



Jason Sherlock

ISBN 978-1-78849-252-2
eBook ISBN 978-1-78849-303-1

Donny Mahoney

Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE & THEMES:

This is a heartwarming story of a young boy who wants to be accepted. Jason uses his phenomenal sporting prowess to declare his Dublin identity, an identity that is at times challenged because of his appearance.

His journey across three sporting disciplines delivers considerable success. His energy and down-to-earth charm challenges the stereotype that identity has only one face leading the way for racism to be challenged as Ireland grows into a multicultural society.

The themes explored are:

- Dedication
- Winning and losing
- Making choices
- Sportsmanship
- Loyalty
- Choosing priorities
- Disappointment
- Cultural identity
- Racism
- Team spirit

SUMMARY

Ever since he was a youngster, Jason had a passion for sport. He loved the camaraderie of belonging to a team and he had an athletic talent that allowed him to master a discipline quickly and successfully.

Jason lived with his mam in Finglas. His parents were separated and his dad lived in Hong Kong. Although Jason was very comfortable living in Finglas, his appearance provoked unwelcome racist comment. Despite the love and reassurance he got from his mam and his extended family, Jason had to struggle to control angry responses to the comments.

His uncles Brian and Eddie were great GAA and soccer fans and Jason travelled to all the local games to watch them play or to follow the 'Dubs'.

When Eddie took Jason to see Dublin beat

Galway to win the All-Ireland final, Jason's imagination was captured.

One day Jason and his friend Pato, wandered further from home than usual; they join a kick-about where a racist comment from the other players upset and angered Jason.

Jason was still in contact with his Chinese family who run a restaurant. On a visit, Jason ate fish and chips, to underline his Dublin credentials.

Moving to a new school, he discovered basketball and was immediately attracted to it. His talent was obvious and he was seen as a rising star.

When Jason was fourteen, he spent the summer with his uncle Eddie in North Cork and was introduced to hurling. His natural sporting ability secured him a place on the local team; however, a racist remark provoked him and his reaction caused an argument with his uncle.

Back in Dublin, Jason signed for a competitive soccer team.

His basketball progress saw him represent Ireland to help defeat England on a memorable night.

A football trial with West Ham and a basketball sports scholarship in the USA both tempted him to leave Dublin, however, his ties to home were too strong.

GAA still tugged for his attention and after appearances for his school team, his was invited to trial for the Dublin minors. He stepped over a threshold that took him to a place on the senior side and winning a sensational Sam Maguire Cup within two years.

Jason joined the UCD soccer team and earned a sporting scholarship so that he can continue to play for them.

Recognition at U-21 and a friendly against Liverpool brought another trial offer.

When the All-Ireland Championship started, Dublin progressed as Leinster champions to meet Cork in the Semis. Jason ignited the match. Dublin met Tyrone in the final, which Dublin won.

Jason decides that his future is in Dublin and carries all his memories as he settles into family life and a coaching position with Dublin.

APPROACH

This biography highlights the determination needed for any sporting skill to develop and illustrates how participation in sport can encourage resilience.

It appeals generally and provides many opportunities for discussion around the pivotal points in the story.

The themes sit firmly within the remit of the SPHE and PDMU guidelines.

Development can be more effectively facilitated with small-group discussion.

The guide has been divided into three sections to reflect the development of the story.

Section 1 Outsider Pages 7 - 59

SUMMARY

Seven-year-old Jason is the happiest boy in Finglas. Surrounded by a loving family he feels he can achieve anything.

Whether it is playing for his local soccer team or travelling with his uncles to watch GAA, Jason's 'Happy Place' is always sport.

When his uncle manages to secure tickets for the All-Ireland, Jason experiences the thrill of watching from Hill 16 as Dublin claim Sam. It's an experience that he will never forget.

Summer empties the streets and Jason and

his friend Pato range a little further to find a game. The game is rough, but it is the racist remark that stings Jason to retaliate. Pato separates them, however, it is a situation that Jason is familiar with.

Although his parents are separated, Jason still has contact with his Chinese family who run a restaurant in the city centre and a visit for a meal helps him to enjoy meeting the other side of his family.

A new school sees Jason introduced to basketball, where he displays a passion and a skill.

Jason's sporting calendar is very busy and he plays a role with his school GAA team at corner forward.

