



Rugby Rebel

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eBook ISBN 978-1-84717-752-0**Gerard Siggins**

Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE & THEMES

Eoin Madden has established himself as a rugby talent at Castlerock. The story opens with Eoin and his friends returning after the summer for the third in a series of adventures, both on and off the pitch.

Supported by his ghostly friend Brian, Eoin plays the history detective, uncovering a mystery that has its origins in a War of Independence execution and brings closure to one of its tragic episodes.

On the pitch, the fortunes of Castlerock continue to develop with the school establishing itself as the emerging force in Leinster schoolboy rugby, and Eoin shares the leading role with his friend Dylan.

The themes explored are:

- Friendship
- Success
- Loyalty
- The War of Independence
- Bullying

SUMMARY

Returning to Castlerock, Eoin and Dylan discover that they will share a room with Alan and Rory again. The adventure begins when they discover that the room has a strange trapdoor under Eoin's bed.

As they ease themselves into the routine of the new term, Eoin is invited to trial for the Junior Cup Team; he manages to secure a place on the team, to the annoyance of his U-14 pals, who had hope that he would be the lynchpin of their team.

Eoin rediscovers his friendship with Brian, his ghostly mentor, and also makes the acquaintance of Kevin, the ghost of Kevin Barry, who was executed during the War of Independence.

When mobile phones begin to disappear from their locked room, the boys decide to investigate the trapdoor. With Brian's help,

they manage to unlock it and discover a system of tunnels running under all the dormitories including a padlocked door that they have no access to.

Using his detective skills and with some help from Kevin, Eoin finds the key for the padlock.

When he and Mr Finn find a weapons cache and a 90-year-old skeleton, an untold story from the War of Independence can be completed and Kevin's ghost is finally able to rest.

Attention turns to their appearance in the Junior Cup final and Mr Carey is visibly distressed. All his preparations are in tatters as a vomiting bug has cut a swathe through the team. He is forced to call Eoin and his pals to fill the breach, which they do admirably, a superb tackle from Dylan securing their win on the final whistle.

APPROACH

This story is entertaining, fast paced and believable, weaving threads from the War of Independence and presenting them from a different perspective.

The story offers the opportunity for wider consideration of one of the figures from that time, Kevin Barry, offering insights into his character. The themes relate easily to SPHE/PDMU and will facilitate a discussion based approach to the novel.

This guide has divided the story into two sections and the activities offer suggestions on developing the themes.

Section 1 The Trap Door Pages 7 - 80

SUMMARY

As the summer holidays draw to a close, Eoin and Dylan squeeze in a last 'kick

about', chatting about the new term and making preparations to leave for Castlerock.

They are billeted again with Rory and Alan in a room with an intriguing trap door under Eoin's bed. Dismissing it when they are unable to open it, Eoin decides to visit the quiet copse in the grounds where he hopes to meet Brian his ghostly friend again.

What sound like gunshots force him to run, however he's unable to see anything suspicious and decides against reporting the incident.

Classes begin and preparations for exams are top priority this year.

Eoin is invited to trial for the junior squad, impressing Mr Carey with a well-worked try.

Eoin's promotion causes annoyance, however class work provides distraction and a class visit to Kilmainham Jail affords Mr Finn the opportunity to recall the story of the execution of Kevin Barry and his rugby connections.

Eoin, encouraged by the junior captain, Devin, conjures a last-minute try and conversion during a friendly match, drawing praise from Mr Carey.

A mobile phone goes missing and suspicion falls on Dylan, creating a nasty atmosphere in the room. Eoin confides in Alan about hearing gunshots and they decide to visit the copse, glimpsing another rugby-shirted ghost disappear into the bushes.

After last lesson next day, Eoin invites Dylan for a jog. Finding themselves at the copse, Dylan is stunned to meet Brian, who tells them he feels the presence of another ghost and hands them an empty bullet case he has found.

Eoin's phone is missing now and when Mr

McCaffery rings Eoin's number as part of his investigation, the distinctive ring tone can be heard coming from under the bed. The headmaster assumes the boys haven't searched carefully enough and leaves. Examining the seal on the trap door they find it cracked and realize the ringing was coming from under the floor.

Mr Finn agrees to research old school papers to discover where the trap door might lead, advising them to secure the door by placing the bed leg over it in the meantime.

Given permission to play for the U-14s Eoin relishes the opportunity to travel home for the match, setting up the winning score in the process.

