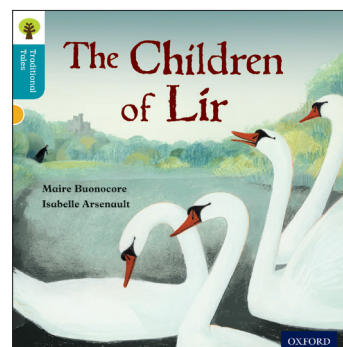**Traditional Tales**

The Children of Lir

Written by Maire Buonocore and illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault
Teaching notes written by Pam Dowson
Information about assessment and curriculum links can be found at the end of these Teaching Notes.

Background to the story

- Traditional tales have been told for many years. They help to keep alive the richness of storytelling language and traditions from different cultures. These tales, many of which will be familiar to the children, are rich in patterned language and provide a springboard for their own storytelling and writing.

- This journey story is an Irish legend, one of many where people are changed into animals. It is a story of good versus evil.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Ask: *Do you know of any stories where magic changes people into animals?* After reading the story, the children could read Roald Dahl's *The Magic Finger*, where people are turned into ducks.

- Ask: *Do you know of any stories where a jealous character creates problems for others?* (e.g. 'Snow White')

- This is a legend – tell the children that legends are based on real people or events, but that they often include magical or supernatural elements. Ask: *What other legends do you know?* (e.g. 'Robin Hood', 'King Arthur' and 'Finn MacCool and the Giant's Causeway')

- Look at the cover of the book and read the title together. Ask: *How do you think the swans are linked to the title?*

- All the words in this story are decodable. However, we've listed some of the more challenging words on the inside front cover of the book, to help build familiarity with these before children read the story for themselves.

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story. Remember to give them lots of encouragement and praise as they read.

- Check that the children understand the meaning of the words *doomed* (page 11) and *form* (page 13).

- Pause at page 19. Ask: *What do you think is going to happen next? What will King Lir do?*

- At page 23, ask the children to focus on the final sentence, *Lightning flashed and thunder crashed*, noticing the rhyming words that add emphasis.

Returning to the story

- Ask: *Why did the Queen turn the children into swans?*

- Ask the children to find alternative spellings for the long /oo/ in the book, for example: gr**ew** (page 3), r**oo**m (page 4), thr**ough** (page 9), m**o**ved (page 14) and fl**ute** (page 27).

- Return to the Queen's spell, cast to turn the children into swans (pages 11 to 12). Ask the children to explain the spell's conditions. Ask: *Where did the swans have to go? How could the spell be broken?*

- Ask: *What thoughts might the children of Lir have had at the end of the story?*

Storytelling and Drama

- Split the class into five small groups. Assign one chapter to each group. Ask them to rehearse an oral retelling of their chapter. Provide copies of the story map available on www.oxfordprimary.co.uk/tradtales for the children to refer to.

- Encourage each group to find their own way of retelling their part of the story. They might choose to have one narrator, whilst others in the group mime the action as the story is told. They might tell the story from a particular character's point of view. Or, they may decide to act out their chapter in role, with a speaking part each.

- Allow sufficient time for the children to plan and rehearse their retelling. Then tell the whole story as a class with each group performing their chapter. After the performance, talk about the different techniques used in the retelling and what they thought was particularly effective.

Writing

- Re-read pages 20 to 23, where the Queen is banished from the kingdom and the King destroys the wand. Ask: *What might have happened if the King had made the Queen reverse the magic spell at this point?*

- Talk about how this would change the story and which events from the original story would not have happened. Ask the children to think what might happen in this new version of the story. Encourage them to think about the characters' actions, for example, how King Lir could have ensured the Queen carried out his wishes and how she would have reversed the spell. Ask: *How would the children have felt? What might the King decide to do about the Queen afterwards?*

- As a class activity, gather ideas, noting key points on the board. Encourage the children to discuss their ideas and to elaborate and build on suggestions from other children in the class.

- Ask the children to write new versions for the story ending. They can use the outline of the story created during the class discussion as a basis for their individual writing. Alternatively, they may want to write their own alternative ending. Encourage them to include details of characters' thoughts and feelings as well as events and actions.

Links to the wider curriculum

Science
- Find out about swans: their habitats, life cycle, characteristics, etc.

Geography
- Look at a map of Ireland and find the lakes and rivers where swans might live.

Art and design
- Make paper feathers and use these to create a large class collage of a swan in flight.

Music
- Listen to some of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake.*
- Use minor chords to compose some music to suggest the singing of the swans.

PSHE and Citizenship
- The Queen's behaviour was driven by jealousy. Talk about what makes us feel jealous and the effects this can have on ourselves and others.