They reach the Bunscoil finals and although they don't win Jason learns that sometimes the experience is just as valuable as the result.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p11-12,33,36):** Jason realized that he looked different because his dad was from China. Each of us look and sound different even in our own families. Some differences however are acceptable and some are not. Why do we accept some people who are different and insult others? Is this fair? Who decides which differences are acceptable?
- **(Read p44):** Jason is sensitive about how he looks. However, he will tolerate some 'slagging'. Is 'slagging' acceptable? Is there a difference between it and racism? What is the difference and how would you know if you had crossed the line?
- **(Read p51):** Jason believes that determination and effort are all that is required for sporting success. Is this really true? Is it unfair to suggest that someone who isn't very good at sport simply isn't trying hard enough? What other advantages does Jason have that others do not?
- **(Read p59):** Jason realizes that playing can be as enjoyable as winning. How does competition affect how we enjoy playing sport? Is playing or winning more important in sport? Can you explain your opinion?

ACTIVITIES

1. Just Brilliant (Read pp7)

Standing on his doorstep, Jason looks around him and realizes that 'life is just brilliant'. It is a special moment.

Think carefully about a time, when for you too life was brilliant.

Write a description of the moment. You can use the 5xW & H formula (*Who, What, Where, When, Why & How*) to describe what happened. Add an illustration if you like.

2. Garda (Read pp15-16)

On their way to the match, Jason and his uncle Brian are stopped by a Garda who scolds Brian for carrying Jason on his handlebars and because neither of them is wearing a helmet.

When she is finished talking to them, she gives Brian a leaflet on safe cycling.

Make a copy of the leaflet she gave him. rsa.ie/Documents/Campaigns/Wrecked/Downloads/Cycle%20safety%20booklet.pdf

3. Sam (Read pp24-25)

Every day people from different cultures come to live in Ireland and they are anxious to learn about the extraordinary culture we have here.

For every GAA fan the words 'Sam' or 'Croke Park' need no explanation. This is not the case for people from other cultures.

Create a simple, easy to read illustrated guide to explain the excitement that bubbles in every GAA heart when they talk about 'Sam'.

crokepark.ie/BlankSite/media/Images/Primary-schools-resource-pack.pdf
crokepark.ie/tours/gaa-museum/exhibitions/sam-maguire

4. Racist (Read pp33-34)

When Pato pulls Jason and Netherlands apart, he turns to the other boys and tells them what he thinks of them for tolerating the racist comments.

The author thought that he might include a short paragraph here to describe the exchange.

Create the dialogue he might have included. scoilnet.ie/search/?q=racism

5. Jason is sad (Read pp36-37)

Despite having a very good relationship with his mother, Jason is unable to explain what has happened and how he feels.

He decides to write her a note instead to explain why he is behaving the way he is.

Help him to write the note.

6. I'm Loved (Read pp42-43)

Jason knows that he is loved by both his Dublin and his Chinese families and this makes him feel secure.

Think carefully about how your own families show you that you are loved.

Make an illustrated card with a picture of yourself and the heading, 'I KNOW I'M LOVED BECAUSE...' with speech bubbles to explain all the reasons why you know you are loved.

Present it to your family when it is finished.

7. 'Listen, Nan' (Read pp48-49)

When Jason arrives home, breathless and excited about basketball; he just has to tell someone.

Nan is the only one at home and she listens patiently, asking the occasional question.

Write the dialogue of the one-sided conversation they had.

You can perform it for the class with all the excitement that he must have shown to his nan.

Section 2 Leinster Blue Pages 60 - 119

SUMMARY

The basketball coach builds a confidence in Jason that he demonstrates in front of the selectors and helps them to secure a win.

Jason accepts an invitation to spend the summer in North Cork with his uncle and is introduced to hurling. He makes friends with Diarmuid and his family who are neighbours.

Another racist comment during a match provokes retaliation from Jason and the subsequent argument with his uncle leaves him on the point of returning to Finglas.

However, Diarmuid pleads with him to stay and when his uncle understands what happened, he apologizes.

Summer over and Jason is back in Dublin where he shares an ambition to make a career in sport. He accepts an invitation to play soccer for St Kevin's Boys team, helping them to win the SFAI Cup Final.

Life is exciting for Jason; his mum has remarried and he has been selected for the National Basketball squad to play in the U-15 Four Nations Tournament. The coaching team includes Joey, his St Vincent's coach and he inspires Jason and the team to an unexpected victory against England in their first match.

Returning to Dublin after a trial with West Ham, Jason reflects on his experience and his excitement at the opportunity to play at a Premiership club, however, his attachment to Dublin is greater and he declines the offer.

Joey takes the national schoolboy basketball team on a tour of the USA. Jason impresses every time he takes the court and is offered a sport's scholarship. Again, he declines preferring to return to Dublin.

At school, Jason is included at corner forward for the school team against another Northside team and discovers a new sporting skill.

The manager of the Dublin Minor team is at the match and Jason is invited for a trial. Jason decides to pare back his soccer and basketball involvement. He commits to GAA and is selected for the Dublin Minors.

