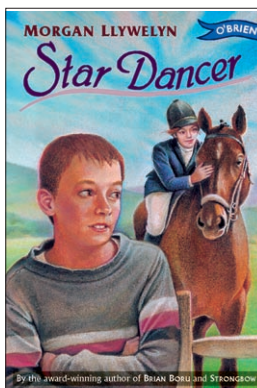


STAR DANCER



by Morgan Llywelyn

ISBN: 0-86278-331-3 • €6.34 pb • 160 pages

The RDS belonged to The Enemy, people with nice houses and money to spend. Having evaded security, Ger Casey intended to spend as long as possible in the grounds. He knew what he'd see: Happy people, stuck-up people in tight breeches and funny coats. He didn't expect to see a horse trotting sideways; he knew little about horses, but he knew they couldn't dance – they never did on telly. And he never expected that The Enemy would speak to him, show an interest in him, but Suzanne O'Gorman appeared pleasant and friendly and casually invited him to watch her compete the next day. As Ger watched her practise, spellbound, he thought that maybe he too could ride *Star Dancer*, maybe he too could make the horse dance in that magical sideways motion. When he determined to come back, he made a decision that would alter his whole life, a decision that would cause much trouble with his friends and family, but one that would ultimately lead to close friendship and happiness beyond his wildest dreams.

LANGUAGE – ENGLISH

- ◆ Language of horse-husbandry: Numnah, curry comb, groom, hoof pick, bit, reins, saddle soap.
- ◆ Discussion: 'Sport is about sportsmanship. It's not just about winning' (p.127). Children reflect on recent allegations of drug-taking in sports and discuss the above statement, possibly in form of debate.
- ◆ Discussion: '... Ger felt tall and powerful. This was great, like being a king or a general' (p.43). Examine this passage and suggest occasions which might cause children to experience similar feelings.
- ◆ Creative: 'Donal always had money, though Ger didn't know how' (p.53). Children list their suggestions of how Donal might have acquired his money – honestly or otherwise.

SESE – SCIENCE

- ◆ Plant and animal life: Processes of life. Becoming aware of the basic life processes in animals – feeding, breathing, moving, using senses. Designing and making an animal home that provides for growth, exercise, feeding of the animal.
- ◆ Plant and animal life: Caring for our pets. Care of horses: Importance of regular exercise, balanced diet, grooming and shelter. Children list and discuss essential horse-husbandry chores and contrast these with care and maintenance of horses in deprived urban communities. Important local horse fairs, such as those held at Ballinasloe, Co Galway, Buttevant, Co Cork, and Smithfield, Dublin, might also be examined from an economic and social point of view.

SESE – GEOGRAPHY

- ◆ Human environments: Settlement, homes and other buildings. Exploring and investigating some features of the built environment in inner cities and in rural areas, examining the text for

descriptions of urban decay and the effects of unemployment in Ger's home environment (pp.10, 17, 20, 103).

- ◆ Human environments: People at work. Exploring and examining the work of those involved in the care of horses, in particular that of the farrier and the vet. Discuss also the importance, especially in former times, of the blacksmith and the forge in the everyday life of the community. Suggest reasons for the closure of many forges and say what might have replaced the forge as a centre of village/small town life.

- ◆ Environmental awareness and care: Identifying, discussing and recording aspects of natural and human environments in the locality which are considered attractive/unattractive, and reasons for these preferences.

- ◆ Environmental awareness and care: Caring for the environment. Identifying and discussing a local, national or global environmental issue, such as litter or pollution or decay. Investigating the causes, suggesting possible actions or solutions and participating in the resolution if possible.

SESE – HISTORY

- ◆ Local studies: Games and pastimes in the past. Investigating and discussing the traditions formerly associated with the horseshoe. Children might ask an older relative or friend for information about the use of the horseshoe in rural games/sports, especially in Munster, and might also investigate some superstitions and customs involving the horseshoe in Ireland. A variety of horseshoes might be brought in and examined or children could make their own, either from pottery clay or thick card.

SPHE

- ◆ Myself: Developing self-confidence. Recognising that making mistakes and learning from them is part of growing up, becoming

more confident in coping with change and unfamiliar situations and becoming increasingly responsible. Chart Ger's development from initial resentment of The Enemy (pp.8, 10, 15), telling lies and wanting to impress (pp.21, 49, 98–99), to his admission of, and learning from mistakes (pp.41, 84–89), accepting responsibility and responding to praise (pp.52, 62, 95, 111).

- ◆ Myself: Taking care of my body. Beginning to develop strategies to cope with various difficulties, such as peer pressure (pp.98, 99, 106–107, 142). Becoming aware of the dangers of alcohol abuse and exploring the reasons why Mrs Casey may have chosen to drink (pp.21, 49, 95–96, 140).

- ◆ Myself: Making decisions. Exploring how the views, opinions, expectations and responses of others can influence personal decisions. Examine the extent to which Suzanne's and Ger's decisions were influenced by the wishes and directions of parents and by social constraints.

- ◆ Myself and others: Myself and my family. Understanding that families can undergo unplanned and unpleasant changes, such as unemployment or imprisonment. Discuss Ger's family life and contrast with the support, affirmation and encouragement afforded Suzanne by her family.

- ◆ Myself and others: My friends and other people. Exploring the different aspects of Ger's friendship with Suzanne, such as loyalty, genuine communication, keeping promises and forgiveness.

- ◆ Myself and the wider world: Local and wider communities. Examining how justice, fairness and equality may not be exemplified in a community. Exploring discrimination against particular groups and discussing how it can be counteracted.