Visiting the copse again, Eoin and Alan are surprised by the ghost of Kevin Barry, toggled out in his Belvedere kit. In their brief exchange he confirms that he has met Brian. He is unsure why he has been able to materialize except for a suspicion that he has a role to play in an imminent dilemma.

The junior team's first match is an easy win and Mr Carey is able to empty the bench, giving Eoin a last eight minutes of game time.

Brian disturbs Eoin with a set of mysterious instructions he has been given. Eoin, realizing they are the instructions for opening the trap door, enlists the help of Dylan and Alan. Together they open the door and venture into the dark.

Using Alan's torch, they discover a corridor and a heavily bolted and sealed door at the bottom of the stairs.

Spying the stolen phones on a bench, they creep along the corridor until a chink of light from another trapdoor above them alerts them to movement in the room above.

Silently retracing their steps back in the main corridor, they discover that the occupants of the room are Duffy and his gang of bullies. The mystery of the stolen phones is solved.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read pp30-31):** Eoin and Alan seem to have a different understanding of the purpose of taking part in sport. Eoin is anxious to play competitively while Alan is content to enjoy participation. Which view do you think is healthier? Should the purpose of sport be for enjoyment or success?
- **(Read p37):** At Kilmainham, the

class learns about the punishments used, including capital punishment. Today, some countries still use capital punishment for some crimes. Do you agree with capital punishment? Is it justified? What crimes do you think deserve the death sentence?

www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/mar/29/death-penalty-countries-world

www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/

- **(Read p38):** Kevin Barry has a medical career in front of him as a doctor, yet he chooses to become involved in a dangerous rebellion that cost him his life. Today many young people are radicalized and seek to join or support violent causes. What do you think attracts young people to these causes? What might encourage you to place your life in danger?
- **(Read pp30 & 60-61):** Eoin's friends are annoyed that he has chosen to play for the junior cup team, believing that their team is weakened by his absence. Mr Carey is determined to field the best possible junior team as a winning team is prestigious and will reflect well on the school. Should school sport be about presenting the school in the best light? What does this say about the school's focus on winning only?

ACTIVITIES

1. Memories (Read p15)

Eoin is doing a 'clear out' of old toys and books; keeping or dumping belongings without any real thought.

If you had to clear out your belongings, which would you store and which would you throw out?

Choose five for each pile and give reasons for your choice.

2. The Special Place (Read p23)

Eoin uses the secluded copse and rock as a retreat when he wants to be alone and think. It is a special place for him.

Everyone needs a special place where they can feel safe and comfortable.

Describe your special place and explain when you like to use it and why it is special for you. You can add an illustration if you like.

3. The Dream (Read p31)

Alan has a dream that despite his lack of sporting ability, he will play on a

competitive team one day.

Can you describe your sporting dream and explain how you think you might be able to achieve it one day. Add an illustration if you wish.

4. Dear Dixie (Read pp41-42)

Mr Finn watches as Eoin scores and converts in his first junior game and decides to send a text message to Dixie to tell him about it.

Could you help him to compose the text, as he is not very confident using text-speak?

5. Madden (Read pp60-65)

Richie Duffy is annoyed. He blames his own poor performance on the fact that Eoin is back on the team.

That evening he writes home to his father, describing the game, his own performance and how he felt at the way he was treated and humiliated both by the teacher and the rest of the team.

Can you help him to write the letter?

6. Kevin Barry (Read p71)

Eoin has the opportunity to do an interview with the ghost of Kevin Barry, however he is really short of time and needs some help preparing the questions.

Can you help him to prepare 6 questions, which will give Kevin the opportunity to explain a little about his background and why he chose the path of violent revolution instead of a medical career?

7. Technology (Read p76)

Since he materialized, Brian has been amazed at the revolution in technology since the time when he was alive, particularly the things he has seen at the Aviva stadium.

Some of them seem more like magic than technology.

Could you describe and illustrate the five most amazing changes he has seen since he played at the old Lansdowne stadium?

8. The Door (Read p78)

When Eoin, Alan and Dylan climbed down through the trap door, they found two doors, one bolted and one ajar.

Neither door was like anything they had ever seen before. That evening, Dylan decides to make a sketch of the doors, including all the detail of marks and hinges that he can remember. Then he

checks the Internet to see if he can find any information on them.

What he discovers about the bolted door disturbs him.

Recreate his drawing of the bolted door and explain what he discovered on the Internet about it.

