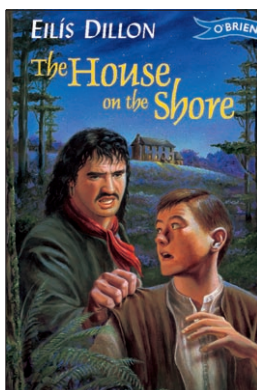


THE HOUSE ON THE SHORE



by Eilís Dillon

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When Jim O'Malley left his parents' home in search of work at his Uncle Martin's house in Cloghanmore, he little imagined that he would find himself involved with pirates and a treasure hoard hidden in a secret 'priest's room'. But when Jim befriends the Fahertys, he learns things about his Uncle Martin from the other villagers that make him wary of his strange old uncle. Torn between family loyalty and a desire to help his new friends and neighbours, Jim is forced to make difficult decisions in a dangerous situation. He and Roddy Faherty are caught up in events that they cannot control as they risk life and limb on board a Galway hooker, at the mercy of a greedy pirate and his henchman.

LANGUAGE – ENGLISH

- ◆ Descriptive writing: E.g., 'as still as a rabbit when the weasel's eye is on him' (p.26), '... face like a wrinkled chestnut, long forgotten in a drawer' (p.31), 'with the pleading eyes of an aged dog' (p.46), '... dark eyes were as inscrutable as bogholes' (p.113).
- ◆ Language of place: Children analyse the first paragraph for atmosphere and sense of place. Discuss the success or otherwise of the author's imagery.
- ◆ Colourful language: 'the grey-blue sea moved restlessly' (p.3), 'the water was still black and shiny at the lee side' (p.11), 'it was a stony beach' (p.22). Children examine the language used to describe the seaside village of Cloghanmore and later write a passage describing the more usual seaside village associated with recreational purposes such as holidays.
- ◆ Hiberno-English: Direct translations of idiomatic Irish in narrative, e.g., 'people do be always making up yarns' (p.92), '... 'twould be a fright to the world' (p.103), 'and I'm thinking ...' (p.136).
- ◆ Character description: E.g., 'a mean, shifty rasper of a man' (p.9), 'a heavy, dark face, with a hooked nose ... long, greasy black hair in curls down to his shoulders' (p.24).
- ◆ Discussion: Compare the leisure activities enjoyed by children holidaying at the seaside fifty years ago with those currently enjoyed. Discuss the availability of inexpensive and readily accessible foreign holidays and say if these have contributed to the decline of the domestic holiday.
- ◆ Discussion: Read the description of Uncle Martin's fireplace (pp.16, 17) and compare with the photograph of 'an old-style Irish fireplace' near the front of *Everything Irish*. Imagine a group of people seated around this fireside and describe the scene.
- ◆ Creative: 'What a story he [the cat] could tell, if he were not so lazy!' (p.63). Children write Furse's account of the day he discovered the priest's room or Furse's impressions of the foreign visitors on the evening they introduced Uncle Martin to pizza.
- ◆ Creative: 'Over the mantel ... was a framed certificate ... but it was impossible to read ...

for the print had faded completely ...' (p.100). Design the certificate which hung in Paddy Conneeley's shop.

LANGUAGE – GAELIGE

◆ Ainmfhocal: M.sh., Cloghanmore from *clochán* meaning 'stony place' and *mór*; *spartóg* meaning 'top grassy sod'; *boreen* from *bóithrín*; *pooka* from *púca*.

SESE – SCIENCE

- ◆ Plant and animal life: Variety and characteristics of living things. Observing and exploring suitability of plant and animal life for damp, wet conditions; how life is influenced by, or adapts to, environmental conditions. Children study one aspect of Connemara plant/animal life from those mentioned throughout the book, perhaps starting with description on pp.12–15.
- ◆ Environmental awareness and care: Science and the environment. Identifying ways in which science and technology contribute positively to society. Children examine and discuss the scientific ideas introduced by John Faherty and how successful or otherwise the results were (pp.77–79, 221).

SESE – GEOGRAPHY

- ◆ Human environments: Natural environmental features and people. Becoming aware of the natural features in their locality and in the west of Ireland and their relationship to the lives of people living there. Children study interrelationships of some natural features and the lives of people (dependence on the sea, fishing in Cloghanmore) and compare with those in their own locality.
- ◆ Human environments: Homes and other buildings. Investigating and appreciating some features of the built environment in their locality and in the west of Ireland. Children discuss materials used to construct homes and other buildings in the contrasting areas and draw simple plans, maps and models. For detailed description of traditional buildings in Cloghanmore, see pp.4, 11, 12, 15–17, 96, 100.

SESE – HISTORY

- ◆ Life, society, work and culture in the past: Life in Ireland since the 1950s. Becoming familiar with aspects of the lives of these

people. Children might examine homes (pp.4, 55–56), clothes (pp.4, 56), farming, foods and cooking (pp.20, 56, 70, 228), technologies used (pp.77–79) and traditions (p.172).

SPHE

- ◆ Myself: Growing and changing. Recognising that independence and responsibilities are continually increasing. Discuss Jim's development, with particular reference to pp.7, 68, 70, 97, 148, 234.
- ◆ Myself: Safety and protection. Realising that as independence increases so does responsibility for personal safety. Analyse Jim's strategies for keeping safe: Telling people who are trustworthy; discovering how and when to get help.
- ◆ Myself and others: Relating to others. Identifying and discussing various responses to conflict situations, and deciding of those which are most appropriate and acceptable. Discuss the different approaches of the women (pp.173, 177, 211, 235) and the men (pp.186, 195, 234–237) and debate the success of each of the strategies.
- ◆ Myself and the wider world: Media education. This book was first published in 1955 and certain images or attitudes may now seem somewhat dated, particularly those relating to the Italian and South American pirates. Examine the passage in which Jim initially sees the stranger with the 'heavy, dark face, with a hooked nose and ... long, greasy black hair in curls down his shoulders' (p.24). Discuss the significance of his immediate reaction: 'This was no Irishman' (p.24). How have our perceptions changed since the first publication of this book and how might these strangers be introduced if this book were written fifty years later?

MUSIC

- ◆ Listening and responding to music: Music that tells a story. Children listen to and describe initial reactions to selected excerpts from *The Brendan Voyage* by Shaun Davey (see *The House on the Shore*, Ch.13, p.26).

VISUAL ARTS

- ◆ Thatched cottage: See *Everything Irish*, pp.10–11.
- ◆ Irish currach: See pp.15–16, as above.