



# Pirate Queen

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Morgan Llywelyn

## Teaching Guide

by PETER HEANEY

### RATIONALE & THEMES

Sixteenth century Ireland was a time of upheaval, uncertainty and transition for the Gaelic way of life, as its people tried to cope with the political, social and economic storm generated by Elizabeth Tudor and her lieutenants as they subjugated Ireland. We see this tempest unfold through the story of one strong woman; Granuaile O'Malley and the effects that this transition has on her son, her way of life, and her clan.

The story is told through flashbacks and letters that Granuaile writes to her son. The story can be used effectively in classrooms to dramatise to the mechanisms of social change. The universal and inspiring themes are as follows:

- Courage
- Determination
- Gender roles
- Loyalty & treachery
- Love
- Responsibility
- Gaelic tradition
- Communication

### SUMMARY

Granuaile's story is one of courage, determination and survival against the political, social and economic turbulence of 16<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland.

We see a young Granuaile assume control over her father's fleet and carve a livelihood off the hazardous Western coasts. We see her resistance to the intrigue and perils of the growing English domination and devastation of Gaelic Ireland. We see her endure hardship, loss and imprisonment.

Eventually she meets, and reaches an agreement with Elizabeth Tudor. This ensures that the fortunes of her clan are

favourably poised to take advantage of, shape and prosper within, the new and emerging order before she abdicates control of her fleet to her son Tibbot.

### APPROACH

To maintain the pace and sense of integrity, the story is divided into several episodes, which reflect the experiences in Granuaile's life and also echo the political events that surround her.

The pace at which the book is read is entirely at the teacher's discretion, however it might be useful to tackle it in sections and use class prediction activities at the beginning of each section, to maintain interest in the progression of the story.

## Unit 1 THE GAELIC WORLD IS SHRINKING PAGES 7-38

### SUMMARY

Granuaile has given birth to her son Toby while on a trading voyage off the South West coast of Ireland. She fears that she may not be there to advise him as he grows older, so she decides to record her thoughts and feelings in a series of letters for him. She hopes that the letters will give him a more faithful portrayal of his mother than he might hear from others.

We discover her determination from childhood to join her father and lead the O'Malley fleet. We see her dedication and loyalty to the Gaelic traditions and see Ireland as a prosperous land, providing for its entire people. We see her growing suspicions and unease at the intentions of Elizabeth Tudor who has begun the

process of dividing the clans.

Granuaile sends her son to be fostered after the Gaelic tradition and returns to sea. She maintains a steady and close contact with him through a series of letters, which offer him advice and support. As Christmas approaches, Granuaile is determined that her son, now six years old, will experience both a Gaelic and an Anglo Norman celebration. Although the celebrations are lavish, Granuaile has a sense that her Gaelic world is in danger from the greed of Tudor England.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read p.19. Granuaile's husband Richard is a Norman. He has a different outlook on things. What do you think Granuaile means when she says "Your kind will never have enough until they have everything"?
- Read p.24. Granuaile's father Dubhdara is loved and respected by his crews. How do you think the crew felt sailing with someone who believed that praise was more effective than punishment? How would this be likely to influence their efforts?
- Read pp.27-31. Granuaile has arranged to have her son fostered and explains her reasons in a letter to him. Do you think that Tibbot might have fully accepted her decision? How do you think he might have felt when he learned of it?
- Read p.21. If warfare, plunder and domination were normal among the Gaelic chieftains themselves; how was the behaviour of Elizabeth Tudor so very different? Do you think there might have been any benefit in her uniting Gaelic Ireland under a single government?

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. Dear Mammy.

Read pp.30–31. Granuaile has sent Tibbott to be fostered at Castleaffey and then to Kinturk Castle. Can you pretend that you are Tibbott and write the letter he might have sent his mother to tell her what it was like being fostered and how he felt?

### 2. My Name

Read p.7. Granuaile has chosen a name for her son. This is an important duty for every parent. Ask at home for as much information about your own name and why you have been given it.

### 3. If I could choose?

In Gaelic Ireland, names were often augmented to say something about the person. e.g.

- Dubhdara (Black Oak)
- Donal of the Pipes
- Tibbott of the Long Ships
- Richard in Iron

The names could indicate what they were good at or what they looked like. Could you choose a suitable extension for your own name, to describe something about you? Can you explain why you have chosen it?

