

Little Croker

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JOE O'BRIEN

Teaching Guide

By PETER HEANEY

RATIONALE AND THEMES

Reading *Little Croker* with your class should make for lively and enjoyable classroom discussions as the themes are universal and have broad appeal. In addition, any sports-mad boy or girl will really empathise with the goals and dreams of the characters.

The action is firmly set within a G.A.A. context and reflects the sportsmanship, and ethos that mark the game at every level.

The themes will find easy resonance across the whole curriculum and include:

- Reconciliation
- Serious illness
- Ambition
- Commitment
- Sportsmanship
- Encouragement
- Friendship
- Emancipation

SUMMARY

The Littlestown Crokes Gaelic Athletic Club (G.A.C.) is in the final stages of a battle to secure the league trophy when misfortune threatens to frustrate all their efforts; Mick Wilde, the team coach, has a stroke, leaving his son Danny to cope with many changes. Danny, the team captain and playmaker, has to call on all his imagination and skills to deal with challenges both on and off the pitch.

Mick and his brother Larry have always seemed to hate each other, so Danny is surprised when Larry offers to look after him while his dad is in hospital. At first, Danny finds it hard to settle in at his uncle's house, but in time he discovers the raw Gaelic football talent of his cousin Jonathon, and the two boys develop a close friendship.

At the same time, Danny has to cope with both his own fears for his dad's health and with keeping an eye on Jimmy, the assistant coach, whose managerial skills are a pale shadow of Mick's.

Uncle Larry is anxious that the cousins do not spend too much time together, fearing that Danny will be a bad influence on Jonathon.

The cousins devise an elaborate plan to circumvent the objections that Larry and Mick have to Jonathon playing for Littlestown Crokes; in the process, they achieve reconciliation for Mick and Larry, secure the league title with the last kick of the season and even become reluctant heroes with a mention

on national television.

APPROACH

This is an action-packed, fast-paced and lively story, with enormous opportunity for the class to empathise with the hero, Danny, and the challenges he faces.

The characters, themes and situations have an appealing authenticity, offering both scope for discussion and the opportunity to create alternative solutions to the challenges they present.

An effective approach should include whole class discussion, including circle time and debates as a support framework for individual and small group responses.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (*Read p 59*): Sean Dempsey is a good player, however his play is dangerous and 'dirty'. Mick thinks that Sean's dad Tommy has some responsibility for Sean's behaviour. How do you think that Sean's dad might be responsible for Sean's dirty play? What sort of example does he need to show to Sean?
- (*Read pp 92 & 96*) Larry made some very hurtful remarks about the Littlestown estate. What do you think that he was really trying to say to Danny and Jonathon and why? What do you think that Danny could have said to him to tell him how he felt about his remarks?
- (*Read p 148*) Danny and Jonathon were delighted when they realised that their plan had worked and they had fooled their parents. Do you think that the cousins were really behaving responsibly? What consequences could there have been if things had gone seriously wrong?
- (*Read pp 154-156*) Danny, Splinter and Jonathon have discovered a bag of money. Splinter's reaction is '*Finders Keepers*', but Jonathon realises that they can't keep the money. Who do you think was right and what reason would you give to persuade the others if you were one of the group?

RESOURCES

Further resources can be found at:

- www.gaa.ie
- www.ladiesgaelic.ie
- www.rte.ie
- www.museum.gaa.ie

THE PHANTOM BAINISTEOIR

Managing a team is a big responsibility and requires tremendous skill in order to be successful. There are many things to think about and one of the most important is picking the team.

For this activity you will be Bainisteoir of your own team and you will be allowed to pick any player from the National League for your team.

To enjoy the activity you will need to decide if you want to do the activity:

- By yourself *or*
- As a member of group in class *or*
- As a member of a family team with your dad / grandad / mum / other family member to help.

Team selection and scoring rules:

- You will need to decide which players you want to fill each position. You can use the team sheet below to nominate your players. You must keep an eye on the scores / red cards etc of your chosen players in their real-life games and apply their scores and so on to your team.
- You must pick players for each position from the positions they play on their own teams: you can't put forwards into each of the positions.
- You can have three subs named and if one of your team is injured and goes off then you can add the sub's points to your score if they have scored for their own team.
- You can change no more than three players each week and players can be nominated on more than one team.
- You will need to publish your team each Friday and decide which other team from your class will be your opponent for that weekend.
- If one of your players has been sent off then you can't use any points they scored for your score.
- Deduct one point from your score for every YELLOW card and two points for every RED card collected by your players. Red carded players can't be substituted
- For every save that your goalkeeper made then add three points to your score.
- Each Monday you can check if any of your players scored for their team at the weekend and then add their points to your score. You will find match reports in any of the Sunday newspapers. You can use the score sheet below to calculate your team score.
- If there are several teams in the class, then perhaps you could organise the activity into a class league.
- If you needed any more rules for the activity, then perhaps you could set up a GAA Rules Committee and decide for yourselves what the rules should be.

