



Kevin Kiely

Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE & THEMES

The sinking of the Lusitania off the coast of Kinsale by a German U-boat caused great loss of life and was seen as an infamous act that helped to propel the USA into the conflict of WW1.

There is still mystery and anomaly surrounding the sinking.

Finbar Kennedy becomes embroiled in the intrigue and danger that marked her final fateful crossing when he runs away from home to accompany his father Jack who is Staff Captain on the vessel.

The themes are woven into the story and the friendships that Finbar establishes on the final crossing and include:

- Courage
- Loyalty
- Consequences of war
- Friendship
- Adventure
- Intrigue & mystery
- Danger

APPROACH

The guide is divided into three sections to reflect the structure of the story.

The plot offers many opportunities to identify with the themes and experiment with different combinations of response as the characters weave their actions through the events of the story.

Although the story is historical, the themes are universal and will encourage discussion and application to contemporary situations. E.g. Showing bravery in the face of disaster.

The story also creates an authentic platform for the class to consider some of the consequences of decisions made during war.

SUMMARY

When Finbar Kennedy runs away from home in Queenstown to join his father aboard the Lusitania bound for New York, little did he realise the world of danger and espionage he would enter. From the moment he steps aboard unnoticed, his life is in danger and it is only through good fortune that he survives.

Rescued by his father and adopted by the captain, he becomes their eyes and ears on the lookout for signs of danger.

On the fateful return leg of the trip from New York the sense of foreboding that dominates the ship is realised when she is torpedoed and sinks off the Irish coast.

Separated from his father and with the ship sinking, Finbar is forced to assist in a very strange escape from the wreckage and debris as the ship explodes. This ensures his own survival and he is eventually reunited with his family.

Unit 1 Outward Bound Pages 9 - 88

SUMMARY

Finbar is troubled by nightmares and the premonition of a great liner sinking. However in the excitement of his father returning home on the Lusitania, all his fears are forgotten.

His father's leave is short but the whirl of presents and parties is exhilarating for Finbar and when his father boards the ship for New York, he decides to stow aboard and join him.

Mingling with the hubbub on the quay, Finbar manages to secure a commission to carry luggage for an aristocratic old lady right out to the liner and into her cabin.

Spotting his father in a corridor, he manages to slip away from the old lady and return unseen to hide in her cabin.

When the old lady returns to the cabin with a companion, Finbar overhears their conversation and realises that they are both spies.

A clumsy movement compromises his hiding place and he is hauled out to face being permanently silenced by her companion. He manages to escape with a shot still ringing in his ears and takes the opportunity to hide in a cargo hold just before it is secured for the voyage.

All the while there is great anxiety at home at his disappearance particularly as contact to the liner confirms that he is not aboard.

Several days of thirst and deprivation locked in the cargo hold leave him hallucinating before he is discovered and hauled before the captain as a stowaway.

He manages to explain that his father is the Staff Captain and when he is reunited with him it is obvious that his spell in the hold has left him delirious and in need of care.

Finbar recovers slowly in the ship's medical centre, explaining all that he saw and by the time the ship docks in New York he is completely recovered.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- (**Read pp 23-27**): Jack has only 36 hours shore leave before he sails again, yet he decides to spend time getting drunk and Finbar has to search for him in a pub. Do you think that he is behaving responsibly? Why do you think he went to the pub when he was home for such a short time and why did his wife accept this behaviour?
- (**Read pp 32-33**): Jack realises that his

family is in debt, yet he spends money foolishly on presents. What does this tell you about his character? What suggestions could you make to help him control his spending and manage his debt? What evidence can you find that Mrs Kennedy is not as irresponsible as her husband?

- **(Read p63):** Finbar has been overcome with a great fear and begins to wail uncontrollably. He is trapped in the hold with only the rat and believes that he will die. Can you describe what makes us afraid and how we all behave when we are confronted by fear? Are there common fears or do we all have our own individual fears?
- (Read pp 77-78): When his father first discovers that Finbar is aboard, he is concerned but then confesses that secretly he is pleased with him and encourages his actions in running away. Do you think this is responsible of him? How might Finbar have interpreted this? How do you think he should have behaved?