Section 2

Kevin Barry's Key

Pages 81 - 176

SUMMARY

Eoin and his friends show their discovery of the tunnel to Mr Finn and Mr Carey, who promise to reprimand Duffy and his friends for the prank.

Eoin isn't convinced he knows the whole story and goes to the copse to ask the ghost of Kevin Barry. Kevin tells Eoin a lot of his personal background, but little else.

Eoin has caught a chill from his trip to the copse and is confined to bed missing the next junior team match. Brian visits him and promises to investigate the mystery door; while Rory brings the good news that the junior team have won their match.

Fit and returned to training Eoin languishes, frustrated in the back row, knowing he is a faster decision-maker than Paudie, the selected out half.

Home for the weekend, Eoin takes the opportunity to talk to his grandfather, Dixie, about rugby and Kevin Barry and welcomes his encouragement.

He is embarrassed to be told by Dylan that Dylan's sister Caoimhe is keeping a scrapbook on him, but graciously agrees to sign it when he meets her later at home.

Eoin has won the out-half selection for the semi final. Seeking the seclusion of the copse, he meets Kevin again who appears to be searching for something but is unsure what it is. Their conversation produces a few more details for Eoin as he unearths a huge key while helping Kevin to search in the soft ground.

Initial thoughts suggest the key will open the bolted door and with Alan he tries without success to gain access.

Eoin decides to visit Kevin's old school, Belvedere College, discovering the key opens an old box that has been on display there for 90 years. The box reveals another key, which Eoin persuades the archivist to loan him to try in the lock at Castlerock.

Accompanied by Mr Finn, the boys make

a startling discovery when the door is unlocked. The room is full of cases and a rifle is propped against a window. The principal and Mr Finn call out the Gardaí who inform them that some of the cases contain rifles and the boys are evacuated for the night to safety.

Returning from their semi-final victory, subdued by a serious injury to Ronan, Eoin is questioned by the Gardaí and learns that a human skeleton has been discovered in the room; it appears that it has been there for a very long time.

Mr Carey is dismayed to learn that a vomiting bug has struck the school and is anxious for the health of his squad as the final looms.

A welcome respite home for Eoin and Dylan sees them enjoy the cinema with Caoimhe and her friend.

The news is not good for Mr Carey as the bug strikes the team forcing him to cast his net into the U-14 squad for replacements, delivering selection for a delighted Rory and Dylan.

The Garda have identified fingerprints found on the rifle and the story is complete. Kevin reveals the skeleton to have been a comrade charged with guarding the cache of weapons.

Kevin's capture and execution meant he was never relieved from duty and introduces him to the ghost of Eugene McCann who died at his post.

Mr Carey is distraught at the injury list, but the team, under the leadership of Devin the captain and the partnership and precision playing of Eoin and Rory, manage to secure another trophy for Castlerock.

After the game, congratulations are slapped all around as Eoin watches Kevin and Brian cavort on the pitch, interrupted by Dixie who introduces him to one of the Leinster Academy coaches who is interested in securing him to play for them. Eoin eagerly agrees.

DISCUSSION POINTS

□ (**Read p93**): Dixie remembers a time in rugby when replacements were only used for injured players. The teams were expected to play the full 80 minutes. Nowadays, a lot of tactical advantage can be gained by bringing on a 'fresh' substitute. Do you think that this has improved the game?

□ (**Read p104**): Kevin Barry recalls how old stories of the 1798 rebellion

influenced his thinking to join the rebels. These battles were more than 100 years old when he was born and his only information was from stories. How do you think these types of stories can influence the way people think about events in the past? Are they myths or menaces? Can they influence how people behave today?

□ (**Read p106**): Kevin admits that he was armed and either fired or attempted to fire his weapon. He may even have been responsible for the death or injury of a soldier. Do you think that this makes him guilty and liable to face punishment? How could you argue that his punishment should have been less because of his age or what he did?

□ (**Read pp157-158**): When the priest reveals that Joe Memery had been killed, Kevin realizes that Eugene is locked in a cellar with no escape facing a slow agonizing death. His excuse for not telling the priest was that the warder was present. Should he simply have revealed the secret location to save his comrade? Which was more important for him, his comrade's life or the rifles?

ACTIVITIES

1. The Out-half (**Read p91**)

Eoin is anxious to establish himself in the out-half position and the captain Devin has encouraged him not to give up.

Can you help Eoin to identify the top 5 qualities that a good out-half needs?

