

LOCKIE AND DADGE

ISBN 978-0-86278-424-9 pb

FRANK MURPHY

Teaching Guide

By Irene Barber

RATIONALE AND THEMES

Reading *Lockie and Dadge* with your class should be a worthwhile team-building experience which will sustain established readers and encourage less enthusiastic and less fluent readers. The guided activities meet curricular needs in a fresh, interesting and varied manner. They are designed to stimulate reading, understanding, analysis, evaluation, summarisation, imagination and empathy and to hone oral and written expression. These activities will also develop research skills and encourage individual expression. This novel has been selected as it deals in a humorous and insightful manner with themes such as:

- Acceptance of differences
- The desire to belong
- Loneliness
- Journey
- Fear of rejection
- Homelessness

SUMMARY

Abandoned as a baby, Lockie is about to meet his new foster-family – the Farrells are his third family in only five years. Yet, despite his good intentions, he fails to integrate with the Farrells and eventually runs away. He then meets up with the eccentric but kindly Dadge, and Dadge's friends, Pasha and Mammy Tallon. They are people who, like himself, have been 'living on the edge' for many years. After a very eventful journey, Lockie finds what he was looking for on the delightful Tallon Island in the home of Pasha and Mammy Tallon who take over custody of him.

APPROACH

For the purposes of this exploration the book has been divided into six units. However, the pace at which the novel is read is entirely up to the teacher. It may suit to read one chapter a day, or larger blocks. Possible discussion points and activities are listed at the end of each unit.

UNIT 1 HOME, SWEET HOME

SUMMARY

Lockie arrives at his new foster home (his third in five years) accompanied by Miss Cuneen, the sympathetic social worker. His reputation as a 'handful' has preceded him to the Farrells. Mr Farrell runs the house like a ship, all order and unquestioning discipline. Mrs Farrell and the two Farrell children are not particularly welcoming. School offers no solace either. Lockie strikes up a friendship with Mickey Wheeler, also an outcast. But when Mickey's family is moved on, Lockie decides it's time for him to leave too.

Read pp.7–26.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why, do you think, did the Farrells agree to foster Lockie, knowing his reputation for being difficult? What might they have done to make him feel more welcome?
- What was it that drew Lockie and Mickey together?
- Miss Cuneen told Lockie that she was trying to find a 'good foster home' for him as he had to be with someone who

could teach him 'self-discipline' so that he could 'grow up to be a responsible and valuable person' (p.7). Do you agree with her on the importance of self-discipline? Can you think of other qualities necessary to become a responsible and valuable person?

- On p.8 we are told that Lockie was 'tired of being moved from one family to another, like a piece of furniture' and that Mrs Farrell spoke about him as if he were 'no more than a bag of potatoes, and deaf at that.' Is there any significance in the author's use of inanimate objects to portray Lockie's feelings? In what other words might he have suggested to the reader how Lockie felt at this time?
- Miss Cuneen had advised Lockie to 'establish a father-son relationship from the beginning' (p.11). Do you think that Lockie followed her advice? Why might it have been difficult for Lockie to do as she suggested? How else might he have tried to establish this relationship?
- We are told that 'Lockie set great store on naming things' as 'he felt he had some secret power over them' when he had 'his own name for a thing or a person' (p.15). Explore the reasons why Lockie might have felt like this. Does this tell us anything about his character and personality and, if so, what?
- Mrs Farrell 'couldn't find a word bad enough for Mickey' and 'finally settled for 'filthy thing' as the worst insult she could find'(p.23). Later she forbade him to have 'anything to do with that tinker boy.' Discuss the attitudes and prejudices which caused her to use such insulting language when speaking

about Mickey. Suggest possible reasons why she might have been so intolerant and try to think of ways to combat such prejudices. Contact the Equality Authority (Tel 01 4173333) or visit www.equality.ie for useful information.

ACTIVITIES

1. LETTER WRITING

Ask one group of students to write a formal letter to Miss Cuneen from the perspective of either Lockie or Gordon, describing events up to the end of Chapter 3.

Another group could write a similar but informal letter. In what respects do these letters differ, if at all?

