



Shay Given

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Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE & THEMES

This is an exciting story following a young boy from the small Donegal town of Lifford who dreams of keeping goal for Ireland. His journey takes him to the heights of European and World Cup qualification and recalls the 'glory days' when Irish footballers and their fans challenged the giants of the game.

Shay collected trophies in a long and successful playing career in the English Premier League, where his achievements and skill matched the best in the world.

The themes explored are:

- Dedication and commitment
- Winning and losing
- Making choices
- Sportsmanship
- Loyalty
- Choosing priorities
- Dealing with disappointment
- Rivalry
- Dishonesty
- Team spirit

SUMMARY

Shay was born to be a goalkeeper. Brought up playing with his three brothers, football was as natural for him as breathing. With his front garden as a stadium, he imagined himself saving thundering shots from all his Premier club heroes.

Shay was only fifteen years old when he was selected to play in goals for Lifford Celtic, his local senior team. His dad, also a goalie, was delighted and predicted that Shay would play for Ireland before he reached twenty.

At school, Shay kept goal for the school teams. During the All-Ireland U-18 final he had a terrible game and suffered the humiliation of being substituted. The following week in the U-16 final he redeemed himself with a terrific performance and the school lifted the trophy.

When Lifford Celtic played the FAI Junior

Cup final, Shay's dad used his contacts to alert the Premier club scouts and ensure they attended to watch Shay play.

Shay impressed and received offers of apprenticeships from Scottish and English clubs.

With his dad's advice, the decision to leave school early and pursue a football career was made and he accepted an offer to go to Glasgow Celtic. However, after two years and unfavourable terms to sign for the club, Shay left to return to Lifford.

His return home was short lived and another offer took him to Blackburn Rovers, followed quickly with a call to join the national squad just as Mick McCarthy took over from Jack Charlton as manager.

The beginning of McCarthy's tenure was disappointing for the team with a string of mediocre results and Shay was unable to hold on to the first-choice goalie position on a regular basis.

Another club move took Shay to Newcastle and a famous night in the Champions League when they beat Barcelona. However, disappointment brought him back to earth when they finished runners-up to Arsenal in the FA Cup.

In Saipan, Shay watched incredulous as the infamous dispute between the captain and the manager unfolded and their campaign was derailed again.

Injury began to define Shay's career and when he moved to Man City, he finally got an FA Cup medal as the reserve keeper.

International heartbreak struck again with the hand of Thierry Henry and Shay's playing career entered its endgame when he retired from international duty.

Martin O'Neill, the new Irish manager, persuaded him out of retirement, however, time was not on his side and he stepped aside into a coaching role at Derby County after a record number of international caps

for an Irish goalkeeper and a stellar career at the top tier in the Premier League.

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 A Young Footballer Pages 7 - 55

SUMMARY

The prologue describes a torrid night in Tehran when Ireland qualify for the World Cup in Japan.

The story proper opens when Shay is a child. The Given household is lively for young Shay and his brothers and football is always their first choice for entertainment.

Shay's dad is also a goalie and it is his support that helps to direct Shay to follow in his footsteps.

Travelling to watch Ireland play in Dublin their dad arranges for them all to meet the Irish team and Shay is thrilled to meet his hero Packie Bonner, imagining himself repeating the famous penalty save that took Ireland into the 1990 World Cup quarter finals.

Later at a local summer soccer school, Packie

gives the first indication of Shay's potential. This is followed by an invitation to play for the local senior side Lifford Celtic.

Still only fifteen, Shay plays striker for his school team, however, when the regular goalie is injured Shay is moved into goal and makes the role his own.

When the school reach the All-Ireland U-18 final, Shay makes an early mistake and is substituted. His dad is incandescent and threatens to withdraw him from the team. The U-16 final is the following weekend and Shay is allowed to play, pulling off a spectacular save that secures the trophy for the school.

Lifford Celtic have made it to the finals of the FAI Junior Cup and his dad uses his contacts to ensure that Premier League scouts attend. His strategy is successful and Shay is offered a number of apprenticeships.

