



Legends' Lair

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RATIONALE & THEMES

Following the sudden death of his beloved granddad, Charlie Stubbs, a very talented footballer, defers the promise of a trial with Manchester United and returns to Ireland with his family, where his father takes over the running of his granddad's shop.

Discovering a hidden trove of trophies in his granddad's store, Charlie unwittingly uncovers a legacy of bitterness that has festered for 50 years.

However, with his father's support, good humour and an exceptional footballing talent, he manages to revive the Legend of the Lair and defuse the acrimony from the past.

The themes explored are:

- Rivalry
- Jealousy
- Bullying
- Determination
- Sportsmanship
- Friendship and trust
- Relationships
- Fairness
- Taking responsibility
- Loyalty

SUMMARY

Charlie Stubbs has a very close bond with his father, both passionate about football and dedicated Manchester United fans.

The family has adjusted to life in Manchester when the sudden death of Charlie's beloved granddad dictates that they return to live in Dublin, Charlie to reacquaint with his friends and his dad to take over the running of the family shop.

Charlie, a talented footballer has deferred his opportunity for a trial with the Manchester United Youth Academy, opting instead to join the local club that both his dad and granddad played for in Dublin.

A chance discovery in the shop store uncovers a horde of his granddad's trophies, including an old leather football that has been autographed by Bobby Charlton.

Some old friends of his granddad share details of his football achievements and reveal a fascinating but incomplete history of the old football, a history that hints of acrimony and division.

Unable to resist the lure of the old Legends' Lair pitch where his granddad played and despite the express advice from his dad, Charlie and his pals pay it a visit and manage to lose the ball into an overgrown garden that is guarded by a fierce dog.

Annoyed, they decide to return the next evening after the club disco to retrieve it.

The attempt fails and Charlie finds himself facing his granddad's old nemesis who disputes the ownership of the ball.

Manipulating the old man's weakness for gambling, Charlie and Kelly, the old man's granddaughter devise a plan to revive the old Legends' Lair pitch and play a challenge match with the ball as the winner's prize.

The match stirs memories and pitches two local sides against each other in a thrilling contest.

Winning, Charlie returns the ball to Kelly's granddad, closing the story and extinguishing the last flames of the dispute in the process.

APPROACH

This is a very enjoyable and entertaining read. Although the themes are universal, it is likely that the story will be more attractive to boys.

The story line is particularly engaging and offers many opportunities for discussion.

This guide has divided the story into three sections and the activities offer suggestions on developing the themes.

Section 1 Granddad Pages 11 - 59

SUMMARY

Charlie Stubbs and his father share a love of football and a strong bond with each other. Having moved to Manchester from Dublin, the family have adapted well, however when his uncle and grandparents arrive for a visit, Charlie senses a disharmony.

The last league match of the season gives his granddad the opportunity to watch Charlie help his team secure a win against the league leaders, grabbing runner up spot and impressing a scout from Manchester United in the process.

A clumsy remark from his granddad however provokes an over-reaction from his dad and reveals the reason for the tension between them.

Charlie resolves to mediate and secures a promise from his dad that he will talk to his granddad in an effort to resolve the issues.

Leaving for school the next day, Charlie says "Goodbye" to his granddad, little realizing it will be the last time he will see him.

Called from school later that morning, he is devastated by the news that his granddad has died suddenly.

Still reeling at the loss of his granddad, his parents tell him that the family is relocating back to Dublin to help manage his granddad's shop and Charlie reluctantly says goodbye to Salford.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (**Read pp19**): Charlie is determined to discover the cause of the tension between his father and granddad and questions his granddad closely. Should children be involved in adult disagreements? Do they have anything to offer? Do they have the

SUMMARY

Charlie and his family move back to live in Dublin where Charlie discovers some of his granddad's football history from his old friends at the funeral service.

As the family adjusts to life in Dublin, his mum enrolls him in the local school where he has his first encounter with Jake Murphy or Murph, the school bully and Charlie realizes that he will need to be careful how he deals with him.

Reunited with his old friends, he agrees to join the local football club that both his dad and granddad played for and meets Kelly, Murph's twin sister who also plays for the team.

Although Charlie tries to ease his presence into the team modestly, his commitment and skill quickly impress the coaches.

Helping his dad in the shop, Charlie discovers an old leather football autographed by Bobby Charlton and a bag of trophies belonging to his granddad.