2. ROLE PLAY

Re-read pp.17–19. Students might write the screenplay for the bullying incident in the playground, considering how each character felt as the drama unfolded.

Assign parts for Lockie, Mickey, Jim Walsh, tall red-haired boy, chanters, bell ringer, the spectators and Mr Bradley. Later, the drama might be acted in class.

3. CUCKOO!

All Lockie wanted was a place where he could feel at home. He didn't want to feel like an outsider 'a young cuckoo in another bird's nest'.

Find out all you can about the life cycle of the cuckoo and then explain the quotation above.

4. NAUTICAL TERMS

John Farrell liked to use seafaring terms. Arrange the following alphabetically and write the dictionary explanation of each one:

keel-hauled, gangway, galley, mizen, topsail, mutiny, nautical, midshipman, deck.

UNIT 2 NEW BEGINNINGS

SUMMARY

Lockie sets out in a small rowing boat. Exhaustion sets in and when he falls asleep, the oars drift away. When he comes to, he manages to swim ashore

and is rescued by the kindly but eccentric Dadge. They meet up with Dadge's friends, Mammy Tallon and Pasha, who agree to take Lockie with them to Tallon Island. Lockie and Dadge travel on the jennet cart while Mammy Tallon and Pasha make their way on a motor cycle and side cart.

Read pp.27–56.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What do you think of Dadge?
- What did Mammy Tallon mean by the remark 'We've been living on the edge all our lives'.
- Why did Mammy Tallon and Pasha take Lockie under their wing?
- Mammy Tallon believed that '...the rules don't always give the best answer'(p.47).What might have led her to this conclusion? Do you agree with her?
- Mammy Tallon could be said to have suffered from intolerance all her life yet she tells Lockie that 'people near the big city wouldn't give a fivepenny bit' for him, that 'they'd hand [him] over straight away' (p.49). Consider her attitude to city people as expressed above and say if you think that she too might be intolerant of others.

ACTIVITIES

1. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

List Lockie's needs, both physical and psychological, at the time of his meeting with Dadge.

Prioritise these needs in order of importance. How did Dadge help to fulfil these needs?

2. ECCENTRIC BEHAVIOUR

Look up the word 'eccentric' in a dictionary or thesaurus and discuss the meaning. Ask the pupils to describe (sympathetically) any eccentrics they know.

Identify three occasions in Unit 2 where Dadge behaved oddly. Ask the pupils to write a paragraph describing either Dadge or a person they know themselves. Encourage the pupils to identify reasons for the eccentric behaviour rather than being dismissive or intolerant.

3. DICTIONARY WORK

Put these words in alphabetical order and write out the dictionary explanation:

gunwale, thwarts (n), hull, bridle, jennet, harness, flamboyantly, brusquely, impassive, tarpaulin.

This list includes seven nouns, two adverbs and one adjective. Ask the pupils to try to identify each, with help from a dictionary if necessary.

UNIT 3 ON THE RUN

SUMMARY

The four make their way to Tallon Island. Dadge gets involved in a pub brawl with Peter Murtagh. Meanwhile Lockie's disappearance makes it into the paper with a full description and a request for information. They change partners and now Lockie rides pillion with Pasha. They stay with The Arcadian Amusement Arcade but Katy, one of the young circus women, is jealous of Lockie and, having discovered that he is a runaway, reports him to the gardaí. Lockie notices two intruders and later one of them is caught planning to steal the arcade's takings.

Read pp.57–91.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why did Dadge fight Peter Murtagh?
- Why was Pasha so well liked and respected?
- Why did Katy 'blow the whistle' on Lockie?
- The barman tells Dadge that he 'should be above taking any account of what the likes of [Peter] would say'(p.65). Do you think this is good advice? Do you agree that insults and slurs of the kind delivered by Peter Murtagh should be ignored by those on the receiving end?
- Dadge tells Lockie that he doesn't 'know any man that hates violence more than Pasha' because 'he was in the war'(p.65). In what war might Pasha have fought? What might Pasha have witnessed in the war which caused him to hate violence?

ACTIVITIES

1. CHARACTER SKETCH

Allocate these page numbers to specific pupils in the class with the question: 'What does this page tell you about Pasha?' (List pp.65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76.)