Accepting an invitation to train with the team on a visit to Dublin, the decision is made to join Glasgow Celtic as an apprentice and at sixteen years of age, Shay leaves for Glasgow with his dad's prediction ringing in his ears, that he will be playing for Ireland before he is twenty.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p9):** When Shay saves the shot from Karim Bagheri, he believes it to be a pivotal moment. What is a pivotal moment in a game? How would you recognize one and what effect would it have? Give an example and explain how a pivotal moment affected a game that you were playing.
- **(Read pp17-20):** Shay's brother Liam is a fan of The Smiths and decides to change his appearance to look like Elvis. Why do we copy our heroes? Is this a healthy thing to do? How easily can we be influenced by what our heroes do or say? How can you make sure that your decisions are truly your own? webwise.ie/teachers/lockers-lesson-5/
- **(Read pp34-35):** Shay is not really interested in school and his teachers are concerned that he will regret missed opportunities later. Should school be compulsory after a certain age? How would it affect society if you had a choice whether to go to school or not? What subjects do you really need to do at school? What else could you do if you didn't want to go to school? getschooled.com/article/935-5-reasons-to-go-to-school-every-day/
- **(Read pp44-45):** Shay's dad is incensed when the coach substitutes Shay so quickly and threatens to withdraw him

completely. Parents on the sidelines can be a problem when they disagree with a coach's decision. How can this affect the team? Who has the final say and how should a complaint be dealt with?

ACTIVITIES

1. Respect (Read pp7-8)

The Iranian fans behave terribly and show no respect for the Irish players. Their experience of Tehran is one that they will never forget.

The team decide to write a letter to complain to the Iranian Football Association about their fans' intimidating behaviour.

What should they say and how strong should the tone of the letter be?

Can you help them to write the letter?

coilnet.ie/uploads/resources/36391/36193.pdf

theredcard.ie/teachers/

2. The Game (Read p12)

Shay and his brothers have created a football game to suit the number of players they have.

In groups, create a new football game for an **ODD** number (<10) of players.

Create an exciting, illustrated poster, explaining the rules and scoring. You'll have to decide on an appealing name for it.

3. The Keeper (Read p16)

Soccer and Gaelic players need a range of skills; however, a goalkeeper needs an extra set for moving, handling the ball and reading the game.

In groups, identify five extra mental and physical skills that the goalie needs and rank them, with an explanation, in order of importance.

wikihow.com/Be-a-Soccer-Goalie
assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0040/3453/7_Skills_a_Goalkeeper_Really_Should_Master.pdf

4. Family (Read pp19-21)

Shay appreciates his family and is happy that he is part of it.

Think carefully about your own family and what makes it special for you.

Create an illustrated 'Thank You' card for your family, explaining what you appreciate about them and why you're delighted to be a member.

5. Twenty (Read p29)

Shay's dad predicts that Shay will play for Ireland before he reaches twenty.

Think carefully about what you would like to

do when you leave school. What ambitions would you like to achieve before your twentieth birthday?

Create a short list illustrated in cartoon style of your ambitions explaining how you think that you'll achieve them.

6. M.O.T.M. (Read p45)

His school are All-Ireland U-16 champions and Shay has been awarded M.O.T.M. (*Man of the Match*).

His dad is delighted, but particularly pleased with the comments that are attached to the award.

Make a copy of the report that was included with the award.

7. Scouts (Read pp47-49)

Although Lifford Celtic lose, Shay's performance is impressive and the Premier League scouts who attended the match email their reports to their clubs.

Shortly afterwards, offers of apprenticeships arrive for Shay.

Make a copy of three of the reports. Try to make the language and tone different for each of them, while making it clear their impressions of Shay and his potential.

Section 2 Saipan Pages 56 - 119

SUMMARY

Despite his school's advice to finish his education first, his dad encourages him to accept Celtic's apprenticeship offer and Shay sets off for Glasgow.

He finds Glasgow a challenge and is homesick and after two years, when Celtic offer him unattractive terms to join them as a player, he decides to return to Lifford.

He doesn't have to wait long for other clubs to show interest and when Blackburn offer him a contract, he accepts.

It is the perfect learning environment. As part of his training he goes on loan to Sunderland where he is spotted by Mick McCarthy, the new Ireland manager, who makes the dream call and asks him to join the national side.

An injury to the first-choice goalie gives Shay the opportunity to start and at just nineteen he takes the field against Russia, remembering his dad's prediction that he would play for Ireland before he was twenty.

However, McCarthy's reign is marked by disappointment and the team struggle to qualify for major competitions.

Now at Newcastle, Shay enjoys a spectacular night when they beat Barcelona in the Champions League, however, at home their Premier fortunes wan and they are beaten by Arsenal in the FA Cup final.

Another opportunity to reach the World Cup in Japan through the play-offs sees them endure a torrid cauldron in Tehran where they hold Iran to book their tickets.

In Saipan, Shay can only watch in disbelief as the explosion of acrimony between their captain and manager rips through the camp.

