



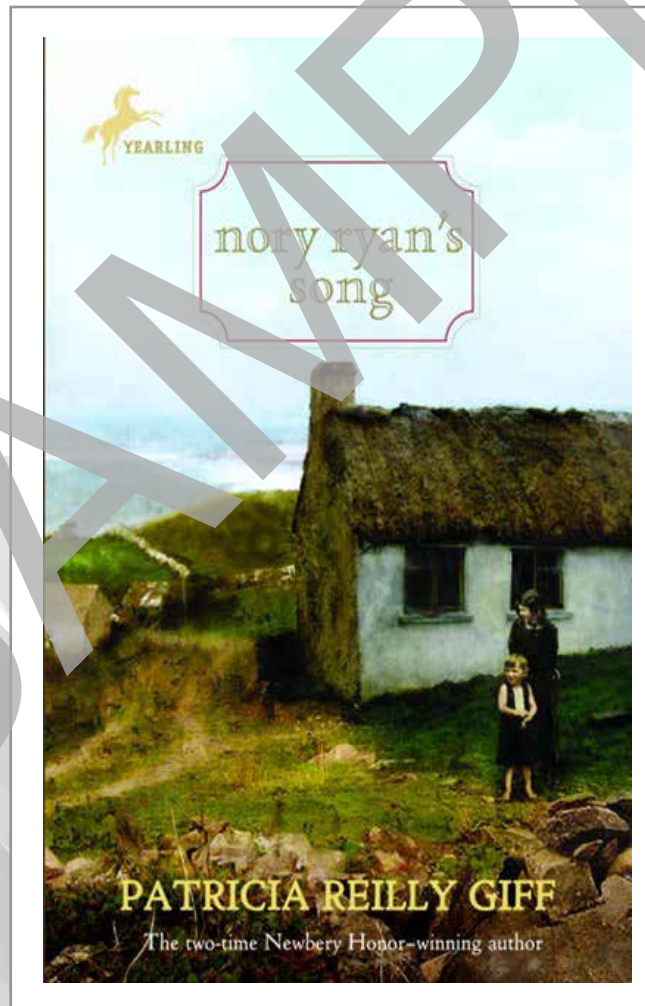
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Nory Ryan's Song

Patricia Reilly Giff



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Nory Ryan's Song

Patricia Reilly Giff

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, research, critical thinking, decision-making, creative thinking

Comprehension

Predicting, evaluating decisions, cause/effect

Writing

Poetry, letter, essay, review, transcript

Listening/Speaking

Oral presentation, discussion, debate

Vocabulary

Definitions, parts of speech, context clues

Literary Elements

Setting, conflict, tone, characterization, point of view, figurative language

Across the Curriculum

Art—painting, sketching, music; Social Studies—“The Great Hunger,” colonialism, immigration, geography, genealogies; Health—herbal remedies, recipes; Science—effects of starvation

Genre: historical fiction

Setting: Maidin Bay, Ireland; 1845

Point of View: first person

Themes: family, courage, sacrifice, survival, community, fear, hope

Conflict: person vs. nature, person vs. person, person vs. self, person vs. society

Tone: conversational, hopeful

Summary

Twelve-year-old Nory Ryan lives in Maidin Bay, Ireland with her grandfather and siblings. The family is awaiting the return of Nory's father, who is away fishing in hopes of earning enough money for the family's rent. A failed potato crop and an English lord who wants only to clear the land of Irish settlers force Nory's family to go to great lengths to survive their hunger. Nory's courage and her friendship with a neighbor, Anna, help her survive for a while. In the end, it seems the family's only hope is to make the long trip to America to reunite with Nory's eldest sister in Brooklyn.

About the Author

Patricia Reilly Giff was born on April 26, 1935 in Brooklyn, New York. Ever since she was a child, Giff was surrounded by books. She earned a B.A. from Marymount College in 1956, an M.A. from St. John's University in 1958, and went on to pursue a 20-year career in teaching. In 1975, Giff was awarded a Professional Diploma in Reading and a Doctorate of Humane Letters from Hofstra University. Of her more than 60 books for children, Giff says she tries to write books "that say ordinary people are special." She is a two-time Newbery Honor-winner for her works *Pictures of Hollis Woods* and *Lily's Crossing*, which also earned a Boston Globe-Horn Book Award. *Nory Ryan's Song* was noted as an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and an ALA Notable Book. Other works by Giff include the Polk Street School series, *All the Way Home*, *Water Street*, and *Maggie's Door*, a companion novel to *Nory Ryan's Song*.

Giff lives with her husband in Weston, Connecticut, and has three children and five grandchildren. She says her two greatest loves are her family and children's books. In 1990, she opened a children's bookstore named "The Dinosaur's Paw" (after one of her books) to help her further her mission of bringing books and children together.

Chapters 1–4

Nory looks forward to the coming months when her father will return home from his fishing trip—a desperate attempt to earn money for the family. She strives to save a family, the Neelys, from being evicted but is unsuccessful. After inheriting the evicted family’s dog, Nory goes fishing with Sean Red so she can feed the dog without taking food away from the family.

