



The Making of Mollie

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Teaching Guide

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SUMMARY AND THEMES

The Making of Mollie is an epistolary novel, a collection of letters, composed by Mollie to her friend Frances. These letters prove to be an invaluable primary source of historical information for the reader as well as providing in-depth information on Mollie's character and her thoughts and feelings on those around her. The conversation is one-sided as we never read Frances's responses; however through Mollie's descriptive and diary style entries we form a solid impression of her pen pal's personality.

We meet Mollie at a critical point in her life. She is beginning to look outside herself and reflect on her place as a young woman in society. Mollie sees the small injustices that she encounters at the hands of men and society in general in 1912 and yearns for change and equality. Mollie's sister Phyllis is an essential source of information and inspiration to Mollie as she uncovers her elder siblings participation in the growing suffragette movement. As Mollie uncovers hard truths her social conscience heightens, and the reader experiences these firsts alongside her, while being entertained by the sharp, funny style of the narrative.

The Making of Mollie has cross-curricular application due to the diversity of themes, including:

- Human rights
- Women's rights
- Equality
- Family
- Loyalty
- Discrimination
- Courage
- Friendship
- Love
- Social status
- Secrecy
- Conflict
- Social Change
- Education

- Home rule
- Religion

Opportunities for integration lie in the subject areas of: History, SPHE, Geography, Art and Music. Several examples may be found in the teaching guide below.

Unit 1 Pages 9–88

SUMMARY

25th March 1912

The Making of Mollie opens with a letter written from the perspective of the protagonist herself, Mollie. We learn about her home life, her relatives and their unique 'Carberry' clan dynamic. Mollie is the second youngest child in a family of four children. She has an elder sister Phyllis, who is almost of college-going age. Harry, her brother, is two years Mollie's senior. To Mollie's annoyance, Harry often behaves as if he were her *much* older, *much* wiser superior in every single way. Mollie's lengthy letter to her dear friend Frances details the many ways that Harry manages to get under her skin over the course of a few days. Mollie finds it particularly frustrating that Harry, as a boy, is allowed to do whatever he pleases, whereas she, as a young girl, must ask her parents' leave for *any* activity outside the home.

Mollie's younger sister Julia is twelve and very much the baby of the house. Together the three females complete the fiddly odd-job of darning clothes that are beginning to show signs of wear and tear. Mollie's days are 'incredibly dull'. She tells us about the various ways that her siblings drive her mad: Harry with his haughty, supercilious manner and Julia with her fervent religiosity.

Mollie writes about the local convent school that she attends. The main players in her school-yard social circle are Nora, Daisy,

Gertie and Grace. Nora and Daisy are held in Mollie's highest esteem. Gertie and Grace are best avoided, in Mollie's opinion. Mollie signs off, urging Frances to respond with tales of her far more exotic life in England.

5th April 1912

Mollie's second missive takes a more intriguing turn. Phyllis, her elder sister is up to something odd. Phyllis is inclined to involve herself in unusual activities but her behaviour of late has added a much welcome dash of drama and intrigue to Mollie's days. Mollie's suspicions were raised by snatches of Phyllis's whispered conversations with the family maid, Maggie. Further clues lay in the unsightly large hat that Phyllis began to wear, later found by Mollie on top of a wardrobe covered in flour and cabbage leaves. The most condemning piece of evidence came when Mollie spied Phyllis climbing out the window and sneaking into the lane behind the house. These are not the actions of a well-bred innocent young lady and Mollie can't decide what her sister could be up to. Mollie shares theories of a secret love affair, or maybe Phyllis is a revolutionary or a criminal. She can't quite put her finger on it yet, but what she is sure of is that Maggie the maid and Phyllis's friend Kathleen are somehow involved.

19th April 1912

Mollie writes to her fellow book-worm buddy once more, describing Phyllis's increasingly mysterious movements about the house and town. She reveals a serious break-through in her amateur sleuthing activities; Phyllis has been receiving secret packages. Furthermore Phyllis has been sneaking said packages to Maggie the family's maid. Through a little additional spying and a growing sense of guilt, Mollie has discovered that the package contains pamphlets. Could it be that Phyllis and Maggie truly are revolutionaries? Even Nora, who is not taken to flights of fancy, admits that it sounds quite suspicious.

