



Resistance

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Brian Gallagher

Teaching Guide

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RATIONALE & THEMES

The activities in this guide are designed to complement a class reading of the text in a way that inspires young readers to delve deep into the characters and themes of this fascinating story. It aims to develop empathy skills, stimulate discussion and encourage readers to dissect literary techniques in fresh and engaging ways. There are also activities included that are designed to hone communication, presentation and literacy skills. This novel deals with very important events in history and its key themes include:

- Friendship
- Loyalty and Trust
- Social Class
- Courage
- Honour and Duty
- Family

SUMMARY

By the author of the exciting *Spies* and *Pawns*, *Resistance* is set in 1940s Ireland – but this is an Ireland with a difference. In this story, Ireland has been successfully invaded by the German army and is part of the Third Reich.

The story centres around three friends, each with their own secrets, and follows them as they try to navigate their way safely through a dangerous world, which proves particularly difficult when they discover one of the other members of their youth club has been acting as a Nazi informer.

Even though all three friends come from different backgrounds, they are determined to resist the cruel German regime, passing information to the Resistance movement despite the dangers. As time goes on, the three friends reveal their secrets to one another and give one another support through some dark and difficult times. However, life still goes on and they are still able to take their minds off such horrors as

Nazi reprisal attacks, keeping each others' spirits up with jokes and a youth club holiday. Their bravery and determination to do the right thing influences the actions of their parents and both adults and children join forces to keep one another from harm even when being chased by some very dangerous and determined Gestapo officers.

APPROACH

This guide has followed the structure of the novel and is divided into three units, with suggested discussion points and a range of activities at the end of each section. As the setting for this story meshes historical fact and the hypothetical while making reference to a number of challenging historical events, this book offers excellent opportunities for elevated debate and discussion. It's an engaging read with well-developed central characters that reader will instantly relate to.

Section 1: Prologue & Part One: Occupation Pages 9 -92

SUMMARY

The prologue opens in Cork, in 1941, where we meet a young Jewish girl, Rachel, in fear for her life as the Gestapo enter her school in search of her. Her life is saved by the quick-thinking of a teacher at the school who manages to give Rachel enough time to escape. This is an Ireland of terror and suspicion.

The first section of the novel opens in Dublin, where we meet twelve-year-old Kevin Burke, son of a prominent businessman and member of Dublin Corporation having a luxurious meal with his parents. Later we are introduced to Mary Flanagan, daughter of a prominent Resistance fighter with her own secrets. We reencounter Rachel Clarke, who has escaped Cork and is now living with

her aunt in Dublin under the alias of Roisin Tierney to evade capture by the Germans for her Jewish heritage. However, it's not just Roisin/Rachel and Mary who have their secrets – Dennis O'Sullivan has his own, although his are less honourable.

Kevin is determined to stand up to the bullying Nazi regime and begins passing on information gleaned from the documents in his father's desk to members of the resistance. However, Roisin/Rachel becomes suspicious of the secret conversations between Kevin and Mary and immediately jumps to the wrong conclusions, causing tensions to form between the three friends. Uncomfortable with their secrets, the three friends open up to one another, even though knowing each others' secrets could have serious consequences if uncovered by the Germans. Their relations with Dennis O'Sullivan take a turn for the worse as he seems determined to torment Kevin.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read page 9. What are your first thoughts on hearing that the Germans have invaded Ireland? What do you know about the Nazi rule? What changes do you expect to see?
- Read pp. 13-16. What sort of person is Sister Carmel? Do you think you would have had the courage to stand up to the police like she did? Do you think she did the right thing?
- Read page 26. Kevin suggests that people who muddle along with those who commit murder risk becoming part of the process. What do you think he means by this? Do you agree? What do you think Kevin's father should do? Is it an easy decision? Why / why not?
- Read pp. 38-39. What do you think of Dennis's father's arguments to support the Nazis? Do you think that people should be practical in times of war? Why do you think some people chose to spy

on their neighbours in times of war?

- Read pp. 44-46. Kevin says that 'one of the worst things about the Nazi occupation was how people were forced to make compromises with their consciences, just in order to survive'. Do you think this is the worst thing? Why/why not? Why do you think forcing people to co-operate was such a powerful form of control?
- Read pp 54-56. Why do you think Mary doesn't tell Roisin/Rachel the truth? Should she trust her friend? How do you think Roisin/Rachel might react if she found out the truth about what Mary and Kevin were discussing?
- Read pp 66 – 67. Mary's dad admits that innocent civilians will die as a result of the Resistance stopping the Germans shipping the Jewish prisoners to the labour camps. Do you think it is a difficult decision for him to make to continue with the attack? Is their resistance worth it if it means innocent people die? What would be the alternative?
- Read pp 74-76. Kevin's parents tell him not to worry about the horrifying treatment of the Jewish people. Why do you think they are trying to pretend it doesn't exist? What do you think about his parents – are they cowards or just trying to survive?

ACTIVITIES

1. FLAGS

On page 9, Rachel feels fear when she sees the swastika flying from the sleek black car approaching her school. Why do you think flags have so much power? Do you know what the Irish flag symbolizes? With a partner, research world flags. Choose four flags and create a short presentation on each to deliver to the rest of the class. In your presentation, you should include: what the flag symbolizes; the history of the flag; an image of the flag; anything else you think is interesting or important. Extension: Which flag is your favourite? Why?

2. BULLIES

In Chapter Two, we are introduced to Dennis O'Sullivan. What sort of boy is he? Create an extended piece of writing explaining your opinions on Dennis, using evidence from the text. Make sure you also consider what Roisin says about the sort of people who have collaborated with the Nazis – what does Dennis have in common with these people? Do you think she is correct when she says that making an enemy of Dennis O'Sullivan might become a problem?

