

TEACHERS' NOTES

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Katie and The Leprechaun

Written by Kathryn England

Illustrated by Emma Stuart

Synopsis

Katie and the Leprechaun is the story of a no-nonsense girl named Katie O'Reilly and an irritating leprechaun named Paddy Fitzpatrick. When Katie meets Paddy in the park she soon discovers that having a sensible conversation with a leprechaun is all but impossible. Paddy tells her he is a one-shoe maker fresh out of ideas for a new design. Being naturally good-natured, Katie agrees to help. This turns out to be an exercise in frustration but Katie does eventually come up with a solution to Paddy's design problem. Annoying as Paddy Fitzpatrick has been, he is a very grateful leprechaun and leaves Katie a surprising reward.

Author motivation

The author's motivation in writing this book was to demonstrate the innate caring nature of children and their capacity to find solutions to problems.

Author Background Information

Kathryn grew up with an older brother near a river on the outskirts of Sydney. She has always been an avid reader and first realised she could spin a yarn herself when a teacher read a humorous story she'd written as a homework assignment to the class. The chuckles it received from classmates left a lasting impression on Kathryn in that she realised she could write something that brought pleasure to others. She can still recall the look on the teacher's face and the inflection in her voice as she used her narration skills to enhance aspects of the story. It was not until many years later that Kathryn's mother enrolled her in a creative writing correspondence course where she learned the finer points of writing. She has published fiction, non fiction and picture books with trade and educational publishers. Katie and the Leprechaun is her first book with New Frontier.



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Illustrator Background Information

Emma Stuart has been illustrating children's books for the past 12 years. In that time she has had over 35 books published. Emma works primarily with water colours, but also works with acrylics, oils, pen and ink and pencil. Her characters are full of life and bring a real sense of 'light heartedness' to the reader. Emma works in a large range of genre's and styles, from highly detailed realism to simple character based illustration.

'I love all forms of visual art, from oil painting to fine drawings to brightly coloured illustration. The thing I find so fascinating about illustrating for children's books is the way that the characters come to me. It's like magic, the characters already exist, I just bring them to life through illustration'.

Educational Applicability

The theme of this book is character values. It illustrates perseverance, kindness and resourcefulness. It also deals with myths and legends.



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DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before Reading the Book

1. List some character values, such as responsibility, fairness and respect and ask the children to name others.
2. Talk to the children about myths, legends and fairytales. Is there a difference between them? Are certain myths, legends or fairytales peculiar to certain countries?
3. The Irish have leprechauns. Does Australia have its own mythical or legendary creature?
4. Discuss how the leprechaun in the story is dressed in green. Why is green associated with Ireland? Are there colours that are associated with Australia? Expanding on this topic, discuss how colours can be used to describe emotions (green with envy) or situations (red for danger).

After Reading the Book

1. What sort of child is Katie O'Reilly? Should a person expect a reward for helping someone? Discuss how Katie helped Paddy without expecting anything in return and even used her lunch money to buy the thongs. What sort of good luck might Katie expect to receive after finding the leprechaun shoe?
2. Are the children familiar with the The Elves and the Shoemaker fairytale referred to in the story? Is there really a leprechaun in it? Is Katie right in saying that fairytales are easier to remember than other stories and, if so, why?
3. Katie mentions a great grandfather who came to Australia from Ireland. How many children in the class have grandparents or parents who came to Australia from another country? Are those children aware of myths, legends or fairytales associated with those countries? Perhaps they can ask parents or grandparents for help with this and relay any stories to the class.
4. Has Paddy elevated his status by referring to himself as an Irish legend rather than an Irish myth? Ask the children to do their own Internet research on leprechauns.

ACTIVITIES

Design

Ask the children to draw some of the shoes referred to in the story. Have them design a shoe for each member of their family eg a boot for dad, high heels for mum, slippers for their grandmother. What sort of shoe would they design for themselves? Have them draw a silly shoe.

Language

Ask the children to say leith broghan over and over quickly. If the emphasis is placed on the 'ghan' in broghan, they will hear the similarity between the words leith broghan and leprechaun.

Emotions

Katie goes through a range of emotions in the story. Have the children identify the illustrations that depict



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anger, pain, frustration, surprise and worry. What other emotions could be drawn on Katie by an illustrator.

World Map

On a map of the world, label some countries or regions. Print out small pictures of mythical or legendary creatures and see if the children can pin them to their country of origin eg leprechauns, Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, the Yeti, Pegasus, the Chinese/oriental dragon (this is the type with the serpentine body rather than the winged variety), bunyips and yowies can be matched to Ireland, North America, Scotland, the Himalayas, Greece, China and Australia.



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