### 4. Both are Granuaile

Read p.27 & p.36. Richard Sidney has written a very short report (100 words) for Elizabeth, describing Granuaile and how he thinks she might affect their plans. The Abbott of Murrisk has included a short profile of Granuaile in a list of important Mayo chieftains that he is compiling.

Write both accounts and indicate what you think the differences and similarities might be.

### 5. Rockfleet

Read pp.16–17. The castle at Rockfleet has been cleverly designed and built. Draw a plan of it and include an illustration to show what you think the castle might look like if you were approaching from the sea? Choose what you think is its most important design feature and explain why you choose it.

### 6. Pride and arrogance

Read pp.34–35. These are emotions that sometimes encourage us to say and do things that we don't really feel comfortable

with. How do you think that this short exchange between Granuaile and Richard might have been different if either of them had not been so proud? Describe how you think it might have ended.

### 7. Chinese whispers

Read p.32. The old Gaelic way of sending messages was to shout from hilltops. Do you think that this was a reliable method? Write a message that you think might have been sent this way and then send it around the class by whispering it from person to person. Did the message change by the time it reached the last person? Write a message that you think might be less likely to become distorted if sent this way.

### 8. Imagery

Imagery is a very important tool that helps writers to create clear descriptions. Explain what you think these mean:

- p.11. long snakes of torchlight.
- p.24. stretching from sunrise to sunset
- p.25. laugh like a huge wave breaking
- p.28. cripple my tongue

Create three images of your own to describe Granuaile. Think about how she spoke or looked or moved or stood.

## Unit 2 GRANUAILE IS CAPTURED PAGES 39-77

### SUMMARY

Granuaile returns to Ui Malley and finds that the monastery at Murrisk has been closed. She continues to demand revenue from the ships using the port of Galway and as a consequence, there is an attack on Rockfleet, which she easily repels.

We learn from Granuaile's memory about her time in Iar Connacht when she married Donal O'Flaherty. We discover that Donal was a bully and a fool. He resented Granuaile's success in rebuilding his fleets and leading his crews. When the English fail to appoint him as clan chief, he is enraged and attacks and seizes an isolated fort belonging to a clan who support the English. Donal dismisses Granuaile's advice to secure his capture and is killed in a counter attack. It is left to Granuaile to rout the attack and consolidate the fort.

Her children are adults and her husband is

dead, so Granuaile decides to return to her home in Rockfleet and 200 of Donal's men decide to accompany her. She finds Sir Henry Sidney is the English administrator in Galway and that they have demanded rent from the O'Malley's for their own land. Granuaile becomes bolder in her defiance of the English, using kidnap to humiliate an English Lord for his lack of hospitality. Although she negotiates a pact with Sidney to ensure the safety of her home at Clew Bay, she decides to establish her own power beyond doubt and attempts to capture Askeaton Castle, the stronghold of the Earl of Desmond. This proves to be her undoing and ends in her capture.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read pp.62-63. Granuaile was irritated by Lord St Lawrence's lack of hospitality when she visits him, so she kidnaps his son to teach him a lesson. Do you think her actions were appropriate? What do you think was the real reason for what she did?
- Read pp.57-58. On page 19 Granuaile accuses her husband's Anglo-Norman people of greed, yet she raids every ship within her grasp. Do you think that Granuaile is really very different from Richard?
- Read pp.41-43. Elizabeth has begun to close the Catholic Churches. What motive do you think she has for doing this? What will she gain from it? Is it simply to punish Granuaile?
- Read pp.44-45. Granuaile's marriage to Donal was 'arranged'. What things do you think Dubhdara considered when he was arranging it? Is there any benefit in choosing a spouse this way?

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. The future

Read pp. 34-38. Things are beginning to change for Granuaile. Before reading the next section make five predictions about Granuaile and her circumstances that you think will happen.

#### 2. If I had only known

Read pp.46-47. Donal has misled Dubhdara and Granuaile finds things very different when she reaches Iar Connacht. What boasts do you think Donal made to Dubhdara to persuade him to allow Granuaile to marry him?

Make a short list of his boasts beginning each one with either "I will" or "I have."