ACTIVITIES

1. Nightmares (Read pp 9-10)

Finbar awakes terrified from a nightmare. The dream is so real that the fear remains as he wakes.

Can you describe a nightmare that you have experienced and explain how it might have affected you even when you became conscious?

2. The Clock Eye (Read pp18-19)

The 'big watery eye' of the clock on the cathedral spire high above the town and harbour has a commanding view of everything.

Do you think that you could draw the scene that it saw with all the bustle and excitement?

(You can 'Google' old photos of Queenstown to see what the clock might have seen)

3. The Special Place (Read p29)

Jack Kennedy has created a special place for himself in the attic. He calls it 'The Turret' and there he keeps everything he needs for his work.

If you had the opportunity to create your own special place, can you describe where it would be and what items you would have in it?

4. Happy Families (Read p33)

Jack declares that his family is the happiest in the street. Why do you think that he says that? Can you find 3 reasons that would support that statement?

How many reasons can you find that would contradict him?

Can you think about both sets of reasons and decide which group is the stronger? Can you say why you think this is so?

Can you create your own list of reasons why you think people might consider themselves to be happy?

5. Faces (Read p40)

As Finbar moves along Westbourne Place towards the railway station and the quays, he passes many groups of people. He is fascinated by the expressions on their faces.

Each group has a different type of expression, from the frenzied gawking of the mob watching the fight to the shadowy figures arriving by train.

Do you think that you could work in small groups to create a collage of faces to show the mood of the crowds? You could use a combination of images that you draw yourself with images from other sources.

You can try these sites for ideas:

kids.tate.org.uk/create/make_a_collage.shtm

lynnblakejohn.com/art-class-for-kids-stylized-faces-plus-collage/

6. Rat's Eye View (Read pp64-65)

In describing Finbar's ordeal in the cargo hold, the author had considered including a description of events from the rat's view.

Do you think that you could help him by creating a short paragraph to describe the rat's reaction to the arrival and behaviour of Finbar?

You might include a description of Finbar, his behaviour and what the rat thought of it all.

7. Missing (Read pp66-67)

Finbar has been missing now for three days and Sergeant Kilroy has decided to put up posters asking for information about his whereabouts.

Could you help him to create a suitable 'Missing Person' poster for Finbar?

You will need to decide what detail the poster might include? E.g. physical description, last known movements etc.

8. Report (Read pp81-82)

Jack Kennedy listens intently to his son's story. Although Finbar is delirious, Jack realises that something very serious has happened and he must telegraph a report to the British authorities.

He must be careful to sift fact from fiction and decides to report only what he suspects is accurate.

Using the information he has from Finbar and his own passenger lists, he carefully writes his telegraph (*see p69 for an example of a telegram*).

Could you help him to write the telegraph?

Unit 2 Homeward from New York Pp 89 - 160

SUMMARY

His first glimpse of New York is breathtaking as Finbar looks out over the dock at Manhattan. With the disembarkation formalities completed he meets his father at the Cunard office. Jack cautions Finbar not to talk about the episode on the ship and warns him to flee if he catches sight of Crowley while they are in New York.

Jack takes Finbar to a boarding house he uses where they receive a warm welcome.

Their three days in New York pass in a whirl of sights, however, during a meal in Chinatown a fortune teller unsettles Finbar with a frightening prediction that seems to confirm his own recurring nightmare about a disaster at sea.

His anxiety is further heightened when he reads a sinister warning in a newspaper to transatlantic passengers as they prepare to board the Lusitania for the return trip to Liverpool.

Aboard ship, he has been given the job of messenger boy and told he is the unofficial 'eyes and ears' of the captain. He brings the newspaper threat to his dad's attention but the captain decides to ignore it, however the level of threat aboard is raised as a precaution.

On duty, Finbar is enthralled to bump into the US senator's daughter, Penny Mayberry again and they decide to meet when his duty shift has ended.

Finbar eavesdrops on the precautions being taken to ensure a safe voyage as the liner glides past the Statue of Liberty and into the Atlantic.

When Penny and he rendezvous, she confides that she fears an attack on the ship and reveals her suspicions about the cargo they are carrying; persuading Finbar to check and confirm what is really in the hold.

When Finbar discovers the cargo includes bullion and ordinance, he questions his father who explains that it is help that the USA has given secretly for the war effort and must be kept secret.

