



Rugby Flyer

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Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE & THEMES

Rugby Flyer continues the rugby career of Eoin Madden as he joins the Leinster Summer Academy and is offered the opportunity to take part in an international tournament at Twickenham.

His circle of ghostly friends and encounters widen to include a Russian émigré fleeing the Revolution as well as a Romanov cousin of the Tsar and his doomed family. The adventure culminates in the discovery of a fabulous treasure.

The themes explored are:

- Courage
- Sportsmanship
- Nature of success
- Endurance
- Values
- Rivalry
- Hope
- Friendship
- Taking responsibility
- Loyalty

SUMMARY

Eoin and Dylan have been selected for the Leinster and Munster Summer Academies respectively, sparking their rivalry. When they visit Eoin's granddad Dixie, his story about a deserted neighbouring house that was once home to his friend Alex, a Russian émigré, and his broken family heirloom, sets them on a search for a fabulous treasure.

A summer sleepover for Eoin and his Castlerock friends creates both a welcome diversion and the opportunity to satisfy the urge to explore the deserted house where Eoin has his first encounter with the ghost of the Russian.

The Academy weekend produces its share of challenges and provides Eoin with the opportunity to make new friends.

Back home, Dylan and Eoin discover that

they have been selected for the Twickenham tournament, Dylan for the Munster squad and Eoin for the Leinster squad.

In London, both squads win through to the semis and Dylan's rivalry intensifies. When they are drawn against each other, Eoin fears for their friendship.

Dylan suffers an injury from a full-blooded tackle and when he has to be hospitalized with a suspected concussion, Eoin's concern for his friend dissolves all thought of rivalry and their friendship is restored.

A ghostly encounter at Twickenham with a pre-war rugby legend and the story of a lost Romanov treasure connected to his grandfather fires Eoin's interest.

With the scene set for a thrilling final, pitting Leinster against Ulster, Eoin has to use all his guile and resources to lead his team to victory.

As they prepare to leave for home, Eoin discovers the true value of the gift he has been given, a gift he is now unable to keep.

Approach:

This story is very fast paced and lively with the characters solid and easy to relate to. The themes relate easily to PSHE / PDMU and will facilitate a discussion-based approach to the novel.

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

Section 1 Leinster Calls Pages 7 - 57

SUMMARY

Tearing open the letter from Leinster Rugby inviting him to take part in their Summer academy, Eoin is subdued that the offer is not from Munster, anticipating the teasing he

will have to endure from Dylan.

Dylan's reaction does not disappoint as they visit Eoin's granddad Dixie.

Dixie encourages Eoin to seize his opportunity before entertaining them with a story of a long dead neighbour, a Russian émigré who fled the Russian Revolution; before surprising Eoin with the gift of a broken egg-shaped bauble fragment that he had been given by the Russian; Dixie feels it's appropriate because it looks like a rugby ball.

Roused from a rugby-themed doze, Eoin learns that Dylan has an invitation to join the Munster academy.

Throwing themselves into practice, they are thrilled to learn that Eoin's mum has invited their friend Alan for a sleepover and Dylan has been included too.

Spotting the bauble, Alan demands an explanation, prompting them to undertake a ghost-hunting excursion to the deserted house.

The house, though dark and foreboding, does not intimidate them and when a silent figure in the white strip and red rose of England materializes on the stairs, they make a strategic exit, but not before Eoin picks up a dusty photo, receiving a wave of acknowledgement from the brooding figure.

Safely home, they briefly consider a return expedition the next day, ruling it out in favour of watching rugby DVDs and a cushion fight.

As departure for the academies approaches, tension shortens Dylan's temper to the point of a blow connecting with Eoin's eyebrow. The sight of a blood smear breaks the tension and Dylan apologises profusely.

When Dixie drops in to wish Eoin luck at the academy, Alan questions him gently (without success) to check if he can establish a connection with the occupant of the now deserted house and his interest in rugby.