Intrigued by one small trophy tucked in the corner of the bag and inscribed Legends' Lair Champions. Charlie listens spellbound as his dad explains and despite an explicit warning, determines to visit the lair to see the place himself.

The lure of the lair is irresistible and Charlie finds himself on the lair having a kick-about with his friends Zucko and Ant using his granddad's ball.

A careless kick sends the ball into the dense shrubbery of the only occupied house and the presence of a large dog forces them to postpone its retrieval until after the post match disco the following evening.

Returning to the shop, Charlie discovers that his dad has put all his granddad's trophies on display and gleans a tantalizing scrap of detail from one of his granddad's old friends about the ball and the controversy surrounding how it was awarded.

Their last match of the season is a friendly against local rivals and Murph's team.

Despite their opponents being a league above them, the match is close fought, exciting and Charlie's team are thrilled to finish with a draw.

3. Mint (Read p36)

Charlie and his friends use a lot of expressions that others may not understand.

When Charlie gasps, "*Mint! Yeah! Big time.*" He means, "*That's exciting. I'd love to accept your invitation.*"

Read through the section and choose 5 interesting expressions, then translate into formal language what you think they are saying.

Now add 5 expressions that you use with your own friends that you think are unique to your area and explain what they mean too.

4. I'm a Fan (Read p39)

Charlie is a Manchester United fan like his dad. Many people support Manchester United as well as other teams in Europe.

Create a fan profile for yourself describing your team and your support for them. Explain why you support them and what being a fan means to you.

Compile your thoughts as a letter to your club's fan magazine.

5. Charlie Lad (Read pp48-49)

As he walked up the path after seeing Charlie off to school, his granddad has a strange foreboding that he will never see him again.

Unable to shake off the feeling he decides to write a note for Charlie to read when he comes home from school.

After he collapses, Charlie's mum finds the note on the kitchen table.

Write a copy of what you think he said using the same language his granddad might have used.

6. Granddad (Read pp51-53)

Charlie is distraught at the sudden death of his granddad and takes comfort at kicking his ball against the wall.

As he watches the ball ricochet off the wall, time seems to slow down and with each thud of the ball he experiences a memory flashback of his granddad.

Create an illustration of Charlie kicking the ball against the wall and add 5 memory bubbles to describe each of the memories that he has.

understanding to make a contribution?

- (**Read p35**): After the match, both teams line up to shake each other's hands as a sign of respect. Is this a meaningless gesture since they had been opponents minutes earlier? How will the jubilation and disappointment affect their feelings towards each other? What do you understand by respect?
- (**Read p39**): Charlie and his dad both support Manchester United. Some supporters will support more than one team, spending a lot of money on team merchandise. What makes a person support one team and not another. Why do people support a team despite poor performances? How would you choose which team to support?
- (**Read p46**): Charlie is scolded for attempting to eavesdrop on the conversation between his father and granddad. Was he invading their privacy? Should you have the right to keep some things private? Is there a difference between private and secret? Is privacy ever unhealthy? What should you do if you discover private information about someone?

ACTIVITIES

1. The Spot Kick (Read pp24-25)

Charlie is able to kick a ball with deadly precision. This skill is a combination of knowing what part of the ball to strike, which part of the foot to use and how much power to put into the kick to make the ball behave as he wants it to.

He has decided to write a short manual to help you deliver the perfect shot for every occasion.

Use illustrations to create a guide for 5 different shots explaining how to create effects such as swerving the ball and showing where and how to deliver the kick.

news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/football/skills/4188836.stm

[www.wikihow.com/Take-a-Penalty-Kick-in-Soccer-\(Football\)](http://www.wikihow.com/Take-a-Penalty-Kick-in-Soccer-(Football))

2. The Scout (Read pp31 & 36)

The United scout is impressed with Charlie's performance and skill, however he has to consider other factors about Charlie when making his report.

What are these other factors? Create the template for the United scout's report and complete each of the sections for the report.

What did he write into each section after meeting his coaches and dad?