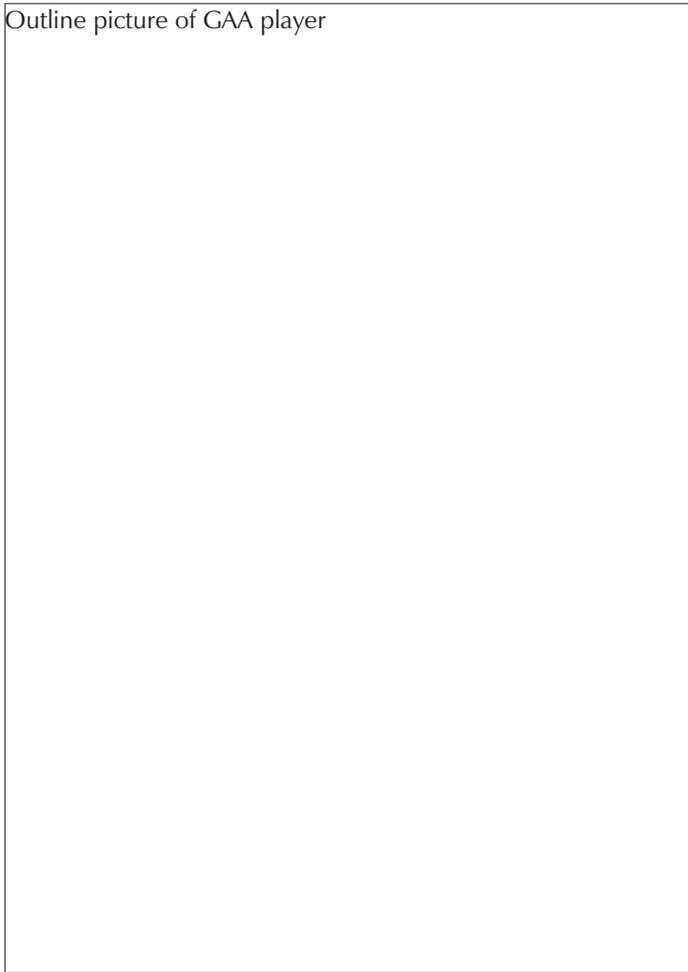
Each player or team will need a scoring sheet, such as this one:

Bainisteoir name			
Position	Player	Score	Fouls
Goal			
Left corner back			
Full back			
Right corner back			
Left half back			
Centre half back			
Right half back			
Mid field #1			
Mid field #2			
Right half forward			
Centre half forward			
Left half forward			
Right full forward			
Centre full forward			
Left full forward			
Sub #1			
Sub #2			
Sub #3			
	Totals		
	Match score		
Man of the Match			
Reason for choosing them			

THE KIT

Now that you have chosen a team you will need to design a kit for them. You can use the template below to create your own design.

Outline picture of GAA player



(You can see examples of county designs at www.gaa.ie)

Use the box below to explain your choice of colour and design.

If you decide to use the GAA logo on your kit, you could write a brief polite letter to them explaining what you are doing and asking permission to use the logo on your kit, explaining that the kits will only be drawings.

If you decide that you would like a sponsor for your kit, you could choose someone locally who could sponsor all the kits in the class. When you write to them, explain that all the kits will only be drawings and perhaps ask for a small donation for a charity instead, for example, to Trócaire or GOAL.

I chose these colours and designs for my kit because ...

CAD É AN T-AINM ATÁ AR AN FOIREANN?