Despite the controversy, Ireland make it out of their group and face Spain in the knock-out stage. Full time sees the teams drawn and they brace themselves for the penalty shoot-out.

With the penalties drawn at 2-2, Spain take their final penalty. Indecision causes Shay to miscalculate and Spain are through. Ireland are devastated but none more so than Shay.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (Read pp59-62): Shay finds it difficult in Glasgow because of homesickness. Is this really a mental health issue? How can the club try to protect Shay's mental health? How does competition affect your mental health? Today, what effect can social media have on your mental health? mentalhealtheducate.ie/animations
- (Read p65): Shay is offered a salary of £500/week at Blackburn. This is a phenomenal wage for a teenager and much greater than the average wage. Does this reflect a fair reward for what a footballer does? The club is able to offer the wage because of ticket sales. Is it fair that many of the fans paying for tickets could never hope to earn such a wage? bankofengland.co.uk/knowledgebank/why-are-football-players-paid-so-much
- (Read pp82-83): Barcelona are clear favourites, yet Newcastle beat them on the night. How is this possible? What other factors are influencing the game apart from the individual skills of the players? Is being a favourite really an advantage?
- (Read pp89-90): Newcastle are runners-up in the FA Cup Final and yet Shay is disappointed. Why is winning so important that anything else is a disappointment? Is this a positive attitude to take towards sport? Some players will not wear their runner-up medals at the award ceremony. Is this a sign of disrespect towards your opponents? active.org.nz/news/10-reasons-why-winning-and-losing-are-important-for-children/

- (Read pp101-108): The conditions at the Saipan training facility are clearly inadequate and Ireland's captain Roy Keane is angry. However, the manager is prepared to accept them. Should they have been expected to tolerate the conditions? What was the principle involved? What could both of them have done to avoid the dispute?

ACTIVITIES

1. Dear Dad (Read pp58-59)

After his first week at Celtic, Shay decides to write to his dad to tell him all about the club, how he is settling in and how he is missing home.

Can you help him write the letter? What should he say and how can he say it without causing his dad to worry about him?

2. Shay (Read p69)

Shay keeps a clean sheet for his first appearance at Sunderland and the fans and club are delighted.

For the next match, the club decide to issue a short 'bio' piece in their match day booklet to introduce him to the fans.

Make a copy of the article they included to introduce him.

3. Dalglish v van Gaal (Read pp82)

Louis van Gaal gives an arrogant media interview and states that they expect to win. Dalglish does not. Both managers will speak to their teams before the match to prepare them.

In groups make a copy of the short speeches that each of them gave in the dressing rooms both before the match and afterwards.

How did they encourage their team and then explain the result?

4. Qualified (Read pp97-99)

As Ireland leave Tehran, the RTÉ sports team record a short 30-second piece for the evening news to give an impression of the match and the excitement of reaching the finals.

Work in pairs to produce a lively and entertaining commentary that the two reporters produced.

5. Roy (Read pp102-105)

The author describes Roy at Saipan as 'hot-headed', 'marching' around and 'screaming' at people.

How does this language encourage you to think about him? Is this a balanced

description?

Make a list of the adverbs she uses to describe him (you can illustrate your list if you wish). Now use your thesaurus to find alternatives that are less harsh.

Create another description using your alternative list of adverbs. Is it more balanced?

6. He's Wrong (Read pp109-110)

After the Cameroon match, Shay takes time out to have a meal with his dad and brothers.

They are delighted by the Cameroon result but hold different opinions on what happened at Saipan.

The author thought that she might include a short paragraph to record their conversation and discussion.

Make a copy of the paragraph she might have included.

soccer-ireland.com/saipan/roy-keane-saipan-interview.htm

7. What if (Read p119)

Shay plays the final penalty over in his head and wonders if there was anything else that he could have done.

'What if' moments are very common for everyone, when we wonder how a result might have changed if we had done some small thing slightly differently.

Share a 'What if' moment of your own. It doesn't need to be a sporting moment.

Section 3 Moving On Pages 120 - 173

SUMMARY

In the closing minutes of a club match, Shay takes a robust tackle and has to be substituted. Initially suspecting that his discomfort is not serious, he is overcome by a wave of pain and has to be rushed to hospital with a perforated bowel. It is a serious injury and he is unable to play for two months.

He returns with an international win; however, his club are in decline and he accepts an offer to sign for Manchester City.

He settles quickly into the club's routine, earning a M.O.T.M. award and dominating a penalty shoot-out to take them to the UEFA Cup Quarter Finals.