Arriving in Dublin for the academy, Eoin befriends Killian, a boy from St Osgur's their old rivals, before they all meet up with Rory and Charlie from Castlerock as the bus takes them to their destination, turning slowly into the familiar grounds of their school, Castlerock College.

Settling in, Eoin and Killian get an idea of what the Academy both promises and expects from them.

Seeking out Brian, his ghost mentor, Eoin thanks him for his advice to accept the Leinster offer and comments on how things have been too quiet since their last adventure.

Bunking down, they discover that they share their dormitory with Marcus McCord, an intimidating loudmouth who manages to deny them a night's sleep, playing his music loudly all night, his own sleep undisturbed, thanks to earplugs.

Drowsy and dulled, Eoin and Killian wake from a fitful sleep, disconnect the music centre and make their way to breakfast without waking McCord, in the hope he will oversleep and be excluded from the Academy.

Their hopes are dashed when an enraged McCord storms into the dining room, just before the deadline.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p10):** Many claim that they can communicate with the spirit world, carrying messages backwards and forwards. Are they deluded? How could you tell whether they are genuine? Why would you need to communicate with ghosts? If the future does not exist yet are they any more likely to know what is about to happen?
- **(Read pp13 & 39):** Fate has assigned Dylan and Eoin to rival rugby camps, with all the different accessories of flags and ritual insults. Why is rivalry the first reaction between teams whether they are competing or not? What emotion drives this? Is it possible for rivalry to have benefits or will it always be a negative emotion?
- **(Read p25):** Alan enjoys playing rugby, but he is not very good at it. Eoin and Dylan are good, but only enjoy it when they are winning and seem to devote a lot of time to improving already good skills. How can participating in sport encourage pleasure in a group activity? Can watching rugby on TV ever be called participation?
- **(Read p44):** McCord's sneering remarks

reveal a prejudice, mocking those who do not attend his school. Why are some judged by the school they attend? Are some schools really better than others or is this simply the attitude of the people who attend them? Why are some schools more popular and how does this affect those who attend them?

ACTIVITIES

1. Rugby Ireland (Read p8)

IARU realizes that rugby is still not as popular as either Gaelic or soccer.

They have announced a collage poster competition targeting both boys and girls U-12 to promote the sport and encourage participation.

They want the poster to have exciting images, facts and short inspirational quotes.

Create a poster for the competition. You can send a copy to O'Brien Press if you wish.

2. What's your Sport? (Read p10)

Rugby, soccer and Gaelic are the three most popular sports in Ireland.

Eoin believes that his skills and temperament best suit rugby.

How are the skills, etc different for each of them?

Draw three player outlines, one for each sport and then list 3 key skills, character traits and physical attributes that each sport requires.

Which are common? Remember that both girls and boys play so consider skills that are not gender specific.

3. On the Face of it (Read p28)

Staring at the front of the old Lubov mansion, Eoin believes that it resembles a face twisted in agony.

It is not unusual for your eye to trick you into seeing a human face.

Look at the images on the site below and then draw in pencil what you think the front of the Lubov house looked like.

www.instantshift.com/2013/08/05/houses-with-human-faces/

4. The Insult (Read p38)

Dylan makes skillful use of insults to goad Eoin. The insults are colourful and entertaining.

Work in small groups to make a list of 10 colourful and entertaining insults without using any inappropriate language.

5. Room Mates (Read p54)

Not everyone can share a room successfully.

Work in small groups to create a profile of your ideal room mate.

List the qualities that they should have and the habits that you definitely could not tolerate.

Now decide how suitable you would be as a room mate. What are your endearing qualities and your annoying habits?

6. Brian's Time (Read pp50-51)

Brian always appears dressed in the same outfit and he has a very limited range of locations where he can materialize; so how do you think he spends his time? Is ghostly time the same as our time?

Use your imagination to create a single daily time line for him to show how he spends his day and entertains himself.

7. Metaphor & Simile (Read p36)

Eoin uses the metaphor, '*faster than a snowflake on a pizza*' to describe how quickly the others disappeared.

Later, for entertainment, as they watch the rugby DVDs, Alan suggests that they create colourful metaphors and similes to describe the action.