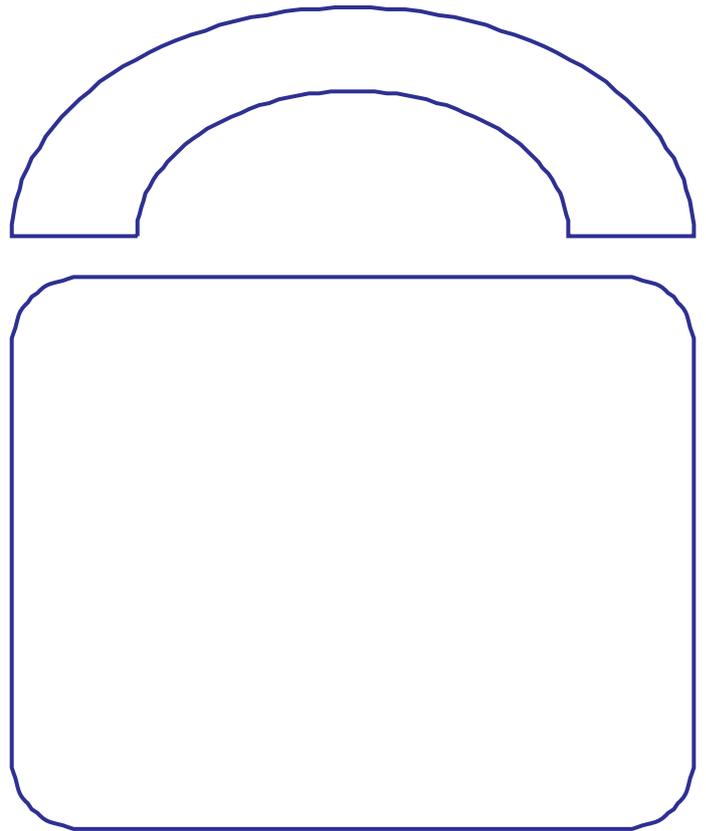
Every team needs a name. The name will let everyone know who the team are, where they are from and why they have pride in themselves.

Can you use your imagination to create a really inspiring name for your team?

Is the team name in English or in Irish?

You will also need to design a club badge to complement your name.

You can use the template below to design the badge in your own colours and include the team name. Of course, you can use your own shape if you prefer.



THE SCOUT

(Read PP 20-23 & 186-187)

One of the Littlestown Crokes players has been scouted by the GAA for the Dublin Schoolboy Development Squad. Robert Jenkins, the scout, has to write a short report and explain why he is recommending him.

Which player do you think is most likely to get noticed by a scout?

If you were asked to write the report what would you write?

Complete the details on the DSDS report form below.

Dublin Schoolboy Development Squad:

(Please include any evidence that you find under the headings)

Name / age & club details of candidate.	
Personal qualities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership• Sportsmanship• Commitment• Club involvement	
Skill levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fitness• Ball skills• Playmaker	
Development potential as a future county player	

THE PENALTY

(Read p 185)

It is the final kick of the season and Danny has asked 'J' to take the penalty. Danny has confidence in his cousin's ability to take the shot because he has been coaching him.

If you were coaching someone to take penalties, what advice would you give?

You can work in small groups and make a list of suggestions. You will then need to decide which advice is the most important and list those in order of priority (i.e. most important to least important).

Use 'Bullet' form to make your suggestions brief so that they will be easy to remember and give your advice as a list of what to do and what not to do.

You can use the diagram and boxes below to help.

What to do

-
-
-
-
-

What not to do

-
-
-
-
-

Extra: If you were asked to coach the goalie, what advice would you give?

IT'S ALL IN THE FACE

(Read pp 26; 31; 87; 97; 102; &113)

Facial expression can be a very effective way of communicating. Sometimes, the way you look at someone can say more to them than the words you use.

Can you use the blank faces below and the facial features to build faces to match what you think the person is trying to say on each of the pages above?

When you have finished, can you write just one adjective to describe the mood that each is trying to communicate. If you use a thesaurus, then you will get a better selection of words. Use the box below the face for your word

You can use the symbols below for mouth, or make up your own:



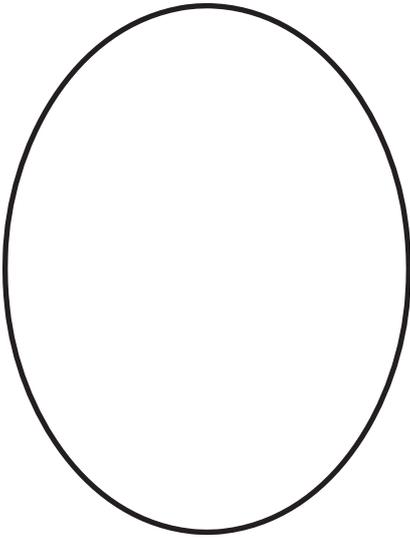
Here are some ideas for symbols for eyebrows



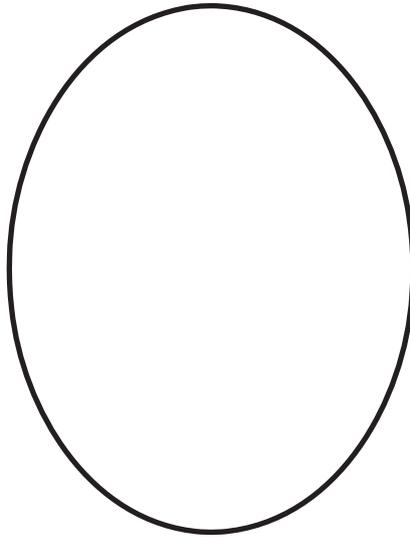
Here are some ideas for symbols for eyes