### 3. A mistake

Read pp.39-40. Sir Edward Fritton ordered an attack on Rockfleet which failed. He now has his Captain's report, including maps and casualty lists. This report blames him for the failure. He has to send a report to Elizabeth and shift the blame to Granuaile. Write the captain's report and Fritton's report for Elizabeth.

### 4. A good wife shouldn't

Read pp.47-49. Granuaile tried to make the best of the situation when she married Donal, and become a 'good wife'. Donal didn't treat her well. Compile a '*should or shouldn't*' list of statements to describe a 'good' wife/husband.

### 5. Granuaile

Read p.56. Richard will become Granuaile's husband. He first meets her at the banquet where he speaks to her briefly. That evening he makes a short entry in his diary recording his impressions. Recreate Richard's diary entry for that day.

### 6. She is only a woman

Read pp.66-67. Henry Sidney is watching and listening to Granuaile very carefully, trying to 'see' inside her mind. What thoughts are running through his mind as he watches her? Make a short list of five things that he notices about her and describe the impressions that these make on him.

### 7. It's a trap

Read p.73. Desmond's men are waiting for Granuaile to attack. How did they know of the attack beforehand? In the shadows of Ashkeaton, a shadowy figure watches Granuaile's capture and smiles. Use your imagination to create a short explanation of what has happened, who the stranger is, and the 'mystery' of their smile.

### 8. Prisoner Grace O'Malley

Read pp.73-77. Granuaile has been captured and is held in Limerick gaol. The Governor has prepared a charge sheet and details of the prisoner, including her sentence, what she has been charged with and the prison regime. This has been prepared for Lord Fitzgerald. Make a copy of what you think the charge sheet for her would have looked like. Include a drawing

of the official seal.

## Unit 3 BINGHAM HAS TAKEN TIBBOT PAGES 78-105

### SUMMARY

Granuaile is transferred by cart to Dublin Castle. She sees the malign influence of the invaders on the countryside at every turn. While in prison she manages to persuade Lord Grey that she could be an asset to him in putting down the Earl of Desmond's rebellion and so secures her release. She is freed to return to Galway and quickly resumes her old ways of smuggling guns to support O'Neill and O'Donnell in the North.

Richard goes to the aid of a small European invasion force sent by the Pope and when Sir Nicolas Malby, the new governor of Connacht, captures his stronghold at Burrishoole, Granuaile forcibly removes him to Scotland to 'cool down' and then persuades him to offer his submission to Malby. He is granted the title of 'The Mc William' and Tibbott is safe from reprisal. However, Granuaile discovers that nothing remains the same for long. Richard and Malby both lose their last battles with illness. Mayo it seems may disintegrate as the chieftains struggle to take the vacant McWilliam title and Richard Bingham, a man whose opinion of the Irish is that they are vermin, is appointed Governor of Connacht.

Bingham learns that Granuaile is importing guns into Ulster, that she is harassing ships bound for Galway and that she has a son, Tibbott. Tibbott is captured by Bingham and held hostage in his brother's castle at Ballymote.

### DISCUSSIONS POINTS

- Read p.82. Even the smallest crime received a harsh punishment. What do you think is the reason behind harsh punishments? Do you think they can really be effective in preventing crimes?
- Read pp.74-76. Granuaile is a prisoner and is treated badly. She had been captured while trying to seize Lord Fitzgerald's castle, so she is guilty. Do you think she has any right to be treated fairly? Do you know what happens around the world today to prisoners?

[www.amnesty.ie](http://www.amnesty.ie) will give you some information on this.

- Read pp.101-102. The English under Sir John Perrot and Bingham believe that the 'Composition of Connacht' is justified. Why do they believe this? What do you think are their reasons for thinking this? Do Perrot and Bingham have the same motives?

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. Prison Walls

Read pp.81-82. Dublin is a dreadful place and the dungeons where Granuaile is held are full of people who will never leave. Sometimes people used their cell walls to scribble messages of hope or defiance. You might like to use a large blank page and work in small groups to recreate a cell wall and some of the messages scribbled there.

#### 2. The Message

Read p.82. Granuaile has written a message to Black Thomas, the Earl of Ormond. She has to be very careful with what she writes in the message in case it is intercepted. It also has to be very short and persuasive, reminding him of her assistance for him in the past, without seeming to threaten him. Could you write the note she sent to him?