He has a sharp wit and is a very keen observer. He creates 5 metaphors and matching similes.

Recreate his list. Use the sites below to help you.

blog.udemy.com/metaphor-examples-for-kids/

examples.yourdictionary.com/metaphor-examples-for-kids.html

www.yourdictionary.com/index.php/pdf/articles/80.differencesmetaphorssimiles.pdf

Section 2 Twickenham Pages 58 - 119

SUMMARY

On the first day at the rugby academy, their performances are measured and recorded. Eoin realizes that talk of friendship is irrelevant as they all vie for selection.

The sessions are demanding, however Eoin is happy to gather tips he can use later.

When the training has finished, Eoin rushes into the dorm first and with expert sleight of hand, 'disappears' the music centre that had disturbed their sleep the previous night;

McCord reacts with rage and frustration.

During a bonding session at the bowling alley they watch with amusement as McCord slips on one of the lanes gifting the final to Eoin's team before storming off in a temper. In the morning Eoin restores the music centre, causing more confusion.

The final sessions offer the opportunity to display the skills they have learned as they contest the coveted places on the team for the Twickenham tournament, with Eoin offering encouragement to Killian and Charlie.

A reckless tackle injures the scrum half, earns McCord a yellow card and gives Killian the chance to replace him.

Eoin offers a few words of support and when McCord fumbles a line out, Killian seizes his opportunity and with a dazzling flash of speed, touches down, between the posts, earning him a call up to join Eoin and Rory.

Back home, Dylan and Eoin swap notes and when they both get confirmation of their trip to Twickenham, excited speculation sees them contest the semi final.

Departure days dawn and Eoin decides on an early jog. Passing the Lubov house he sees a figure standing at the window. Resisting the urge to investigate he waves and returns home.

Arriving at the Leinster offices, there is time for a practice match before they leave. The debrief surprises Eoin when the coach declares that winning is not his priority.

London does not disappoint and Eoin quickly makes friends with some of the Ulster squad.

Discussing the coach's priorities among themselves, Eoin's disagreement has been overheard.

Later, Eoin is relieved when his efforts are praised, believing that his previous comments have been forgotten.

After a tour of Twickenham, Killian remarks on the unusual name for the Obolensky restaurant, Eoin loses his way and encounters a strange figure toggled out in England's kit. Recognizing him as the figure he saw in the Lubov house, Eoin realizes he is a ghost. Alexei Obolensky introduces himself and asks if Eoin seeks the same treasure that he seeks?

Disturbed by groundsmen, Alex disappears and Eoin is directed outside, his head swimming with questions. Reunited with his friends, they go to watch their pals from Ulster crush their Italian opponents.

At the final whistle, they hear a familiar voice

and are persuaded by Dylan to stay and support Munster. Later Eoin stuns him with the news of his encounter with Alex.

Leinster win their first match and while Eoin waits for the second match, he and Dylan visit the Twickenham museum to research Obolensky. They meet him and learn his story and connection to Ireland.

A call from the coach interrupts them. Eoin receives a compliment, as they are led through a few last-minute drills before an outing to the cinema where Eoin sleeps through most of the film.

Eoin's attitude galvanizes before the unknown quantity that is their next opponents, the French side, making it clear that his priority is winning.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p64):** Eoin was able to anticipate McCord's slip and humiliation, yet he decided not to warn him. Why did he not alert him? Was it fair **NOT** to warn him? Is this 'gamesmanship'? Was McCord right to be annoyed that no one warned him?
- **(Read p68):** Each of the provinces organizes coaching academies during the summer. What do you think is the purpose of them? Are they meant to develop the game or to identify and develop an elite group of players? How can developing an elite group encourage wider participation in the sport?
- **(Read p90):** The coaches place a great emphasis on uniformity. The boys eat, train and socialize together. They are also required to dress alike. What is the purpose of this? Are there any dangers in encouraging such close collaboration?
- **(Read p94):** Eoin disagrees with Ted's approach, arguing that the squad needs greater motivation rather than less. Is he right? Does increasing expectations result in higher achievement? When does increased pressure and expectation become counter productive? How can you spot the reversal and what strategies are useful to prevent it?