Pool the responses and record.

2. PLACENAMES/LOGAIMNEACHA

Match the Irish place name with its English translation:

Inishbofin	An Chill	Island of the White Cows
Cloughlee	Liatroim	Fort of the Foreigners
Kill	Cloch Liath	Church
Leitrim	Inis Bó Finne	Grey Ridge
Donegal	Dún na nGall	Grey stone

Which of the three versions of the place names should appear on road signs?

Which is the most interesting?

Which do you prefer?

Which is the oldest version?

Try to find at least 10 other examples, using road signs in your locality and Ordnance Survey or other maps.

3. LOSING IT!

What caused Lockie to lose his temper? What might cause you to lose yours? Write a poem using this form:

When _____, I lost it;

When _____, I lost it; etc.

4. POSTER

Design a poster to advertise 'The Arcadian Arcade'. Specify attractions, venue, time of performance and price.

Or design and write a notice, similar to that which appeared in the newspaper (p.69), asking for public co-operation to trace a missing person.

UNIT 4 THE GREAT ESCAPE

SUMMARY

To his great distress, Lockie is brought back to the Farrells. He misses the freedom and companionship he has enjoyed. The Farrells are even stricter

than before. Again he runs away but the guards find him and bring him back. He is forced to sleep in the attic, with the ladder removed. The attic becomes a kind of refuge. With Dadge's help he escapes through the skylight. Dadge leaves him in the care of the Wheelers, Mickey's family, who deliver him to Mike Donovan, a friend of Pasha's. Pasha comes by boat to bring Lockie to Tallon Island. Dadge heads off alone.

Read pp.92–120.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What did the priest say about the Farrells?
- Why did Lockie like the attic?
- What might the Farrells have done to make him more welcome this time?
- We are told that Lockie 'burst into tears and cried quietly' on discovering that Pasha had not written a message but had given him instead a ten-pound note (p.97). What, if anything, does this tell us about Lockie's feelings for Pasha?
- When Lockie was in the attic, he felt 'he was king'(p.104). Read Chapter 10 of *The Moon King* (ISBN 978-0-86278-573-4) by Siobhán Parkinson and compare and contrast the feelings of Ricky, another foster-child, with those of Lockie. Explore the importance of private and personal space to those without a home of their own.

ACTIVITIES

1. CHARACTER SKETCH

Ask the pupils to draw a picture of Lockie in the centre of a page. Then write adjectives around the page that describe him.

2. LETTER WRITING

Miss Cuneen left her address with Lockie when she returned him to the Farrells saying 'if you ever need to talk to me, be sure to write and I'll come'.

Pretend Lockie wrote to her after he was banished to the attic. Write the letter.

3. FAVOURITE PLACE

The attic became Lockie's haven, 'a place to be free'. Ask the pupils to write about their favourite places.

Discuss first and brainstorm adjectives which describe favourite places and the

feelings these evoke.

4. LOCKIE'S FUTURE

Pretend a case conference has been called to discuss whether or not Lockie should return to the Farrells.

Arrange for pupils to take the parts of: Fr Shanahan, Miss Cuneen, Pasha, and a neutral chairperson. Draft an agenda and decide on a time limit. Decide in advance how the chair is to arrive at a conclusion.

Time and facilities permitting, an audio/video tape could be prepared in advance where Lockie, Mickey, the Farrells, Dadge, Mammy Tallon and others are asked for their opinions. This could be played at the case conference.

UNIT 5 A NEW LIFE

SUMMARY

Pasha brings Lockie to Tallon Island and Mammy Tallon. Everything delights Lockie. He goes to school and is soon accepted as an islander. Christmas comes and is celebrated in a simple traditional way. But his happiness is threatened when Fr Shanahan comes on holiday and recognises Lockie. Again Lockie's future with Pasha and Mammy Tallon is in jeopardy.

Read pp.121–162.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What did Lockie like about living on the island?
- How would you explain the improvement in Lockie's behaviour since he came to the island?
- Why did Pasha ask the priest to leave his house? How did the priest react? Why?