#### 3. The Friendly Gaoler

Read p.82 & p.88. In order to send messages, Granuaile has to persuade a guard to take them. Which arguments might Granuaile use to persuade the guard to help her? How do you think she might select him and how might she first approach him? Write a short dialogue to show how she persuaded him.

#### 4. My Dearest Wife

Read pp.84-88. Lord Grey is the new Lord Deputy of Ireland and is very uncertain about what to make of Granuaile. He makes a point of writing each day to his beloved wife Lady Grey, who is at home in England, to share his thoughts, feelings and hopes. Write the letter he wrote to her, describing his impressions of Granuaile and explaining the reasons for the way he treated her.

#### 5. Fear

Read pp.75-82. Granuaile is in gaol and is afraid. She makes sure that none of her guards can see this. At night as she lies



awake she counts her fears. Make a short list of her fears. Write which one you think is her greatest fear and explain why you believe it to be her greatest. What advice would you give her to help her to deal with it?

## 6. The Dream

Read p.77. Granuaile has escaped for a while in a dream. In the dream she revisits her familiar and pleasant places and memories. It is a comforting collage for her. Create three or four of the scenes for her and stitch them together into a soothing dream. Create it as a short story board with screens and commentaries.

## 7. Think before you act, Richard

Read pp.92–93. Malby has replaced Fritton as Governor of Connacht. Granuaile has to resort to physical force to persuade Richard to act cleverly. Write the arguments that they both would have used with each other. Which of Granuaile's arguments do you think persuade Richard to act as she suggested?

Write a short dialogue to dramatise the argument and the moment when Granuaile decides to send him to Scotland. What do you think they said to each other?

## 8. The Composition of Connacht

Read pp.101–102. Sir John Perrot has decided to redistribute land ownership in Connacht and has devised a plan of 'Surrender and Regrant'. Each of the clan chieftains has been sent a letter explaining what will happen and what this will mean for them, including details of any new titles they will get. It will be a very cold, official and harsh letter. Write this letter for Dir John Perrot.

# Unit 4 THE WIND IS CHANGING PAGES 106-158

## SUMMARY

Bingham is appointed as Governor in Connacht. He is a cruel man who is determined to crush Granuaile. He discovers that Tibbott is Granuaile's son and seizes him as a hostage to ensure that Granuaile ceases raiding. He billets him with his brother's family where he is

treated well and Granuaile reluctantly lays up her fleet.

Bingham summons the Mayo chieftains, including Granuaile, to a meeting where she learns that he has arranged for Tibbott to be married. Rebellion has erupted in Connacht as a result of Bingham's cruelty and when her son in law, The Devil's Hook, sends for her help, Granuaile becomes involved. Together they almost manage to kill Bingham. Granuaile is tricked and captured by Bingham's brother. She is thrown into Galway gaol, however The Devil's Hook surrenders himself in return for her freedom and she is released.

Her oldest son Owen is murdered by Bingham's brother and The Devil's Hook escapes. Granuaile realises that she will be recaptured so she flees North to the protection of Hugh O'Neill. Bingham is promoted and leaves Connacht. It is now safe for Granuaile to return. Red Hugh O'Donnell is captured and his father prepares for war. Granuaile asks Tibbott to compose a letter that she takes to Sir John Perrot, the Lord Deputy, and secures a pardon for herself and her family from Elizabeth Tudor.

Philip of Spain launches his Armada and Bingham returns to Connacht to prevent any support for the Armada from there. The Armada fleet is decimated and Bingham orders that any Spanish who come ashore along with anyone who helps them will be hanged. Rebellion erupts in Connacht and Bingham is forced to seek a truce. A Book of Complaint is compiled against him and this is presented to Fitzwilliam, the new Lord Deputy, however it fails to have him convicted.

Bingham continues to attack Granuaile and Tibbott and Donal are arrested and charged with murder. Granuaile decides to seek a personal audience with Elizabeth Tudor and sets sails for London.

Granuaile presents a successful petition to Elizabeth. Tibbott and Donal are released and to the fury of Bingham, she is granted permission to restore her fleet. Bingham flees to England where he is arrested. Granuaile gifts her fleet to Tibbott and Red Hugh has surrendered. The war to preserve Gaelic Ireland is over and Granuaile and Elizabeth Tudor both die in the same year.

## DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read pp.106 – 110. Fear is a very powerful emotion and can dictate how we behave in different circumstances. How do you think her fear of Bingham influenced Granuaile's behaviour and how do you think she was able to overcome it?
- Read p.107 & p.116. Bingham has a personal animosity towards Granuaile. Why do you think this is so? Is it perhaps because she is a woman? What is your opinion? What does the evidence tell you?
- Read pp.120–121. Hugh O'Neill was treated well by Elizabeth. Do you think that this obliged him to be more loyal to her? Do you think that his attitude to her is justified?

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. We're engaged

Read pp.107–108. When Granuaile returns from her meeting with Bingham, she receives a letter from Tibbott. In it he tells her of his wedding plans and why he has decided to marry. The letter describes Maude and how they met. Write the letter for Tibbott.

### 2. The Battle of Lough Mask

Read pp.110–111. After the battle, Granuaile's crew are ecstatic and one decides that she will write a song to commemorate their victory. Choose a familiar melody / tune that you know and write a short one or two verse song praising Granuaile and describing what happened.

### 3. W<sub>5</sub> + H<sub>1</sub>

Read pp.109–111. The Lord Deputy Sir John Perrot is determined to discover the truth about what happened at Lough Mask. He prepares a list of six questions; the five 'W' plus the 'H' question: **Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?**

He sends these to both Bingham and Granuaile to discover both their intentions and actions and how events lead to the battle. Compile the list that he might have sent.

### 4. I Accuse

Read pp.109–111. Take the position of either Granuaile or Bingham and compose a list of answers to the questions from the previous activity. Try to frame your answers so that you shift as much blame

away from yourself as possible.

### 5. The Lough Mask Tapestry

Read pp.110–111. In Bayeux in France you can see a tapestry that was created to commemorate the Battle of Hastings in 1066. ([www.bayeuxtapestry.org.uk](http://www.bayeuxtapestry.org.uk)) Draw a tapestry to depict all the events of Lough Mask. Your class could create a large mural for your classroom or school corridor. Make sure that all the events are included.

### 6. The Book of Complaints

Read pp.102–136. The Book of Complaints has been presented to Fitzwilliam, the Lord Deputy. It contains five specific complaints about Bingham's conduct. Decide which five complaints you would choose and how you would present them. What evidence would you need to gather.

### 7. A Woman's Heart

Read pp.146–152. Elizabeth Tudor has received many angry letters from Bingham, her Governor in Connacht, about Granuaile and what she has done. Yet, after meeting her, she chooses to believe Granuaile completely. Elizabeth keeps a secret personal diary where she records all her thoughts and impressions.

Write the entry for the day she met Granuaile. It should indicate her true impression of Granuaile and the reasons that persuaded her to support the Irish chieftain against her own official Bingham.

### 8. So! On we go

Read p.156. Granuaile was a woman with tremendous energy and sense of purpose. She made a huge impression on her time and on everyone that she met. If she were alive today, what type of person would she be? What nationality would she be? What causes would she champion? What sort of things would you read about her in the media?

Create a short newspaper biography (with illustration) titled 'A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Granuaile.' The biography can be either completely fictional or based on someone you have researched.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR, MORGAN LLYWELYN

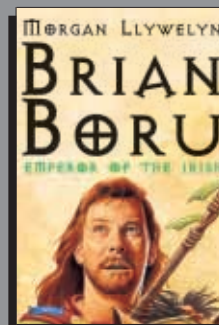


Historian and novelist Morgan Llywelyn was born in New York City, but after the death of her husband and parents in 1985 returned to Ireland to take up citizenship in the land of her grandparents and make her permanent home there.

After making the shortlist for the United States Olympic Team in Dressage in 1975, but not making the team itself, she turned to writing historical novels exploring her Celtic roots. The most successful of these was *Lion of Ireland - The Legend of Brian Boru*, which was published in 1980 and has sold into the millions of copies.

She received the Novel of the Year Award from the National League of American Penwomen for her novel *The Horse Goddess* as well as the Woman of the Year Award from the Irish-American Heritage Committee for *Bard: The Odyssey of the Irish*. The latter award was presented to her by Ed Koch, then-mayor of New York City.

### OTHER BOOKS BY MORGAN LLYWELYN



*Brian Boru - Emperor of the Irish*

*Strongbow - The Story of Richard and Aoife*