1st May 1912

Mollie writes a letter so lengthy that she worries it will be more of a package to post, with prices to match. A lot has happened in recent days and she shares her adventures in earnest with her pen pal Frances. Mollie's sleuthing has caught up with her and she has fallen foul of Phyllis. She followed Phyllis to Custom House Quay, where all was revealed by a lady called Mrs Joyce who spoke to the crowds from atop a box. Mrs Joyce is campaigning for Votes for Women and Phyllis is supporting the cause by selling magazines of the same name. Phyllis is a suffragette! Mollie becomes so absorbed in Mrs Joyce's speech that she is spotted quite easily by Phyllis as the crowd begins to part. Phyllis's temper lessens during the walk home and she begins to explain how she found herself working with the suffragette movement, although she doesn't like to call it that! The movement has struck a chord with Mollie and she comes to realise that she agrees that women should be able to do whatever men do. Mollie thinks of the many small injustices she and her sister have experienced because society (and her sibling Harry) see them as inferior to men. Phyllis had to fight for the right to go to university; Mollie had to bicker to get her chosen cut of chicken; and even riding a bicycle is a frowned-upon form of transport for women and girls of the day. On the other hand, men and boys can do all of the above, and more still, without the censure and disapproval of those around them. Mollie returns to school ready to find out more and enlighten her chum Nora to the cause.

Mollie finds a friend in Frank when she has been charged with walking Barnaby the neighbour's dog. Frank catches Barnaby when he lunges from the lead and as he escorts Mollie home she is most pleased to find that he is sympathetic to the suffragette cause.

DISCUSSION POINTS

25th March 1912

- We learn about Mollie's family and friends from her letters to Frances. The letters are written from her personal perspective and provide Mollie's thoughts about her family. How would you describe Mollie's family based on this first letter? Who are her favourite family members and why? Can Mollie's descriptions be trusted or is there room for deception in the written word? If you were corresponding with a friend by letter or email, would you be completely truthful? If so, why? And if not, why not?

- Mollie's spare time is spent helping out with household chores, tending to her homework and reading. Do you think she is content and fulfilled by her life? Justify your reasoning by referring to the text. If you were living as a child in 1912 how would you spend your free time? Bear in mind the technological differences and social constraints of those times.

5th April 1912

- Based on Mollie's deductions to date, what do you think Phyllis is up to? How are Kathleen and Maggie involved?
- Maggie, as a house maid has fewer freedoms than the Carberry girls. Do you think she is helping Phyllis by choice? If Phyllis and Maggie were caught behaving in an unseemly manner, do you think the consequences would be the same for them both? What might the consequences be?

19th April 1912

- Maggie continues to invade Phyllis' privacy as she attempts to discover what her sister is up to. Do you think Mollie is justified in her actions? Why?
- Mollie discovers that Phyllis is in possession of pamphlets. What role do you think Phyllis plays in their production or distribution? Explain your answer by referencing the text.

1st May 1912

- Mollie has discovered that Phyllis is active in the fight for women's votes. Why do you think Phyllis has hidden her activities from the family? How do you think her parents would react if they found out?
- Do you think that Phyllis's cause is a worthy one? Should the women of Ireland have equal rights to the men? Why?
- Can you think of five rights that should be the basic entitlement of all people? Explain your choices and try to select one right that is necessary above all others.
- Frank surprises Mollie by listening to her thoughts on equal rights for women and agreeing with her. How do you think the other men in Mollie's life, her father and brother, might respond to the same topic?

ACTIVITIES

1. Women's Rights

Investigate the rights of women in Ireland during the year 1912. Follow the link below and summarise your findings.

www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/irish-suffragettes-at-the-time-of-the-home-rule-crisis/

2. Frank's Diary

Compose a diary entry for Frank's thoughts and impressions following his conversation with Mollie and daring recapture of the Menace.