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p76):** Zucko refuses to believe that Charlie, despite his protests is not interested in Kelly. Why did Charlie deny his interest in her? Why does this type of interest cause embarrassment? Is it acceptable to be interested and how could Charlie show it in an open and appropriate way?
- **(Read p77):** Charlie's first impression of Kelly was positive, yet when he learns that she is Murph's sister he makes a different judgment. Is it fair to judge someone on who his or her family is? How should we judge people and what information should we use? How can you make sure that your judgments are accurate and safe?
- **(Read pp90&104):** Charlie's granddad has kept all his trophies hidden in an old kit bag. Why did he do that? What's the point of having a trophy unless it is displayed? He was a skilled footballer. Was it wrong to acknowledge that by displaying his trophies? Should you be ashamed to show off your skill? Is there a difference between pride and vanity?
- **(Read pp124-125):** The Ballyorchard coaches appreciate the parent's support and the absence of negative comment from the sidelines. Is this type of comment ever effective? Do people focus more easily on the negative aspects of a performance? Why is this? What effect can negative comment have on a player?

ACTIVITIES

1. I never Knew (Read p63)

Both Charlie and his dad are surprised to learn that Charlie's granddad had a trial for an English club.

Research an interesting story about one of your own grandparents.

You might need to talk to your uncles / aunts or older family members.

You could write it as a short biography.

2. Whispers (Read p79)

As the rest of the team train with Charlie they are very curious about him and his footballing skill, sharing their comments and expectations as a series of whispers that rustle between them.

What do you think was said? Were there any negative comments?

With some of the comments Charlie heard the whole remark, with others perhaps he heard only one word.

Create an audio recording of the whispers that Charlie may have heard.

3. Kelly (Read pp77 & 82)

Kelly's temper has been simmering since Charlie ignored her and now she takes the opportunity to deliver a crunching tackle that leaves him sprawling on the ground.

Create the conversation that Kelly had in her head with herself, before, during and after the tackle to show what she was thinking, why she did it and what she felt afterwards.

4. Legends' Lair (Read pp91-92)

Charlie and his dad have discovered a kitbag of trophies belonging to his granddad, including the Legends' Lair trophy from 1966.

Upturning the bag to check that it is empty, a roll of card falls out.

Opening it carefully they discover that it is an old poster promoting the match.

Create a copy of the poster in the style you think it might have been printed.

5. Paddy (Read pp105-106)

Charlie's dad invites Paddy to finish the story of the trophy and the match ball, however the others, tease him because he is long winded and his explanations are usually wordy.

Shorten his explanation, making sure to include all the facts and retain the same sense of excitement.

You could have a class competition to discover who can tell the story in the shortest word count.

6. Goal (Read pp120-122)

The game from the second half tip-off until the goal is scored is a mesmerizing series of skilled maneuvers.

Terry and Don watch in admiration and later decide to create a series of sketches and plans to record the plays. They intend to use these later for training.

Help them to create the illustrations, plans and drawings to demonstrate the moves and show the different plays.

Section 3 The Match Ball Pages 126 - 185

SUMMARY

Charlie is forced to lie to his father about what has happened to the ball, creating an

edge to his determination to retrieve it after the club disco he is just about to attend.

The disco is entertaining, Charlie enjoys himself and chats to Kelly, however as he leaves early to retrieve his ball, he becomes involved in a fracas between Kelly and her brother Jake, getting little thanks from Kelly for his support.

Returning to the Legends' Lair Charlie scales the hedge with the help of Zucko and Ant, but is unable to locate the ball in the overgrown garden, he decides to knock on the front door and is shocked when Kelly answers it.

Charlie is introduced to Kelly's granddad, the awkward old man who lives in the house. He has retrieved the ball and is determined now to keep it, justifying his decision with a 50-year-old grudge that has lasted from the match when Charlie's granddad was awarded the ball.

Thinking fast, Charlie spots that her granddad is a betting man and cleverly manipulates him into a challenge involving his team, their rivals Rosco and the ball as a winner's trophy.

His dad is disappointed with Charlie's deception over the ball but relents and agrees to help him organize the match.

The match lives up to the legends expectation, the result uncertain until the last penalty is taken; a shoot out between Jake and Charlie.

As the trophy is presented to Charlie's team, Kelly's granddad reluctantly releases the ball, still grumbling and declaring his rightful ownership of it.

Charlie, now aware of the full extent of the old dispute surrounding the ball, returns it to the old man declaring that since his own granddad has died it is fair that ownership of it should now pass to him.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p142):** The living conditions for Kelly's granddad are less than ideal and in addition he makes things difficult for his carers. Who should care for elderly members of the family? How are their needs different from other family members? Are they really awkward or does it just seem that way?
- **(Read p146):** Kelly's granddad is insensitive when he is told that Tommy Stubbs has died and now is more determined to keep the ball. Can you explain his behavior? How much are his actions driven by his grudge? Does he really have a strong claim to own the

Class Activity

The 5th football fact (p 184) from Charlie advises that more than 80% of all the footballs made in the world are manufactured in Pakistan.