A spectacular public arrest of two spies in the dining room does little to calm Finbar's fears and later when he visits Penny in her cabin, they share their information and try to make sense of the dangers that they are facing.

Lurking off the Irish coast, U-20 lies in wait for the Lusitania.

Oblivious, Finbar begins the day attending to the captain's breakfast as the ship enters Irish waters. The expected naval escort fails to appear and their sense of unease increases when a bewildering signal is received ordering them to reduce speed. A further signal warns of U-boat activity in their area.

At periscope depth, Kapitän Schwieger and his crew muster battle stations and increase speed as the Lusitania steams straight into their path.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p95):** Finbar's father criticises Crowley as a man without principles. Do you think it is possible for anyone to have principles during a war? If you are trying to kill people, how is it possible to have principles? What principles might someone have during a war and how do you think they might exercise them?
- **(Read p102):** Finbar has his fortune told in Chinatown and is shaken by what he hears. Do you think it is possible for someone to be able to predict the future and foretell what might happen?
- **(Read p113):** In war false claims are sometimes made to both encourage allies and to discourage enemies. Truth may be the first casualty. This is what propaganda is. Do you think it is proper to use propaganda as a weapon or should the truth always be told? Are there ever any circumstances when it is appropriate to hide the truth?
- **(Read p131):** Finbar discovers that the Lusitania is carrying a war cargo of ordinance and bullion. Do you think that this makes her a legitimate

target for the U-boat, despite the fact that she is a passenger liner? Was it reckless of the British authorities to use the Lusitania to carry a war cargo in the hope that the Germans would not attack a passenger liner? Do they share the responsibility for her sinking?

- **(Read pp151&144):** Captain Turner and the U-boat radio operator are both uneasy with their orders. They believe them to be wrong. Do you think that you should be obliged to follow every order no matter whether you think it wrong or not? Can you think of any circumstances where it would be acceptable to refuse to do something you believed to be wrong?

ACTIVITIES

1. Manhattan (Read p89)

Finbar is overwhelmed when he sees the Manhattan skyline for the first time. It is an image that he will never forget.

When he eventually returns to school, he attempts to draw what he saw for Mr Dempsey. Do you think that you could make a copy of what he saw?

You can use the site below to view some images of the skyline at the time Finbar visited New York to help you.

www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=34300

2. New York (Read pp96-105)

Finbar decides to keep a diary of his three days in New York. He includes a brief note on the things he saw and the experiences that he had. For some of them he has included a little pencil sketch to illustrate his descriptions.

Do you think that you could choose one of his days and complete the diary entry for that day?

3. Senator Mayberry (Read p15)

Senator Mayberry is concerned that his wife is so worried about their safety on board the Lusitania that he decides at the last moment to write a letter to reassure her.

Penny shows the letter to Finbar and he is very moved when he reads it.

Do you think that you could recreate the Senator's letter?

4. Propaganda (Read p18)

A propagandist takes only some of the facts from any situation or event and

then distorts them in order to change the way people will think about what has happened.

Some propagandists can change the way people think about events and make them believe the opposite to what has really happened.

Can you choose something interesting that has happened recently and then write two descriptions of it; one will contain all the facts and be accurate and the other will be distorted to be propaganda.

What type of language do you think would be used in propaganda? Do you think that propaganda and advert writing are similar?

There are some useful resources on this site?

www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/propaganda-techniques-literature-online-405.html

5. The Engine Room (Read p121)

The smells, heat and noise of the engine room makes Finbar flinch. Later, however when he is alone, he decides to create a poem to recall his experience.

His favourite types of poems are Haiku and Cinquains.

Do you think that you could write two poems, using each form to describe his experience in the engine room?

You can find additional resources on these sites.

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

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

6. Liberty (Read p124)

As the Lusitania streams out of New York and they pass the Statue of Liberty, Finbar whispers a farewell.

Gazing up at her he imagines that she breathes a reply to him.

If you were able to eavesdrop on their exchange, what do you think they might have said to each other?

Do you think it was a warning, a greeting or an encouragement?

You could draw a picture of Finbar on the ship as it passes the statue and use a speech bubble to show what you think was said.