ACTIVITIES

1. 10 Pins (Read p63)

Most of the boys had never played 10-pin bowling before, however Killian is an expert.

As the others crowd around him, he scribbles a few key points on the scoring and tips on playing on tablemats, using 'stick' men illustrations for effect.

He has time to create only 5 mats before they have to begin.

Create the mats he made.

www.tenpin.co.uk/bowling/bowling-tips/hubpages.com/sports/Dont-Look-At-The-Pins-Bowling-Tips-For-Beginners

2. Personal Best (Read p68)

Ted gives each of the boys an exercise diary and asks them to record their practice times.

Recording your own level of activity is a useful exercise. Do you think that you do enough physical activity?

Compile a weekly diary; recording the different activities you do during the week. What percent of your time is spent in physical activity?

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-young-people.aspx

3. Andrew's Mum (Read p71)

When Andrew was taken to hospital, Ted had to email his mum to tell her of the accident and injury.

The email had to give the information in a reassuring way and include all the facts about the incident without laying any blame or accusation against Marcus McCord. It also had to provide the details of the support that Leinster would provide.

Could you help him to compose the email?

4. Marcus' Head (Read p72)

Marcus sits seething and frustrated watching from the sidelines, his anger directed at everyone except himself for the incident.

What was he thinking as he watched the play?

Draw a large illustration of his head and shoulders only and add at least 5 thought bubbles to show his opinions on what is happening in the game, his frustration at being sin-binned and his feelings towards those he holds responsible for his punishment.

5. Tactics (Read p89)

After the practice game, Ted uses his laptop to show the players some of the moves he thinks would be useful for them and then gives them some drills to practise.

In small groups, look at the moves and drills on the site below and pick two of each that you think he may have suggested and then write a very brief instruction for each of them.

You could also try them out for yourselves during your next PE lesson.

www.rugbytactics.com/

6. The English Russian (Read pp111-114)

Alex confesses that although he is Russian, he is also a proud Englishman. How can he belong to two nationalities?

Draw two interlocking sets from a Venn diagram and then draw Alex inside the overlapping region. One of the sets will represent aspects of English culture and the other Russian.

In the overlapping region are those aspects that he admires from both.

Can you give examples of aspects that he thinks both cultures have in common and which he admires?

7. Advantages (Read pp118-119)

Eoin takes a little time to think of his grandfather Dixie and be grateful for the advantages that he now has which were not available to Dixie's generation.

In small groups, think about some of the aspects of your lives today and decide if you have an advantage over your grandparent's generation.

Choose about 6 headings and then gather information from your grandparents about their experiences when they were young.

Can you find any areas where things have **NOT** improved?

Section 3 The Blue Tsunami Pages 120 - 176

SUMMARY

Leinster's opening games return two comfortable wins, however when the squads are switched at half time against the Welsh in the final group game they face a 10-point deficit.

Before they take the pitch, Alex shares his observation with Eoin of where the Welsh are vulnerable, enabling him to claw back the points before a more disciplined scrum allows Páidí to cross the line, snatching a third win and top spot.

Enjoying a rest, they are stunned to learn that they'll be playing Munster in the semi final. Each boy is now anxious to know if they will be selected.

Charlie and Páidí join Eoin on the team, with Killian on the bench. As they leave the training ground, Dylan ignores Eoin's greeting, hissing a fierce reprimand to him as they pass.

Eoin knows that Dylan will apologise eventually, however the rebuff has annoyed him and as the teams line out, Charlie's good-natured teasing restores his humour.

The contest is tense and tight and with Leinster leading by three points, Eoin launches a ball for his winger to chase. Dylan contests the ball but the momentum of the winger is too much for him to control and he is crushed as the try is scored.

When Eoin sees his friend concussed and stretchered to the ambulance, he pleads to be substituted to accompany him to hospital. They are leading by 10 points with minutes remaining and Ted agrees.