Look at the out-half players in the 6 Nations Championship and access which of the qualities each of them has.

Do a little pen sketch for each and rank them from 1 - 6

news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/rugby_union/rules_and_equipment/6310655.stm
www.rugbyhow.com/rugby-fly-half.html

2. The Scrapbook (**Read p97**)

Caoimhe has begun to keep a scrapbook for Eoin and already has a lot of photos and cuttings.

On the first page in her neat handwriting she has written the introduction to her book, describing Eoin, who he is, how she feels about him and why she has decided to create a scrapbook for him.

Could you create a copy of her introduction page? What do you think it might reveal about how she feels about him?

3. Barry Kevin Prisoner 527 (based on whole section)

Kevin Barry's official British Army file contains a number of reports. The reports contain the detail of what happened and what was said at each point.

Eoin has decided to write a single page fact sheet summarizing the main points from each report.

Could you help him to write the report? You can use the site below for more details en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kevin_Barry

4. Dublin Doorways (Read p113)

As Kevin and Eoin climb the hill from Connolly Station, they admire the beautiful doorways and window boxes.

Kevin remarks that it would be a lovely picture for a postcard and Eoin encourages him to paint the picture.

Could you help him to compose and either paint the picture or create a collage?

Use the link below for more details. www.google.ie/search?q=dublin+doorways+and+window+boxes&tbm=isch

5. The Rifle (Read p128)

Eoin noticed that the rifle has three notches cut into the stock and asked Kevin what they were.

After a short silence Kevin explained that the rifle was fired three times and each of the notches represented a victim.

He explained that each time a bullet found its target there were consequences not only for the victim but also for their

circle of family and friends.

Later Eoin, Alan and Dylan try to conjure an image for each of the targets and how they were affected.

Can you help them create three brief descriptions of what happened to each target and their families?

6. Mystery at Castlerock (Read 131-133)

RTÉ have invited you to help them prepare their news bulletin on the discovery of the hidden room at Castlerock College.

The bulletin has three elements:

- Breaking News strap line scrolling across the bottom of the screen with the main facts.
- A 'To Camera' report from a reporter at the scene giving background and some interviews (Garda/Eoin/Principal)
- A written report for the RTÉ Internet site giving full details and analysis/opinion

Can you work in small groups to prepare the bulletin?

7. Dixie's Story (Read pp143-145)

At home for the weekend, Eoin decides to tell his grandfather about the ghost of Kevin Barry.

Dixie is silent for a long time, then asks Eoin to sit beside him as he has a story of his own from that time.

Eoin is astonished as the tale unfolds.

Can you retell the story you think Dixie might have told him?

8. The Irish Times (Read p147)

Their English teacher Mr Gissings has read the report in the *Irish Times* and is amused by the number of different metaphors the reporter has used.

He sets the class the task of rewriting the piece and adding an illustration to replace each metaphor they find. Their target is 5

He also asks them to rewrite the piece in the same style imagining that the reporter had all the facts about the team illness. How would it be different?

Can you create both pieces?

9. The Brass Case (Read p160)

As Eoin snatches the bullet case out of the air, it grows suddenly very hot in the palm of his hand and he is able to hear the crack of the report and see a flash of what has happened when the bullet was fired.

He decides to add the casing to his history project and write a three-line Haiku poem to go with it.

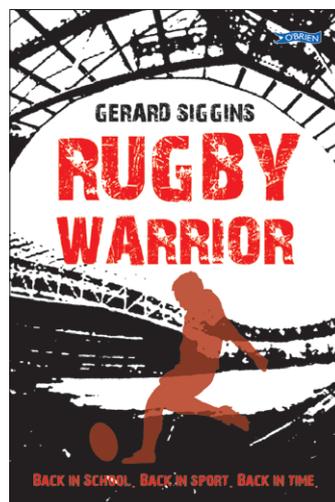
One line will describe the thoughts of the person who fired the shot, the second line will describe the thought of the target and the third line will describe the effect of the shooting.

Can you help him to create the poem? www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-a-haiku/

Read more of Eoin Madden's adventures in Gerard Siggins' other Rugby Spirit books



'brimming with action and mystery'
CBI's Recommended Reads 2012



'young rugby fans will enjoy the adventures of Dublin schoolboy Eoin Madden as he tries to help his school win a cup and, at the same time, solve a ghostly mystery ... a brilliant read for kids aged ten and up' Rugby World