Football production in Pakistan is centered in the Sialkot region where conditions for the workers are poor and labour is very cheap

Many concerns have been raised in the past from different organizations about working conditions, worker exploitation and child labour in the industry in Sialkot.

The dichotomy of international brands taking advantage of workers paid pence to produce footballs and celebrity footballers then paid huge sums for advertising and promotion is stark.

An interesting activity might examine the journey of a football from manufacture by a child in poor working conditions in Sialkot to being used by a child on a pitch in Ireland, highlighting the financial benefits for all the people involved in the journey.

Useful resources can be found on the links below:

(Good practice for classroom Internet use suggests that children are supervised at all times and sites monitored beforehand for inappropriate content)

www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/working_children_activity_1.pdf

www.spiegel.de/international/world/globalization-in-pakistan-the-football-stitchers-of-sialkot-a-683873.html

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCilgfKloVl

ilc.fwc.hct.ac.ae/reading_d1/stitches-slavery.htm

www.aspiro.jp/img/Factsheet_Sportsballs.pdf

borgenproject.org/fair-trade-football-production/

ball? How can a grudge colour the way you think of something?

- (Read pp147-48): Charlie is able to manipulate Kelly's granddad to do what he wants by using his gambling weakness against him. Can you identify the most effective thing he does and says to get his co-operation? Is it right to try to manipulate someone in this way? Did Charlie take advantage of the old man? What is the difference between persuading someone and manipulating them?
- (Read p164): Both Charlie and his dad are amazed by the interest from the local community in their football match. Is sport important for a community? What role do you think it has? Why is football seen to be the most popular? What is its attraction both as a game and as a way to unite a community?

ACTIVITIES

1. Charlie (Read p134-135)

It is obvious to Charlie that Kelly has been talking about him to Rihanna and her friends; perhaps they even teased her about the things she said.

Create the conversation between Kelly and her friends using the language they might have used to reveal what Kelly said, how she might felt about Charlie and the reaction from her friends.

2. Head to Head (Read pp153)

Charlie and Jake Murphy are head to head literally when Charlie confronts him over the way he behaved towards his sister Kelly.

The O'Brien press would like to insert an illustration at this point in the story showing a close up of their faces and their expressions.

Can you create the illustration for them?

3. 50 Years on (Read pp158-159)

Kelly's mum works part time as a reporter for

the local community newspaper and when Jake and Kelly tell her about the match she decides to publish a one-page edition to cover the build-up to the match on Legends' Lair.

Work in small groups to decide what she will include, perhaps player descriptions, interview or memories from older residents etc.

How will she make sure the report is unbiased, especially the information she gets from Jake?

4. Not Again (Read p182)

Kelly's granddad watches in disbelief as Charlie's team lift the trophy and Charlie stretches his hand out to take the ball.

He is reliving the day 50 years ago when Tommy Stubbs first denied him the ball and his memory burns with bitterness.

He recalls every single feeling and detail. He remembers every single angry word.

Write a short description of his memory.

5. Thanks (Read p183)

After the match, Kelly persuades her granddad to write a short letter to Charlie to say thanks for returning the ball.

When he has finished it she delivers it herself and smiles as Charlie reads it.

What did she persuade him to write? Did he manage to show generosity to Charlie for his decision?

Write a copy of his letter.

6. Top Tips (Read pp186-187)

Charlie has shared and explained his 3 top tips to help you enjoy football and get the maximum benefit from taking part.

If you were asked to submit your 3 top tips, what would they be? Explain why you think they are worth following?

You can work in small groups for this activity.



Joe O'Brien lives in Ballyfermot in Dublin with his wife and children. As well as nine Alfie Green books for younger readers and one fantasy novel, *Beyond the Cherry Tree*, he has written three books in the Danny Wilde GAA series. He has appeared on RTE's *The Den*, TV3's *Ireland AM* and many radio shows. His book *Alfie Green and the Chocolate Cosmos* was shortlisted for Children's Book of the Year at the Irish Book Awards in 2010.

The **Danny Wilde** series: follow Danny and Littlestown Crokes in their adventures on and off the football pitch!