At the hospital, Dylan's injury is not serious and he apologises to Eoin for his behaviour. Eoin learns that Munster have taken advantage of his departure and have levelled the scores, forcing extra time.

A tense few minutes seem like an age before the Munster officials who accompanied Dylan to the hospital, confirm that Leinster have taken another score to secure the win, allowing a relieved Eoin to return and join the celebrations.

At the school where the teams are staying a celebration has been arranged and as the boys mingle Eoin is debriefed on what happened after he left, before he slips away to be alone.

Meeting Alex, he learns that his grandfather's neighbour was a Romanov heir and the treasure he seeks is the half of a fabulous Fabergé egg that had been smuggled out of Russia after the revolution.

Drained by the excitement, Eoin is soon asleep and refreshed in the morning; he joins the squad for a light workout before Ted reveals that special guests have been invited for the match.

With the team named and the final practice completed, the squad is invited to meet the guests for lunch. Ted has surprised them all by arranging for their parents to attend the final and Eoin is delighted to greet his parents and Dixie.

Ted delivers his final briefing and praising them for their performance directs them to bring the trophy back before Eoin leads them out.

Both teams are evenly matched when at half time a chance remark from Ted makes Eoin realize that the bauble Dixie gave him is the other half of the lost Fabergé egg. Sprinting to find Alex, he thrusts it into his astonished grasp before taking the field again seconds before the referee starts the game.

Eoin sees that the game has sapped the stamina from his team and decides to kick a long penalty, setting up Killian for a daring move that pays off dramatically, gifting Leinster the match.

Retrieving his kit bag, Eoin meets Alex who presents him with both halves of the egg as a gift. Eoin is in a dilemma. He knows the worth of the gift and realizes the impact it will have on his life.

Back home he visits the Lubov mansion where he meets the owner of the egg, the ghost of Alexander Romanov who suggests a solution and with Dixie's help Eoin donates the egg to the National Museum for the benefit of all.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p126):** Eoin finds it difficult to see the red shirt of Munster representing the 'enemy'. Why does he feel this way? Should a sporting opponent ever be viewed as an enemy? What is the difference between an opponent and an enemy? Can using this type of language encourage healthy participation in sport?
- **(Read p150):** Eoin offers support to Charlie in an attempt to boost his confidence. Why is self-confidence an important element in sports participation? Where does the difference lie between being self-confident and being arrogant? How can you develop your own self-confidence? Do you need high skill levels to be confident?
- **(Read p156):** "No one remembers who came second," is a comment from the coach. Is their aim to be remembered? Are winning and being remembered the criteria they are to be judged on? What lesson might they learn from this attitude and how would it colour their judgements of other people's skills and achievements?
- **(Read p175):** Dixie commends his grandson's decision to gift the egg to the museum. Do you think Eoin made the correct decision? What impression was the author trying to create about his character? Which other characters might have done the same thing? Who would definitely not have given it up? What might you have done in the same situation?

ACTIVITIES

1. Progression (Read pp120-121)

There are three other teams in Leinster's group and Leinster has won their first two matches. The top team will progress to the

semi finals.

Each team scores 3 points for a win and 1 point for a draw. If there is a tie then tries scored will decide the winner.

Does Leinster **NEED** to win the last match? Could they be caught if they only draw? Draw a result table to check the possibilities.

2. Dylan's Mum (Read p137)

Eoin is very relieved when the doctor tells them that apart from a few bruises, Dylan will be fine.

Realizing that Dylan's mum will be worried, Eoin decides to send her a text explaining what has happened and reassuring her.

Could you help him to compose the text he should send?

3. Munster Red (Read p141)

Munster is seen as an iconic team throughout Europe and Eoin understands perfectly Luigi and Giorgio's desire to play for them.

Listening to them and their ambitions, he decides to write a Haiku poem to express

both their feelings and his own for the team.