3. Fashion in 1912

Examine the fashions of 1912 in Ireland using the Google images tool. Remember that fabrics at the time would have been locally sourced and hard wearing. Design an outfit that an IWFL supporter might wear to a rally. Remember skirt lengths and cuts were conservative at the time. Try and be mindful of what was socially acceptable for women to wear during 1912.

4. Charter of Women's Rights

Using the experiences of Mollie as inspiration, draft a charter of five basic rights that the women of Ireland in 1912 should receive. Compare your charter with the Universal Charter of Human Rights of 1948. Are there any similarities? Could you make further improvements to the charter based on how society is now? Or on how you think society should be?

Unit 2 Pages 89–192

SUMMARY

13th May 1912

Mollie has never taken an interest in politics before, 'Home Rule' always seemed to be for adults, but the Suffragette movement feels connected to her daily life experiences. We see that many women of the time felt it was not a girl's place to further her education or pursue a career but rather that women and girls would be better served keeping house and raising children. Aunt Josephine and Grace are two such individuals in Mollie's social sphere who are resolutely against the activities of 'The Irish Women's Franchise League'.

Mollie works her magic on Phyllis and finally convinces her to allow herself and Nora attend an Irish Women's Franchise League demonstration in the Phoenix Park. When Saturday arrives, Mollie can barely conceal her excitement and a sharp word from Phyllis reminds her to keep her emotions in check for what her family believe to be a simple walk in the park with her big sister. Caught up in the marvellous message being shared by the women speaking from the makeshift platform in the park, the girls almost miss the arrival of 'The Menace' and

his keeper Mrs Sheffield. The girls manage to crawl out of her line of sight while getting a warning to Phyllis that her mother's friend is near. Later, in the Phoenix Park Tea Rooms, Phyllis rewards the girls' quick thinking with a copy of 'Votes for Women' to peruse. The girls' conviction in the cause has been strengthened by the day's events and they are eager to attend further gatherings, if Phyllis can be persuaded. It's important to note that the gathering in the park was peaceable compared to most. When Mollie noticed cabbage leaves in Phyllis' hat a few weeks prior, it was remnants from rowdy and aggressive crowds of detractors to the cause such as the 'Ancient Order of Hibernians'.

Monday 27th May 1912

Mollie's begins her letter by sharing her relief that Frances finds her lengthy letters agreeable. We quickly learn that June 1st is to be a significant date in her diary and that of the Irish suffrage cause. On that day suffrage campaigners from all over Ireland – including unionists and nationalists – will gather for a large public meeting. Desperate to get more involved in the fight for equal rights for women, Mollie and Nora set off for town. They plan to find Phyllis and offer their assistance in selling the hot-off-the-presses copies of 'The Irish Citizen'. Their arrival proves timely and Phyllis takes a lavatory break while the girls guard her bag of magazines. Phyllis and her friend Mabel treat the girls to tea, cakes and conversation about the cause. Mollie and Nora are determined to do something to aid the Irish suffrage campaign. Together they plan to go chalking – to advertise the meeting planned for June the first.

Their chalking reads:

Votes For Women!

Grand Meeting At Antient Concert Rooms

1st June, 8pm

Admission 1/6

As Mollie and Nora spread the word through chalked signs, they cause a few raised eyebrows and sharp words from passers-by, although their actions are tame compared to some of Phyllis's tales. Determined to attend the meeting, Mollie attempts to blackmail Phyllis in to escorting them to the gathering, but she begins to feel guilty about her false threats and apologises to her big sister. Despite Mollie's poor show, Phyllis relents and agrees to take the girls on June 1st, as long as they pay for their own tickets.

Mollie decides to go chalking solo in a final burst of advertising before the grand meeting. As she scratches her message into

the ground, she is surprised by her brother's friend, Frank. Once again Frank plays the role of knight in shining armour as he promises to keep Mollie's activities secret and 'keep sketch' as she finishes off her chalking. As they walk home, Mollie is so caught up in their conversation about literature and the suffragette movement that she is almost caught in the path of a coal van – until Frank saves the day once more and pulls her out of the way!