Jason manages to avoid a Leaving Cert resit. He settles into the Minor Championship winning the Leinster title and reaching the final.

His talent begins to draw attention with a very complimentary report in the *Evening Press*.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (**Read pp74-76**): Jason is subjected to racist abuse and reacts violently. What is racism and why do some people feel it is OK to use language like this? What should we do when we hear language like this being used?
scoilnet.ie/search/?q=racism
bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zt9bsk7
- (**Read p84**): The author refers to England as the 'Old Enemy'. What does this mean? What is the difference between an enemy and an opponent? Is it responsible to describe an opponent as an enemy? Is this type of language likely to affect how the players see each other and how they approach the game?
- (**Read p86**): The team has players from Cork and Belfast and all over the island. They are all different, yet they all wear the Irish shirt with pride. What does it mean to be Irish? What is the magic ingredient that makes us all recognizable as being Irish despite our different accents? Is being Irish more than simply being born on the island?
- (**Read pp102-103**): A McDonald's is like Coca-Cola. It is exactly the same throughout the world; so why does Jason prefer the meal in Phibsboro? What is the difference between a Big Mac in Dublin and one from the USA? Why does he prefer the Dublin one? What is Jason really trying to say?

ACTIVITIES

1. The Code (Read pp60-61)

Playing basketball, Jason receives a lot fewer racist comments. His club have a behaviour

code pinned to the club noticeboard explaining what is unacceptable as racist language. Everyone knows what should or shouldn't be said.

Make a copy of the code.

2. The Fighting Dog (Read p64)

Joey uses an American motivational expression about a dog to encourage the team to give their best effort and not be intimidated.

He wishes that he had a poster to explain what he means by it.

Make an illustrated, comic, cartoon poster for him to use.

3. Hurling for Dummies (Read p69)

Jason is thrown in at the deep end by his uncle and joins a hurling team.

He knows very little about it and has never played before.

In groups, create a simple illustrated guide for the essentials that he needs to know for his first training session.
scoilnet.ie/search/?q=hurling

4. Only One Way (Read pp74-75)

When he is provoked by racist abuse, Jason only knows one way to respond and that is with violence.

This is inappropriate and causes problems for him.

In groups create a list of 5 effective strategies that he could use instead that wouldn't cause him to lose his temper but at the same time would challenge the racism.

nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/anger-management/how-to-control-your-anger
mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anger/managing-outbursts/

5. No Pushover (Read p89)

Ireland secure an unexpected win over England and there is a brief report on the match the following day in the sports pages of both English and Irish newspapers.

How did each of them report the match and how were they different?

Make a copy of each report.

6. The Place to Be (Read pp94-95)

Jason is delighted to be home after his trial at West Ham. Everything about home is comforting and reassuring.

What do you like best about being at home?

Make an illustrated list of the top three reasons why, for you, home is the best place to be.

7. Uncle Martin (Read p119)

Jason's Uncle Martin and his Chinese relations in Dublin have been following Jason's sporting career and when Martin reads Con Houlihan's piece in the paper, he decides to send a Chinese greeting card to congratulate him.

Make a copy of the card and the letter that he sent with it.

feng-shui.lovetoknow.com/Chinese_Good_Luck_Symbols
chinasage.info/good-fortune.htm

Section 3 My Heart's in Dublin Pages 120 - 201

SUMMARY

Leinster final day at Croke Park and Jason can barely contain his excitement at being selected for the Minors. When he seals the game with a goal, Jason feels the power of the Hill 16 roar and turns to salute them.

Facing Galway in the semifinal, Jason reacts to provocation and they lose. He is criticized in the papers for poor sportsmanship and realizes that he will have to control his outbursts.

Unexpectedly, Jason is drafted into the senior squad to help them prepare for their final against Down. He is thrilled to be in the company of his heroes. He impresses them and is rewarded with match tickets.

Now eighteen, Jason has left school with a mediocre Leaving Cert. He is invited by some friends to train with them for a couple of weeks for the UCD soccer trials.

When their pre-season training ends and Jason prepares to leave, he is surprised to be offered a sports scholarship to attend UCD and continue to play soccer for them.

The Dublin GAA coach has included him in the senior league squad and makes it clear that he has a chance to secure a Championship place.

Playing for both UCD and Dublin is hectic, however creative thinking and a long taxi drive from Ballybofey ensures that he stays on schedule.

Named on the Irish U-21 panel, Jason is invited to spend a week training with the senior team.

As the season closes, UCD secure a friendly with Liverpool and Jason's performance earns him a trial.

He celebrates his first U-21 cap with a goal and an assist against Austria. It is a memorable night.