The first line expresses the Italians feelings, the second line his own and the third expresses the Munster spirit.

www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-a-haiku/

4. Faberge's Egg (Read p146)

Alex has kept the newspaper article on the Fabergé eggs and now gives it to Eoin. It details their history as well as describing what they were used for, giving a few illustrated examples. Could you create a copy of the article?

www.faberge.com/news/49_imperial-eggs.aspx

5. Eoin Madden (Read p153)

Eoin's mum has downloaded a podcast of the sport's bulletin from the local radio station mentioning Eoin's success in the tournament.

It is a Munster station so there is a little teasing tone to the report.

Create a copy of what you think was said.

6. Memories

(Read p160 & 143-146)

When Alex holds the egg in his hand, he is overcome by a wave of nostalgia and memories flood back of the story Alexander Romanov told him of their escape from Russia.

The author thought he might include a short paragraph describing the dramatic escape he and his sister had.

Create the passage to tell their story.

7. The Nephrite Egg (Read p173)

The museum is delighted to have the artifact and it is ready for display.

They have pictures of the two halves before they were restored and now they need a short piece of text to accompany the display explaining the background and acknowledging the gift.

Create a suitable card for the display.

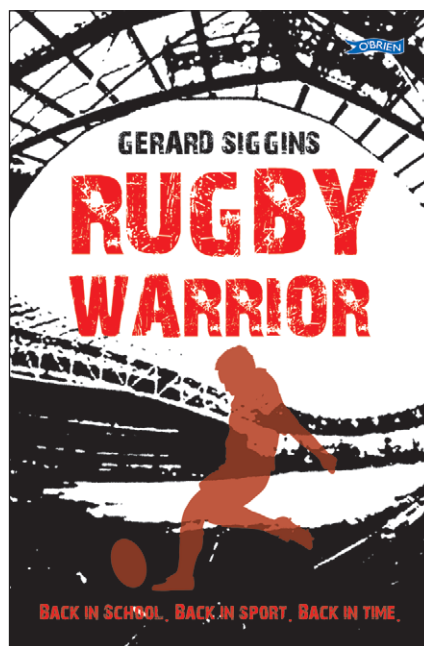
READ THE OTHER BOOKS ABOUT EOIN MADDEN'S GHOSTLY ADVENTURES IN CASTLEROCK COLLEGE



Rugby Spirit

A new school. A new sport. An old mystery ...

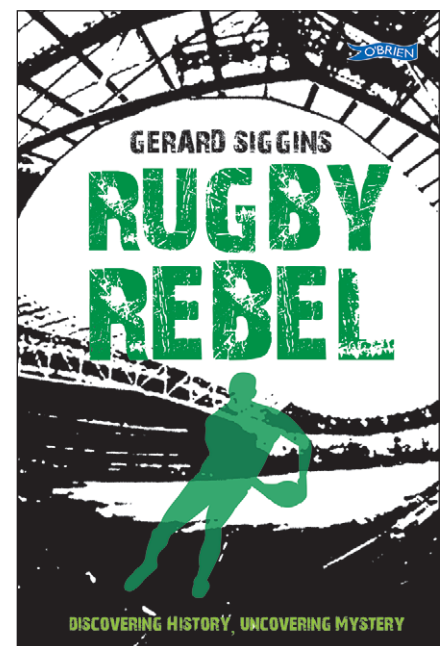
Eoin's has just started a new school ... and a new sport. Everyone at school is mad about rugby, but Eoin hasn't even held a rugby ball before! And why does everybody seem to know more about his own grandad than he does?



Rugby Warrior

Back in school. Back in sport. Back in time

Eoin Madden is now captain of the Under 14s team and has to deal with friction between his friend Rory and new boy Dylan as they battle for a place as scrum-half. Fast-paced action, mysterious spirits and feuding friends – it's a season to remember!



Rugby Rebel

Discovering history, uncovering mystery

Eoin is training hard with the Junior Cup team, plus there's trouble in his dormitory as mobile phones start going missing! And what's the link between Eoin's history lessons and the new spirit he's spotted wearing a Belvedere rugby jersey?