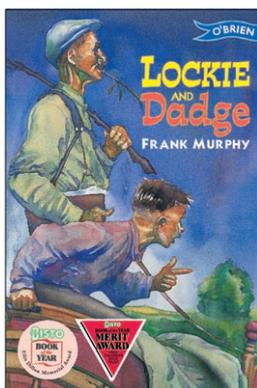


# LOCKIE AND DADGE

by Frank Murphy

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Lockie is about to meet his new foster-family, his third in only five years, but despite his good intentions to establish familial bonds, he fails to integrate with the Farrells and makes the first of several attempts to run away. Having felt like 'a young cuckoo in another bird's nest' all his life, he responds instantly to the kindly interest and acceptance of Dadge, Pasha and Mammy Tallon, people who, like himself, have been 'living on the edge' for many years. Having heard the story of his life, these three, assisted by other 'outsiders', support Lockie in his search for freedom from those in authority – those who at times appear more concerned with notions of respectability than with a young boy's need for love and affection. Finding refuge on Tallon Island, Lockie enjoys the comfort and security provided by Mammy and Pasha, until the well-intentioned authorities step in to question their ability to provide for his welfare. It is left to an enlightened and sympathetic judge to make the choice between the loving but financially insecure Tallons and the devoted, Christian Farrell family.

## LANGUAGE – ENGLISH

- ◆ Vocabulary extension: Copiously, affable, gesticulated, impassive, arabesques, sojourn.
- ◆ Colourful writing: E.g., 'it was twilight all day' (p.7), 'like visiting dignitaries in a ceremonial parade' (p.52), 'with little goat-laugh and meaningless pooh-poohing gasps' (p.58).
- ◆ Descriptive writing: E.g., 'the night sounds of Lockie's new home' (p.15), 'a new set of night sounds by the sea' (p.37), 'noises of the night beside the campfire' (p.56).
- ◆ Proverbs and sayings: E.g., 'cast not a clout till May be out' (p.52), 'as sure as the Lord made sour apples' (p.89).
- ◆ Discussion: Pasha tells Lockie that he calls his wife Mammy because of 'a bit of wishful thinking' (p.55). Discuss the significance of this phrase and its implications.
- ◆ Discussion: Dadge explains that Pasha hates violence because 'he was in the war' (p.65). In which war might he have fought and how might this have affected his attitude to violence?
- ◆ Discussion: All the books in the Farrell home were about the sea and sailing (p.10) and many of these books were classics. What does the selection of books tell us about those who live in the house? Suggest titles that might indicate something of your personality to a visitor.
- ◆ Creative: Paddy Mulcair has the nickname Dadge, short for Adagio. He tells Lockie that it rhymes with badge or cadge (p.33). Think of nicknames for your friends that convey something of their personalities and try to find at least one rhyming word for each name.
- ◆ Creative: Imagine you live in Coonmore (p.41). What are your feelings about the flamboyantly painted house at the end of the cul-de-sac? Write the dialogue between you and your neighbours as you watch them paint their house **or** tell of your feelings as you watch the cart stop outside the gleaming red door.
- ◆ Story: When Lockie was upstairs in the attic, he felt he was free, 'up here he was king' (p.104). Read Ch.10 of *The Moon King*, the story of Ricky, another foster-child. Compare the feelings of Ricky and Lockie. Discuss the similarities and differences between their reactions to their attic rooms.

## LANGUAGE – GAELIGE

- ◆ Beannachtaí: 'Go mbeirimid beo ar an am seo arís' (lth.144). Beannachtaí eile a mhúineadh agus iad a usáid.

## SESE – HISTORY

- ◆ Local studies: Feasts and festivals in the past. Mammy and Pasha celebrated Christmas in a very traditional manner. Read of their preparations for Christmas (pp.143–144) and say how it differs from the more modern celebration. Discuss the positive and negative aspects of the traditional and modern celebration and say which is more in keeping with the original meaning of Christmas.

## SESE – GEOGRAPHY

- ◆ Human environments: Settlement, homes and other buildings. Contrast the Farrell home and its tiny backyard (pp.10, 101) with the crowded caravan of the Wheeler family (pp.22, 109). Examine the nomadic lifestyle of Dadge, who chose to sleep under the stars and who felt 'like a cat on a hot griddle' if he stayed 'more than two days in the one place' (p.144), and compare with the island home of Pasha and Mammy Tallon (pp.124–126, 143–144).
- ◆ Human environments: People at work. Fishing was important to the islanders (pp.129–131) and they supplemented their incomes by letting rooms to tourists in the summer (pp.152–153). Exploring the work of people in the health services: Miss Cuniffe was a social worker with the Health Board and she was charged with finding a suitable foster-home for Lockie. Examine the work of the authorities responsible for child welfare (An Garda Síochána, the judiciary, Health Boards). Did they discharge their duties in Lockie's case?

## SPHE

- ◆ Myself: Self-identity. We are told that 'Lockie set great store on naming things' (p.15), and he rejected the name suggested by Dadge because he thought that 'having another name would make him feel even more of a nobody' (p.32). Discuss Lockie's self-image and the impact hearing himself discussed 'as if he were no more than a bag of potatoes, and deaf at that' (p.8) might have on his self-confidence.
- ◆ Myself: Taking care of my body. Mammy and Pasha lived a poor, frugal lifestyle on Tallon Island, but there was always enough to eat

(p.132). Examine the diet of the household. How might the diet of the urban poor differ? Is it always possible to spend time on preparing/cooking of food, like Mammy Tallon?

◆ Myself: Growing and changing. When Lockie moved into the Farrell household he felt lonely and isolated, 'Mickey Wheeler was the only friend he had' (p.19). But Lockie's circle of friends widens from the moment he meets Dadge. Discuss the friendships formed by Lockie and say how these friendships contributed to his increasing self-confidence.

◆ Myself: Feelings and emotions. Miss Cunee described Lockie's fiery temper as a 'quick fuse' (p.9) and his previous foster-parents had said he was 'cheeky or stubborn or impossible' (p.8). Yet Mammy Tallon testified in court that she had only seen him 'in a rage' on two occasions (p.184). Discuss the different perceptions of Lockie's character and say what might have caused him to lose control with his previous foster-families.

◆ Myself and others: Myself and my family. Having been placed with two families before the Farrells, this was Lockie's third home in five years. He 'was tired of being moved from one family to another, like a piece of furniture' (p.8). The Farrells may have had financial considerations in mind when they agreed to foster Lockie (p.102), whereas Mammy and Pasha were prepared to sell their house in order to pay for his education (p.185). Discuss the reasons Mammy Tallon gave the judge when asked why she wanted to adopt Lockie. Why did these reasons impress the judge?

◆ Myself and the wider world: A member of the travelling community, Mickey Wheeler was 'always last in a line, or on the fringe of a flurry, never at the heart of things' (p.16). Discuss the reaction of Rita Farrell when she found Lockie in the company of Mickey and his family (p.23) and examine the basis, if any, for her prejudice. Why might Mammy, Pasha and Dadge have felt that they were 'living on the edge ... used to no-one wanting [them]' (p.47). Explore how the travelling community experiences discrimination and discuss the need for respect and mutual understanding between settled and travelling communities. Contact the Equality Authority, Clonmel Street, off Harcourt St, Dublin 2.