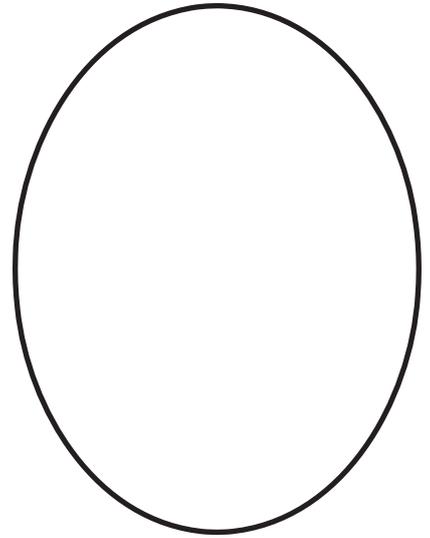
Danny (p102)



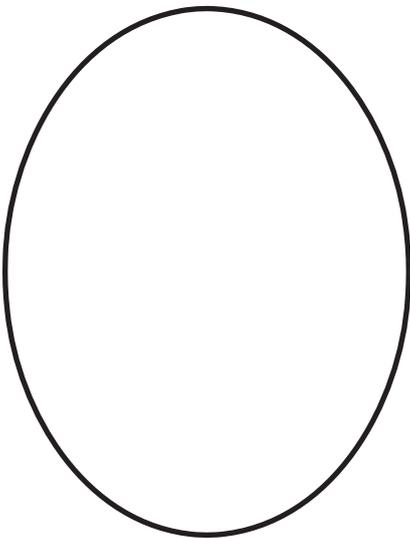
Mick (p26)



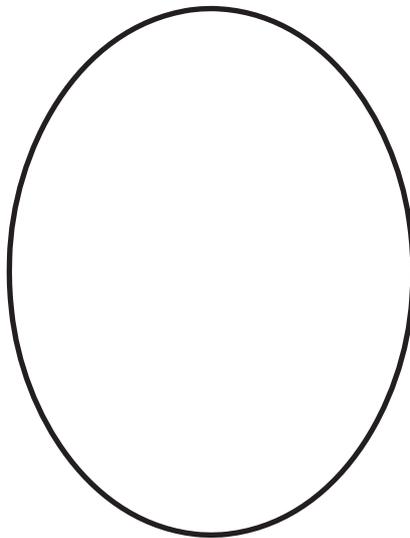
Larry (p97)



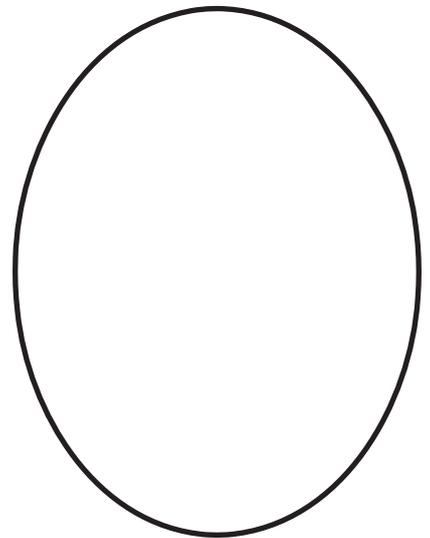
Danny (p102)



Mick (p26)



Larry (p97)



THE NATURAL

(Read p 120)

When Jimmy first sees Jonathon in training his impression is that Jonathon is a 'natural' G.A.A. player.

What do you think he means when he says that? How do you think you would recognise a '**natural**' player?

Could you complete the profile below to describe how you think a '**natural**' player could be recognised?

You could work in small groups to share your ideas and then draw a picture of someone that you consider to be a 'natural' player. You can give four reasons why you consider them to be a 'natural'.

Attributes	Description
Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size • Age • Gender 	
Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing • Kicking • Tackling 	
Temperament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • On pitch • Off pitch 	
Things they might say	
Things they would never say	
Behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards manager • Towards the team • Towards opponents 	
Commitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To training • To team 	

THE GAME

(Read p104)

Jonathon doesn't have the foggiest notion about how to play Gaelic Football. Danny has asked for your help to teach him the main points of the game as quickly as possible.

Could you work in small groups to decide the ten **essential** things he needs to know?

You could design a little 'reminder card' that he could take home with him to learn off by heart.

You will need to decide what is **essential** information and also what order you will present it on the card. For example, would he need to know how to score *before* he learns how to hand pass the ball?

It would be helpful if you included illustrations with your information where possible. You can use the chart below if you like.

The Ten Essential Rules of Gaelic	Illustrations
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	