The Championship starts and Jason is called on as a replacement, making an immediate impression and helping to secure the win.

The team have a successful run through the provincial stage of the Championship. Jason gets the opportunity to deploy his full skill set and attracts a celebrity style following in the process. They are ready for the final run at Sam.

Cork challenge them in the semifinal but a brilliant individual play by Jason is the difference and they face Tyrone in the final.

It is a fiery encounter but again Jason is the difference and Sam goes to Dublin.

When Liverpool offer him a trial, Jason decides that his future is with Dublin and after graduation he settles as Dublin's forward's coach returning to Croke Park to guide the team and remember an unparalleled sporting career at the pinnacle of three sporting disciplines, basketball, soccer and GAA.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- **(Read p126):** Some of the Galway players are determined to provoke Jason and force him to lose his temper. They are prepared to break the rules in order to win. Is this an acceptable part of the game? Why do the other players tolerate it? How can the GAA deal with this attitude among the players?
- **(Read pp137-138):** Jason realizes that he could have done better in his Leaving Cert. He remembers his nan's advice about the importance of education. Was she right? Why is education important? What effect can a good / poor education have on your life opportunities. Is it fair that your education is judged on a single exam?
- **(Read p171):** After the match, Jason stays on the pitch to sign autographs. This is strange behaviour to ask someone to sign their name on a ball or a piece of paper. Why do people collect signatures in this way? How does it connect them to their sporting hero? Is it a sensible way to behave?
- **(Read pp183-187):** Jason has become a 'star' on the team and the supporters cheer for him rather than the team. What effect might this have on the morale of the rest of the team? A game is won by a team. Everyone has a role to

play. Were the GAA right to be worried about 'Jasonmania'? Was Jason right to encourage it with his displays in front of Hill 16?

ACTIVITIES

1. The Three Castles (Read pp120-121)

There will be many people in Dublin on match day enjoying the atmosphere. Not everyone will be familiar with the county crests or their significance.

Make a copy of your own county and the Dublin crest and one of your favourites from each of the other provinces.

Explain what is on the crest and give a little information on the county for a leaflet that the GAA hope to distribute on match day.

oneills.com/uk_en/shop-by-team/gaa-county.html

2. Loser (Read pp127)

Calling someone a loser is an insult, yet in every competition, there will always be a loser.

Brian told them that sport would teach them how to lose. What did he mean by this?

In groups, on a large sheet of paper with two columns headed WINNING and LOSING decide on three important lessons that each of these can teach you about

- Yourself
- How to behave
- Your opponents

2. The GAA way (Read p146)

After the match, Sean gives Jason a little booklet called 'The GAA Way'. It is an etiquette guide advising how GAA players should behave on the pitch, how they should treat each other, opponents and the match officials. It makes suggestions about how to behave after a score, a win or a defeat.

It has recently been revised to include a section on how to behave on social media and what to say to reporters after a match.

Make an illustrated copy of it.

3. League v Championship (Read p162)

Dr Pat reminds the team that if they lose their first match in the Championship, their competition is over.

Considering how much training a team does to prepare, would league competition be a fairer system?

If sixteen teams entered a league competition, how many matches (**home**

& away) would they be guaranteed? How many matches would each team be guaranteed if it were a Championship? What is the maximum number of matches you could play in a 16-team championship?

Write a letter to persuade the GAA to consider league only competitions to allow teams more opportunities to play and spectators more games to enjoy.

4. Q & A (Read p195)

After the match, Marty Morrissey quickly prepares a list of questions that he wants to ask Jason.

In groups prepare a list of five questions for Marty to ask.

Now swap your list with two other groups and create the answers that Jason might give for the questions.

When you get your own list of questions back with two sets of answers, use these to create the answers that you think Jason might really have given.

5. Racism (Read p201)

Racism is a blight on our society and many sporting organizations including the GAA are working very hard to stamp it out in sport.

The GAA are hoping to hold a competition to design a poster to educate against racism and encourage everyone involved in the sport to respect each other.

Submit an entry. Think carefully about the images and text to include and chose a powerful headline to carry your message.

CLASS PROJECT

This story is part of a series of sporting biographies that offer the opportunity to explore a diverse range of topics from:

- Healthy diet
- Importance of good social networks
- Good mental health
- Importance of resilience
- Importance of positive self-image

You can use the sample worksheet here obrien.ie/media/SportingHallofFame.pdf

The focus of the activities asks the pupils to examine the qualities outlined for each of the sports people and prepare a proposal for them to be inducted into a fictional O'Brien Press **HALL OF FAME**.

The activities also ask them to consider how they themselves can aspire to inclusion, encouraging them to identify and celebrate their own strengths.