DISCUSSION POINTS

13th May 1912

- Mollie's interest is piqued by the work of the IWFL. She is embittered by the small slights and injustices that she experiences in her daily life as a young Irish woman. What experiences do you think have shaped Mollie's thoughts and led her to develop an affinity for the suffragette cause? Do you think that she is justified in her actions and beliefs? Why? What would you do in her place?
- Mollie soon sees that Phyllis is engaged in serious political activism that sometimes ends in violence. Do you think that she is old enough to get involved? Why?
- Mollie saves her sister Phyllis from being discovered by Mrs Sheffield and outed as a sympathiser to the suffragette cause. Had she been caught, what do you think the consequences might have been?
- Why do you think the Ancient Order of Hibernians are against equal rights for women?
- How do you think it benefits the men of that time to have more rights than women?
- People of a lower income or social standing also experienced limited rights and freedoms at that time in Ireland. What are your thoughts?

Monday 27th May 1912

- Mollie and Nora go chalking to spread the word of the cause before the great meeting. Can you see any flaws in their plan? Can you think of a better way for them to spread the word, bearing in mind the limited technology of the time?
- Frank saves the day once again and we see his friendship with Molly begin to grow. Do you think Frank is genuinely interested in supporting the suffragette movement or could there be other motivations for his regular meetings with Mollie?
- Many argue that the fight for Home Rule will be damaged by the Suffragette cause. However in this letter we learn that unionists and nationalists are to

unite at a large public meeting for the Irish suffragette cause. What are your thoughts? Say where in the text you found this out.

ACTIVITIES

1. Speechwriting

Compose a speech for the IWFL rally in the Phoenix Park. Write the speech from the perspective of Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington. Use information in the article linked below to inform your writing. When writing a speech: Firstly, introduce yourself – people need to know how is talking to them. Then ask for their attention – you are trying to convince people of something. Be polite! Then state your position. What do you believe?

www.thejournal.ie/readme/the-life-and-times-of-the-great-irish-suffragette-1255920-Jan2014/

2. Ancient Order of Hibernians

Investigate the Ancient Order of Hibernians and use your findings to create a poster calling new members to join their ranks.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Order_of_Hibernians

3. Marketing

Mollie and Nora used chalking to advertise the great meeting of the IFWL. We have a multitude of technology available to use nowadays. How could they advertise their meeting using modern social media methods? Create a draft of your modern marketing strategy.

4. Map of Mollie's Dublin

Mollie and Nora gather in various parts of the city as their support of IFWL grows. Using the Google images tool, charter a simple map of Dublin. Label any sites or locations that are important in *The Making of Mollie*.

Unit 3 Pages 193–300

SUMMARY

Sunday, 2nd June, 1912

Mollie's latest letter begins with bad news as we learn that although the meeting went well, she never got to attend. Mabel mistakenly gave their tickets away and as it sold out, Mollie and Nora found themselves trying to listen from the vestibule. The girls can't make much sense of the muffled words, and instead Mollie begins to share her growing feelings for Frank Nugent with

her friend. The next day in school Grace reveals Mollie and Nora's political leanings to their classmates. Further discussions ensue and Mollie and Nora decide to make a more permanent mark for the movement. They plan to paint 'Votes for Women' on public property – a postbox. If caught, they could be in trouble for vandalism and defacing Government property!

Friday 14th June 1912

This letter contains top-secret information on Mollie and Nora's militant action. They are proper suffragettes at last! Harry's return from a match is delayed by several days due to illness, allowing Mollie to steal his alarm clock and set it for 4:30am. Meanwhile, the school's plumbing is on the fritz so lessons are cancelled until the water system has been righted. Mollie and Nora grasp the golden opportunity for some early-morning action. They sneak out and paint their message 'Votes for Women', across a postbox. Later that day, Mollie is thrilled to hear that word of militant action on behalf of the IWFL has spread. She feels like a true suffragette. Phyllis elaborates and Mollie soon realises that their militant action has been overshadowed by the combined efforts of Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington, Mrs Palmer and their followers. The women in question were taking a stand on the streets of Dublin at the very same time that Mollie and Nora were committing their first public-defacing offence! The ladies were arrested for breaking windows in the GPO and other Government buildings. Mollie and Nora are momentarily concerned that their night-time activities might be added to the ladies list of crimes and if that were to happen they are ready to own up to their crime. Fortunately, there is no mention of their act of public vandalism in the following day's paper, and the girls are relieved to hear that Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington, Mrs Palmer and their fellow militants have been released on bail. Plans are already afoot for a meeting in the phoenix park that the girls *must* attend.