Unfortunately, this proves to be the high point; injury, mediocre team performances and a new manager see Shay lose his first-team goalkeeper position. However, when

City win the FA Cup, Shay collects a winner's medal as the reserve keeper.

Ireland have a new manager, Giovanni Trapattoni, and Shay holds on to the number 1 shirt, playing in all the qualifying matches.

Following their familiar 'play-off' route, this time Ireland are denied by a blatant and deliberate Thierry Henry handball.

Struggling to secure first team game time, Shay moves to Villa and enjoys the opportunity to play again.

Another disappointing campaign leads Shay to make the decision to retire from the international team, however, two years later under the new management of O'Neill and Keane, he is coaxed out of retirement.

Haunted by injury again, he is convinced that his playing career is at an end, however circumstance offers him a final chance to pull on a green jersey and play first-team club football when his rivals are injured.

Representing Ireland one last time he earns his 134th cap and bows out, waving to Irish fans on a French pitch, reflecting on a kaleidoscope of memories stretching back over twenty years.

Retired, Shay moves into coaching with Derby, now able to pass his skill, experience and enthusiasm for the game to the next generation.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (*Read p136-137*): Man City win the FA Cup and Shay collects a winner's medal despite having been on the bench for the tournament. Is it fair that he got a medal as well? Should medals only be awarded to players and not to the reserves?
- (*Read pp144-148*): Thierry Henry plays a clear handball to set up a goal, yet the referee refuses to penalize him. How should players who commit professional fouls be dealt with both during the match and afterwards? How does this type of behaviour affect the game, how it is played and the attitudes of younger players?
- (*Read p152*): In Tallinn, Robbie Keane reminds them of their fans. Fans generate huge amounts of money for the organizers through ticket sales and merchandise. Should more of this money go to develop amateur clubs? Has the professional game really developed into entertainment? Something that you pay to watch rather than enjoy taking part in? Is this still sport?
- (*Read pp155-157*): Ireland can only reach the finals of an international event through the play-offs and are seldom able

to progress out of the group stage. Should we be realistic and accept that Ireland do not have a world class soccer team? Is it time to have more realistic expectations?

ACTIVITIES

1. Thinking (*Read p131*):

As Shay watches Augustinussen prepare to take the Aalborg penalty, he runs a stream of dialogue through his head to help him concentrate.

Augustinussen and every fan in the stadium will be thinking the same things. These comments will speed up as Augustinussen begins his run up and reach a crescendo with either a cheer or a groan when he hits the ball.

Create an illustrated speech bubbled collage or cartoon to give an impression of what is happening inside each of their heads in the stadium.

2. FanZone Forum (*Read pp140-141*)

Under their new manager, Ireland's style of play has changed and although they have stopped leaking so many goals, it is not very exciting to watch.

This has divided the fans with some complaining about and others supporting the new strategy.

The online FAI FanZone Forum is very busy with some robust comments posted as fans challenge each other's opinions.

Create a page of comment to illustrate how divided they have become.

3. Disillusioned (*Read pp144-145*)

Thierry Henry's handball was a clear and deliberate foul and the referee allowed it to go unpunished.

If you had an opportunity to leave a comment on his social media site telling him why his action was wrong, particularly not owning up to his foul and how disillusioned you are by his behaviour, what would you say?

4. Enraged (*Read p145*)

Shay and the team are distraught both with the handball and the referee's refusal to deal with it. They have been cheated out of a place in the World Cup Finals and are powerless to do anything.

This intensity of frustration can affect your mental health.

In groups suggest your top three suggestions for Shay and the team to make sure that

their disappointment and frustration do not overpower them.

bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1WC1vQpNjSpMltg7NC037Xg/anger-fighting-aggression

5. FAI v FIFA (*Read p147*)

After the match FAI write a strong official letter of complaint to FIFA to complain about the incident and demand that they take action.

FIFA write a brief reply noting their complaint, but refusing to take any action

Make a copy of both letters.

6. The Fan's Voice (*Read p152*)

To celebrate reaching the finals of the European Championships, FAI have organized a competition for fans. The prize is, flights, tickets and accommodation for the finals.

The competition is open to everyone and is simple to enter.

You have to complete the statement: **I SUPPORT IRELAND BECAUSE...** in less than 20 words.

Create five separate illustrated entries to show the range of different people, nationalities and ages who support Ireland.

7. Past Pupil (*Read pp169-171*)

It is prizegiving night at St Columba's and Shay has been invited back to award the prizes.

He has to make a short speech and he has been thinking carefully about what he might say about his experiences to the teachers and the leavers.

Can you help him to write his speech?

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.