For more ideas on how to use this book in the classroom use the *Traditional Tales Handbook.*

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The Children of Lir (Oxford Level 9) curriculum coverage chart

Links to Oxford Reading Criterion Scale:

- Can make predictions about a text using a range of clues. (D) [ORCS Standard 3, 7]
- Can provide simple explanations about events or information. (D) [ORCS Standard 3, 9]
- Can read aloud with intonation, taking into account a wider range of punctuation (. ? ! ,). (READ) [ORCS Standard 3, 15]
- Can read all of the high frequency words, up to and including the Y1/2 high frequency word list (demonstrates fluent and automatic reading of frequently encountered words). (READ) [ORCS Standard 3, 16]
- Can explain the meaning of interesting 'WOW' words in context including words with common prefixes and suffixes. (D) [ORCS Standard 3, 17]
- Can summarise a story, giving the main points clearly in sequence. (R) [ORCS Standard 3, 18]

ENGLAND The National Curriculum in England: Year 2

Spoken language	Pupils should be taught to use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas (SpokLang.7) Pupils should be taught to participate in discussions, presentations, performances and debates (SpokLang.9) Pupils should be taught to select and use appropriate registers for effective communication (SpokLang.12)
Reading: Word reading	Pupils should be taught to read accurately by blending the sounds in words that contain the graphemes taught so far, especially recognising alternative sounds for graphemes (Y2 ReadWord.2) Pupils should be taught to read aloud books closely matched to their improving phonic knowledge, sounding out unfamiliar words accurately, automatically and without undue hesitation (Y2 ReadWord.7)
Reading: Comprehension	Pupils should be taught to develop pleasure in reading, motivation to read, vocabulary and understanding by becoming increasingly familiar with and retelling a wider range of stories, fairy stories and traditional tales (Y2 ReadComp.1iii) Pupils should be taught to understand both the books that they can already read accurately and fluently and those that they listen to by drawing on what they already know or on background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher (Y2 ReadComp.2i) Pupils should be taught to understand both the books that they can already read accurately and fluently and those that they listen to by making inferences on the basis of what is being said and done (Y2 ReadComp.2iii)
Writing: Composition	Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional) (Y2 WritComp.1i) Pupils should be taught to consider what they are going to write before beginning by planning or saying out loud what they are going to write about (Y2 WritComp.2i) Pupils should be taught to consider what they are going to write before beginning by writing down ideas and/or key words, including new vocabulary (Y2 WritComp.2ii)

SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence: Literacy and English experiences and outcomes – First Level

Listening and talking	I am exploring how pace, gesture, expression, emphasis and choice of words are used to engage others, and I can use what I learn (ENG 1-03a) When I engage with others, I know when and how to listen, when to talk, how much to say, when to ask questions and how to respond with respect (LIT 1-02a) When listening and talking with others for different purposes, I can exchange information, experiences, explanations, ideas and opinions, and clarify points by asking questions or by asking others to say more (LIT 1-09a)
Reading	I can use my knowledge of sight vocabulary, phonics, context clues, punctuation and grammar to read with understanding and expression (ENG 1-12a) I can share my thoughts about structure, characters and/or setting, recognise the writer's message and relate it to my own experiences, and comment on the effective choice of words and other features (ENG 1-19a) I am learning to select and use strategies and resources before I read, and as I read, to help make the meaning of texts clear (LIT 1-13a)
Writing	I am learning to use my notes and other types of writing to help me understand information and ideas, explore problems, generate ideas or create new text (LIT 1-25a) By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in a logical sequence and use words which will be interesting and/or useful to others (LIT 1-26a) I can convey information, describe events or processes, share my opinions or persuade my reader in different ways (LIT 1-28a / LIT 1-29a)

WALES Foundation Phase Framework: Year 2

Oracy	Learners are able to share activities and information to complete a task (Y2_OracColl.2)
	Learners are able to retell narratives or information that they have heard, sequencing events correctly (Y2_OracList.5)
	Learners are able to express opinions, giving reasons, and provide appropriate answers to questions (Y2_OracSpea.1)
	Learners are able to adopt a specific role, using appropriate language in structured situations (Y2_OracSpea.7)
Reading	Learners are able to recall and retell narratives and information from texts with some details (Y2_ReadComp.2)
	Learners are able to draw upon relevant personal experience and prior knowledge to support understanding of texts (Y2_ReadComp.4)
	Learners are able to express views about information and details in a text (Y2_ReadResp.1)
	Learners are able to apply the following reading strategies with increasing independence to a range of familiar and unfamiliar texts: phonic strategies; recognition of HFW; context clues; graphic and syntactic clues; self-correction, including re-reading and reading ahead (Y2_ReadStrat.4i–4v)
Writing	Learners are able to understand and use language appropriate to writing (Y2_WritLang.1)
	Learners are able to write for different purposes (Y2_WritMean.2)
	Learners are able to follow a structure in their writing with support (Y2_WritStru.1)
	Learners are able to organise writing with a beginning, middle and end (Y2_WritStru.4)

NORTHERN IRELAND Levels of Progression in Communication across the curriculum: Primary Levels 1 and 2

Talking and listening	Pupils can follow discussions, make contributions and observe conventions of conversation (L2_com_talk.2i)
	Pupils can ask and answer questions to develop understanding (L2_com_talk.2ii)
Reading	Pupils can use visual clues to locate information (L1_com_read.3ii)
	Pupils can use a range of reading strategies (L2_com_read.2)
	Pupils can express opinions and make predictions (L2_com_read.5ii)
Writing	Pupils can express thoughts, feelings and ideas from within their experience using a general vocabulary (L2_com_write.2i)
	Pupils can show a sense of structure and organisation (L2_com_write.2ii)