7. Telegram (Read pp 129 & 133-135)

Unknown to anyone aboard, there is another spy watching everything. He has eavesdropped on Penny and Finbar and knows what is in the cargo hold. He witnessed his two companions being arrested and now knows the course, speed and position of the ship.

He has to write a telegram that will avoid Mr Pierpoint's inspection and appear innocent in order to send the information to his contacts.

Could you send a suitable coded telegram that will not arouse suspicion?

(You will need to explain your code)

8. Morse (Read p153)

Captain Turner dictates a message to Finbar to take to the radio operator to send to the admiralty. When he reaches the radio room, Finbar discovers that it is empty and he decides to send the message himself.

Fortunately there is a sheet with the Morse code for each letter hanging on the wall and the captain's message is very brief.

Could you help him to translate the message in to the Morse code dots and dashes?

Some useful resources can be found on these pages.

www.nationalstemcentre.org.uk/dl/a60bd30b82b3a75837f90a5b0441a816aacfb927/20784-CommunicationsKS2.pdf

www.classbraingames.com/2009/12/learn-morse-code

www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/morse-code-message-coloring-page

Unit 3 Lusitania goes down Pp 161 - 205

SUMMARY

Torpedoed on the starboard side, Lusitania's power and ability to steer fail and she begins to list and settle in the water.

Realising the inevitable and that time is limited; the captain issues the order to 'abandon ship'.

Jack instructs Finbar to get a lifebelt and muster with the rest of the crew.

With 2000 terrified crew to evacuate, the crew try to manage the panic as best they

can, but it is unavoidable that there will be a huge loss of life.

With the last lifeboat launched and preparing to jump into the sea, Finbar is shocked to see a man in a wet suit emerge from a stair well dragging a large box behind him.

The man orders Finbar's assistance and the box is revealed as an inflatable boat. With Finbar's help he manages to launch the boat and begins to row through the debris and the drowning intent on reaching the shore ten miles away taking Finbar with him as navigator.

Finbar is numbed by what he sees but is forced to concentrate on the shore line to guide them to land and safety.

Queenstown is in shock when news of the attack and sinking reaches there and Mam, Christopher and Colleen travel to Kinsale to search first among the survivors and then among the dead to find news of either Finbar or Jack.

Returning distraught to Cork without news, Mam steels herself to search in the temporary mortuary there too but no trace of either Finbar or her husband can be found.

Ashore in Kinsale, Finbar begins his search for his dad in the mortuary only to find Penny lying there. Choking with grief, he is barely able to report her identity before he leaves for Queenstown to search for his father there.

The Kennedy house was still and tense as they wait for news. The fumbling of a key in the lock announces the arrival of Jack. The household erupts in joy only to be immediately subdued when they realise that Finbar is not with him.

Returning to Queenstown is a strange experience for Finbar. Dejected and exhausted, he limps home to find a joyous welcome and his father waiting for him.

Their family complete again, Jack and Mam give thanks for their survival.

DISCUSSION POINTS

(Read p177): Sergeant Kilroy is uneasy and clumsy when he is dealing with delivering 'bad' news. Why do you think that this might be so? Are there any things that he might say or do to ease the shock for the family? Why do you think that some people are uncomfortable when dealing with 'bad' news?

(Read p178): Mrs Kelly offers some advice and consolation to Mam. What do you

think that she means by her advice and how do you think it might be useful?

(Read p189): Finbar is devastated and distraught when he realises that Penny has drowned. Why do you think that her death had such a strong effect on him as he had only known her for a very short time? Do you think it is really possible to form such a strong relationship in such a short time?

(Read p193): As the Lusitania sinks, Captain Turner and Jack remain on board until everyone else has left the ship. They see this tradition as their duty. Do you think it is reasonable to expect them to risk their own lives in order to make sure others are safe? When the cruise ship Costa Concordia sank in 2012, the captain was among the first to leave and directed the rescues and evacuation from the shore. If you were captain, would you stay onboard until last?

ACTIVITIES

1. Breaking News (Read p166)

As the passengers realise that the Lusitania is sinking, there is a growing sense of fear and terror. One of the passengers is a reporter with the New York Times and manages to make some notes of what he sees and hears. The notes are very brief.

