4.Pretend you are a member of the Fianna and that you are loyal to Goll. Present a 'Crime-Call' episode where you are looking for information leading to the whereabouts of Fionn.

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.

FASHION AND DESIGN

- Design a costume that a Celtic man or woman might wear for a feast?
- Pretend you are one of the Three Blind Smiths and design a piece of jewellery for the evil lord Rígán. Google 'Ancient Celtic jewellery' for some ideas.

GET INSPIRED!

Did you know that the story of how the Three Blind Smiths became blind in Young Fionn, was partly inspired by a legend involving the construction of Prague's Astronomical Clock attached to the Old Town Hall in the Czech capital? Legend has it that a clock-maker called Hanuš made it and was then blinded so he could not repeat his work! Google it and re-write a short story inspired by this.

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. Torc Mountain in Kerry is known in Irish as Sliabh Torc, meaning 'mountain of wild boar'. 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 and 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 the Battle of Cnucha site. What do you think you might find?

GEOGRAPHY

- Print out a blank map of Ireland and begin filling it in with all the rivers, lakes, mountains and locations mentioned in Young Fionn.
- Cana and Iollán leave their home on the slopes of Slieve Donard to go to Fionn's camp in Connemara. On pg 177, Cana awakes on the slopes of Slieve Fuad to the sound of what is actually the Dragon of Tara. See if you can locate it on a map and guess what route they might have taken.
- On pg 39, Dúnán is sleeping on the slopes of Croghan Hill in Offaly. Google 'Croghan Hill' and discover what is interesting about this very old hill.

ART

- Design a 'Wanted' poster for Fionn.
- 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 Dealra Dubh.
- Draw any setting from the book.

FOOD

- Design a three-course meal only using 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. Draw out your own family tree.
- Cumhall gave advice to his son Fionn in his dream. 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!

The final showdown between Fionn and the Wild Boar of Torc Mountain story is partly inspired by the unusual fact that pigs are unable to sweat! Research pigs, horses, sheep, cattle and goats (or any other animal) and come up with your own set of 5 unusual facts.

SPORT

- The sport of hurling existed as far back as Celtic times. When Fionn tries to make himself a hurl, he has difficulty because he uses the wrong sort of wood. What tree is used to make a hurl and why?
- Brandubh and fidchell were Celtic versions of chess. Design your own fidchell or brandubh board and pieces. Come up with some rules if you can!