Phyllis gladly takes them along with her friend Kathleen, so long as they stay out of the fray. The Ancient Order of Hibernians are in attendance and won't let the ladies speak from the lorry without a fight. Frank makes an appearance once more, keen to show his support for the cause and as he leaves Nora pronounces him a worthy match for her dear friend Mollie.

Mollie returns to school disheartened by the lack of support for the women's cause and feels deflated by the normalcy that school presents when so much more has been

happening outside its walls. The appearance of a pink chalked 'Votes for Women' and an etching in a pane of glass give her a much needed boost as she realises that her actions *have* had meaning and there are more suffragettes in-waiting amongst her school mates than she first realised. Mollie signs off her final letter reaffirming her support of the suffragette movement and her belief that some day soon their collective actions will result in victory and the women of Ireland will have the equal rights that they deserve.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Sunday, 2nd June, 1912

- Mollie has finally opened up to Nora about Frank. Why do you think it took her so long to share this news with her friend? What might this mean about her feelings for Frank? Why do you think Nora felt hurt by her friend withholding the news about Frank? Do you think that Nora was right to be upset?
- Mollie and Nora have decided to take their political message one step further. They plan to paint the message 'Votes for Women' on a postbox in the wee hours of the morning. Do you think that they will follow through with their plan? What potential pitfalls might lie in their way? Can you think of another way for them to show their dedication to the Irish Women's Franchise League?

Friday 14th June 1912

- What dangers might lie in two unaccompanied girls travelling through Dublin in the early hours of the morning? Is there anything that Mollie and Nora might do to ensure their safe passage and completion of their task?
- A stay in Mountjoy prison seems to be the punishment for Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington, Mrs Palmer et al. Do you think this is the right punishment for their actions? Can you think of any other ways that the women might have highlighted their cause? Do you think their actions will have a positive effect on the fight for women's rights?



Anna Carey is a freelance journalist from Drumcondra in Dublin who has written for the Irish Times, Irish Independent and many other publications. She has written four novels about Dublin teenager Rebecca Raftery the first of which, *The Real Rebecca*, won the Irish Book Awards Children's Book of the Year award. *The Making of Mollie* is her first historical novel.

- Mollie is comforted by the discovery of further pro-women's rights slogans in the school grounds. She sees it as a positive sign of the growth in support for IWFL. What are your thoughts? Do you agree with Mollie? What do you think the outcome will be? Will it be a lengthy fight for women's rights?
- Do Irish women of today share equal rights with men on *all* matters? Is there room for further social change? If so, list some changes. If not, say why not.

ACTIVITIES

1. Frances

Although we never hear from Frances directly, Mollie's letters create a clear picture of her friend. Create a character profile for Frances using all the information that may be gleaned from Mollie's letters. Use your imagination to add to Frances' personality and looks. The questionnaire below might prove useful.

www.creative-writing-now.com/writing-character-profiles.html

2. Women's Rights Now

Women's rights are still an issue today. In recent times we have seen huge numbers attend worldwide in support of the 'Women's March'. What are your thoughts on women's rights? Are their rights different in different parts of the world? How could you make a difference? Draft a plan of action, including acts both local and worldwide that you think could help make changes for the better.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_Women's_March

3. Campaign Song

Molly and Nora created a catchy tune to support the ladies of the IWFL. Create your own anthem or rap, using the song of your choice as inspiration. In the film *Mary Poppins* there is an excellent example of such a tune, titled 'Sister Suffragette'. Follow the link below for some inspiration!

youtube.com/watch?v=Kvk1NZDFvZU