ACTIVITIES

1. PERSONALITY PROFILE

Discuss the context and content of these four extracts. What does each one tell about Mammy Tallon? Write your character assessment of Mammy Tallon.

'Stop your old nonsense' (p.122).

'Once you have your health...' (p.133).

'Waste of money!' (p.143).

'He's not leaving here' (p.158).

2. ADVERTISING

Devise a poster or radio or television advertisement for weekend breaks on Tallon Island.

Write Pasha's response to seeing/hearing this advertisement.

3. AUTHORITY

Mammy Tallon and Pasha frequently refer to 'they'. To whom are they referring in the following extracts:

'Remember that we've adopted you. Maybe they don't think so but what they think makes no difference here.'
(p.124)

'They want me to pay for the poles.'
(p.126)

'How long before they find me?'
(p.127)

'They don't care about poor people like us.'
(p.148)

4. CHRISTMAS ON THE ISLAND

List everything the Underwoods did on Christmas Eve, in preparation for Christmas (pp.143–144).

List everything you usually do on Christmas Eve and compare the two lists.

UNIT 6 SAFE AT LAST

SUMMARY

Sergeant McCarthy brings news that a court hearing has been requested by Fr Shanahan as he hopes to have Lockie sent back to the Farrells. Lockie is shocked and runs away to a cave, the secret place of his friend Pat. Pasha finds him the next day. Sergeant McCarthy's daughter, a lawyer, agrees to defend Lockie in court. At the hearing, the judge rejects Fr Shanahan's application and grants custody to Pasha and Mammy Tallon. They return to the island, with Lockie in firm agreement when Dadge says 'Lockie boy, you're in luck'.

Read pp.163–192.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What was Fr Shanahan's motive in requesting the hearing? What was his reaction to the verdict?
- Did the judge do a good job in court? Why?
- The judge asks if it could be true 'that the others picked on them because they were different, Lockie a foster-child and his companion a Traveller' (p.176). Read *The Blue Horse* (ISBN 978-0-86278-305-1) by Marita

Conlon-McKenna in which Katie and her family struggle to gain acceptance among the settled community.

ACTIVITIES

1. TAKE TWO

Divide the pupils into three groups and set each group the task of scripting and acting out a part of the courtroom drama.

Act 1 (pp.172–181)

Act 2 (pp.182–186)

Act 3 (pp.187–190)

2. EDITING ENDINGS

Illustrate the final paragraph of the book. Draw in thought bubbles and fill in what you think each character is thinking. Write a different final paragraph. In what ways does your ending differ?

3. BOOK REVIEW

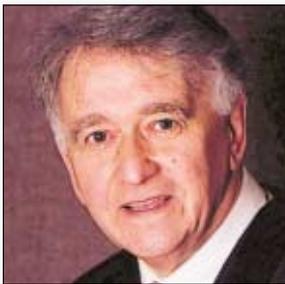
Write a book review. Agree the format in advance.

4. PREDICTION

Project the four main characters ten years into the future. Where are they and what are they doing now?

 Denotes activities that are suitable for both senior cycle primary school use and junior cycle secondary school use.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR, FRANK MURPHY



FRANK MURPHY'S *Lockie and Dadge* won its author an Eilís Dillon Memorial Award (1996) and a Bisto Merit Award (1996). This bestseller was Frank's first novel, and he wrote it when he retired from his job as a school principal. Frank lives in Cork and continues to write for children.

REVIEWS FOR *LOCKIE AND DADGE*:

'This is a compelling story of challenge, adventure and the search for identity.' *The Echo*

'His [Lockie's] search for a permanent refuge dominates this thoughtful story, at times almost Dickensian in its resonances, of how Irish society deals with its outcasts.' *Irish Times*

'The distinctive characters, especially Dadge, Pasha and Mammy Tallon, are almost tangible. The realistic dialogue gives them even greater credibility.' *Sunday Tribune*

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Our hero, Charlie, is desperate to own a bike. Eventually he finds an old abandoned bike frame and transforms it into a mean machine – which, incidentally, can also talk. But then Charlie has to fight off local bicycle thieves that are out to get his Two-Wheeled Tiger.
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