Vocabulary
gannets
dulse
wen
splintered
rapped
bailiff
poaching
mottled
hovel
crop
peat

Discussion Questions

1. Where is the book set? What insight into Nory’s life is given in the first pages of the novel? (*in Ireland by the sea, on land that the English have claimed as their own; The reader learns that Nory’s family grows potatoes, and her father fishes to help pay rent on their property. Nory has a good friend named Sean Red and dreams of living in America one day, and people who do not pay their rent are turned out of their homes by the lord’s bailiff.*)
2. What kind of person is Nory? What does she do to demonstrate her character early in the book? (*Nory is kind, thoughtful, and sympathetic to others. She loves her family. Early in the novel, she demonstrates compassion by borrowing money to help the Neelys, who are being evicted from their home. She takes in Maeve even though she knows that feeding the dog will be difficult.*)
3. Who is Anna Donnelly? Why doesn’t Nory want to be around her? (*Anna is a woman that lives near Nory’s family. She knows how to use herbs and medicines to heal people, though she is not considered a doctor. Her herbal remedies cause many children to think of her as a “witch” with gray hair, bony fingers, and a knowledge of “magic.” Though Anna is somewhat shunned by the community, the people always turn to her for help in times of need. She seems lonely but kind. Nory holds a grudge against Anna for not saving Nory’s mother when Nory’s brother, Patch, was born.*)
4. What conflicts emerge in the novel in this section? Classify each conflict as person vs. self, person vs. person, or person vs. nature/society. (*Answers will vary. Suggestions—person vs. person—Cat Neely and her mother vs. the landowner and bailiff as the Neelys are turned out of their house; the Ryan family vs. Lord Cunningham as they know they must pay rent; Nory vs. Lord Cunningham when she is caught fishing in his creek; Nory vs. her sister, Celia, over the Ryan family’s ability to feed Maeve the dog; person vs. self—Nory’s inner struggle when she finds herself indebted to Anna Donnelly after she loses Anna’s coin; person vs. nature/society—the Ryan family vs. society as they struggle with the famine and its effects, mainly Maggie moving to America*)
5. What beliefs and/or fears are part of Nory’s life and culture? (*Answers will vary. The culture supports the notions of fairies or beings from other worlds that can cause trouble if certain rules are not followed [e.g., sídhe]. Nory believes in Anna’s ability to magically heal. She is also fearful about being caught by Lord Cunningham for poaching on his land, being evicted from her home if the family cannot pay rent, and her father’s well-being during his long fishing trip.*)
6. **Prediction:** What major conflict might Nory encounter as the plot advances?

Supplementary Activities

1. Figurative Language: Locate similes, metaphors, and personification used by the author. Using the Metaphors, Similes, and Personification chart on page 21 of this guide, keep a record of these as you read the novel. You may continue your chart on a separate sheet of paper if needed. Examples: **Similes**—“the sea, gray as a selkie’s coat” (p. 2); “her face as wrinkled as last year’s potatoes” (p. 5); “twitching her little nose like Mallons’ goat” (p. 12); “rocks like black turtles raising their backs to the sun” (p. 15); **Metaphor**—stream: ribbon (p. 15); **Personification**—“the wind tore the mist into shreds” (p. 2)
2. Geography: Locate Galway, Ireland on a map. Then locate Brooklyn, New York. Determine the distance between the two locations.
3. History: Britain colonized many places in the world as it tried to expand its empire. Conduct research to identify at least four countries that were once English colonies.

Chapters 5–7

Maggie marries Francey Mallon and travels to Brooklyn, New York. Nory and the rest of the Ryan family miss Maggie dearly and long to join her in America. Meanwhile, they struggle to find enough to eat. Devlin comes to warn everyone that potato crops are failing nearby and that people will be turned out if they cannot pay rent, regardless of the state of the crops. Nory goes to help Anna, who agrees to feed and look after Maeve. Nory begins to share Anna’s fear of a crop failure as she returns home to inspect her own family’s potato crop.

Vocabulary

smoor
turf
trill
hearth
limpets
tethered
loping
spade
famine
tracing

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Maggie’s wedding and reception. What does the style of this celebration say about the Ryan family? (*Maggie’s wedding is simple, with close family and friends in attendance. Afterwards, there is a nighttime celebration outside with a bonfire and singing. Maggie’s inexpensive, simple wedding indicates that the Ryan family does not have extra money to spend on the wedding but also that they do not need an extravagant, expensive occasion to be happy, celebrate, and enjoy each other’s company.*)
2. What does Maggie tell Nory before she leaves? How do you think this conversation affects Nory? (*Maggie says that Nory’s songs make her the heart of the family and that Nory and Celia will be able to take care of the Ryan home until their father comes home. She also advises that Nory think of her if she is struggling with a decision and says that Nory is a “great girl.” Answers will vary. Nory takes very seriously every word that Maggie says. She is proud to be considered a “great girl” and realizes that her age will not hinder her in helping to care for the family.*)
3. Why doesn’t Patch wear boys’ clothes? What does this information tell you about the Ryan family’s culture and beliefs? (*They believe that the sídhe, evil spirits or creatures with supernatural powers, will steal young boys. They try to deceive the sídhe by dressing boys as girls. This shows that Nory’s family is superstitious. It could also indicate a strong belief in the spiritual world.*)

Cause/Effect Chart

Directions: Choose one action or decision from the novel, and write it in the "Cause" box. Then list the effects of the action.