Later when he reaches Kinsale, he writes the report from his notes and telegraphs it to his paper.

Do you think that you could recreate the notes and the report that he made?

2. Ten Miles Away (Read p167)

As the overloaded lifeboats row towards Kinsale, the survivors huddle together and try to comfort each other.

The author Kevin Kiely has decided to add a paragraph describing what happened in one of the lifeboats.

He has asked you to help him to write it.

You will need to think about who is in the boat, what they each see, hear and say and how they interact with each other.

You could make it interesting by adding different types of people and thinking about what they might say and do and the effect that this would have on the others in the boat.

3. You have to STOP!

(Read pp1711-172)

Finbar snaps out of his daze suddenly and

realises that they are doing nothing to save the people who are drowning.

He begins to plead and argue with the 'seal man' that they should stop and help.

If the author had included this dialogue, what do you think might have been said by each of them?

What arguments might Finbar have used?

Can you create the dialogue that you think they might have had? You can perform it in pairs for the class when you have finished.

4. Statements (Read p182)

As the survivors shuffle together on the quayside, one of the Cunard officials begins to take statements from them. He writes these into a ledger book that he has.

Recently, this book has been rediscovered and the statements are still there in his handwriting.

Do you think that you could recreate a page from this book to include passenger details and what they might have said?

You can use information from the sites below to add authenticity to your work.

www.titanicandco.com/lusitania.html

www.rmslusitania.info/people/lusitania-survivors

news.bbc.co.uk/local/threecounties/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8664000/8664902.stm

5. Disaster Planning (Read p184)

Nowadays, every large organization must have an emergency plan to enable them to deal effectively with any emergency or disaster.

One of the criticisms from the inquest on the Lusitania was that the crew were disorganised and the local services were uncoordinated and unable to deal with the scale of the disaster.

One of the problems was that there was no information.

Do you think that you could design a safety card for Cunard that could be given to passengers to tell them how to behave in an emergency?

You can use some of the ideas from the site below.

(You might need to work in small groups for this activity)

www.wikihow.com/Escape-a-Sinking-Ship

www.boaterexam.com/blog/2011/03/sinking-ship-survival-guide.aspx

6. Seal man (Read p187)

Finbar has arrived safely in Kinsale after his ordeal in the collapsible dingy with the 'seal man'.

The author has added no detail or description of how this happened.

Do you think that you could write a short account (**200 words**) to describe what happened when they reached shore?

What do you think they might have said to each other or done? Where did 'seal man' go and how did Finbar reach Kinsale? Did Finbar discover any clues to 'seal man's' identity? Did he take the seal outfit off when he reached shore?

When you have finished, perhaps you could send your work via O'Brien Press, to the author for comment.

7. Finbar Kennedy (Read p190)

Finbar has been asked to write a short report for the Cunard office; however he is distraught and unable to concentrate. The clerk gives him some help but he is very busy and needs to look after the other survivors.

Do you think that you could help Finbar write his report coherently, describing the events from his point of view?

8. Last Men (Read p193)

Captain Turner and Jack Kennedy are the last to leave the ship. Before they leave the bridge, they each make one last entry in the ship's log which Captain Turner takes with him in a waterproof bag.

The official entry is very brief but each man then makes his own personal poignant comment as well.

Could you create a copy of that last final page?

What do you think each of them said in the log?

INTERNET RESOURCES

There are many resources on the Internet related to the sinking of the Lusitania and the controversy that surrounded this tragic event.

You might find the following useful for extended work on the novel:

www.rmslusitania.info/

www.lusitania.net/myths.htm

Class Project

The sinking of the Lusitania was an international disaster resulting in great loss of life.

However it has not been the only maritime disaster that has claimed lives. There have been many both before and since the Lusitania.

Developing a project on maritime disasters as a follow up to the book could provide opportunities for:

- Developing geographical knowledge
- Increasing awareness of safety issues
- Highlighting the importance of maritime trade and our dependency on the sea for our economy.
- Developing different forms of writing:
 - Research
 - Empathy
 - Report writing
 - Letter writing etc.

A Google search for 'Maritime disasters' will identify quite a large amount of resource. However caution should always be taken when directing children towards a general search on the Internet.

Generally it is prudent professional practice **NOT** to allow unsupervised searches.