3. COLLABORATOR

We see Dennis O'Sullivan supplying information to the Germans in Chapter Three. Why do you think he is doing this? Do you think he has any regrets? How much of an influence do you think his father's views have had on his decision? In small groups, create a role play where Dennis is being interviewed about his decisions to assist the Nazis. Try to think about the sort of answers Dennis might have given to defend himself – try and make his character one we can have some sympathy for.

4. TINY RESISTANCES

Kevin takes action to try and help the Resistance by rifling through his father's study for information. What sort of person does this make him? Write a character study of Kevin based on what we have learned about him so far. Make sure you use quotes from the text in your answer.

5. DRAMA

On pages 60-64, Mary and Kevin debate including Roisin/Rachel in their plans to help the Resistance. How do you think telling her will go? In small groups, script and act out the meeting between the three friends where Mary and Kevin reveal the truth. How will they tell her – will they lead gently into it or just blurt out the truth? How will Roisin/Rachel react? Will she tell them her own secret?

6. FREEZE!

Roisin/Rachel decides to tell her friends her secret, unaware that Dennis O'Sullivan is watching. What do you think he sees? In small groups, create a set of three freeze frames to illustrate what Dennis sees through his binoculars. One member of the group should play the part of Dennis and explain what he thinks is going on in each scene.

7. WHAT TO DO WITH DENNIS

In an attempt to keep Kriminalkommissar Vogts happy, Dennis tells him about a seemingly minor infringement by a cinema usher. Why has he done this – is it because he is a bad person or just someone trying to survive? In small groups, write up the reasons why we should or should not condemn Dennis for his actions and then debate them as a class.

SUMMARY

The second section of the novel opens on the evening of the Resistance's planned attacks on the trains carrying Jewish prisoners to the labour camps. Kevin and Roisin/Rachel decide to take action to help their friend in her dangerous adventure. However, the Nazis are swift in their revenge for their humiliation and take action that shocks the entire community, leaving the three friends feeling guilty about their involvement. Meanwhile, Dennis is still trying to maintain his popularity with Kriminalkommissar Vogts.

Outraged by the actions of the Nazis, the local community have begun acts of quiet defiance, much to the admiration of the three friends, who have finished school for the year. Kevin is becoming more bold in his defiance and gets himself into some dangerous situations. Mary spends some precious time with her father on holiday. Meanwhile, back in Dublin, Dennis' secret is uncovered but a confrontation could spell trouble for Kevin and Roisin/Rachel when they all go on their youth club holiday.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read pp. 95-96. Do you think it is sensible for Kevin and Roisin/Rachel to get involved? What might go wrong? How do you think Roisin/Rachel's aunt would react if she knew what her niece had planned?
- Read pp. 114-115. Dennis's father is angered by the actions of the Resistance. Why do you think this is? Why do you think some people might have been against the efforts of the Resistance? Do you agree with them? Why?
- Read pp. 118-120. What do you think of the Nazis' actions to kill civilians to intimidate them into silence? Do you think this was an effective way to control the population? Why? How do you think people could have resisted this?
- Read pp.133-135. Why do you think members of the local community might feel angry with Kevin's family? Is his father doing the right thing by continuing as a councillor? What are the alternatives? Do you think it is fair to accuse him of being a collaborator?
- Read pp.136-139. As an act of defiance, the young people at the youth club are wearing black armbands as a sign of mourning for those civilians executed by

the Nazis. Do you think this is a sensible decision? Why do you think it was important for so many of them to make this small gesture? Do you think small gestures can make a difference? Why? Why do you think we wear black armbands today? (Think about sports matches).

- Read pp 144-145. When Roisin/Rachel says that it's human nature to 'give out about things', do you agree? Why do you think we complain about things? Is this a healthy way to live? How could we change?
- Read pp.149-152. Why do you think Kevin has chosen to do this? Is it a sensible decision? What advice would you give him? How does it affect your opinion of him?
- Read p.160. Roisin/Rachel spots Dennis with Vogts. What do you think she should do with this information? What advice would you give her? Is it better to keep quiet or could she put herself in danger if she reveals to Dennis what she knows?
- Read pp.170-172. Why did Roisin/Rachel reveal her knowledge to Dennis? What do you think will happen now? What advice would you give her?
- Read pp.176-178. Is Aunt Nuala right to be angry? Do you think her fears are realistic? What are your impressions of her?

ACTIVITIES

1. TENSION

On pp. 100-110, Mary, Roisin and Kevin join in with the Resistance's efforts to save the Jewish prisoners in a very dramatic scene. How does Gallagher create tension in this section of the novel? Write an analysis that examines the use of verbs, punctuation, how the characters react and anything else you think adds drama. Make sure that you use quotes from the text in your response.

2. NEWS REPORT

The actions of the Resistance have had terrible consequences, leading to the execution of innocent Irish civilians. Using the information from Chapters 9 and 10, create either a news report or a news bulletin exploring both the train attack and the executions. Make sure that you interview a range of people in your report, including German officers, Irish officers and ordinary people on the streets. Extension: Remember that there was no freedom of the press under the Nazi rule and any criticism would have been forbidden. Can you present a report that tells the facts without obviously criticizing the actions of the Nazis?

3. MARY

Re-read pp. 125-129. Mary is terrified when she is singled out for interrogation by senior-ranking Gestapo officer Kriminalkommissar Vogts. How does she hide it? What do we learn about Mary in this section – what sort of person is she? Write a character analysis of Mary, using references from the text. In addition, you should also try to include some quotes from other parts of the book so far that support your answer.

4. KEVIN'S GUILT

The knowledge that Mr Murray's death was a consequence of the information he passed to the Resistance is sitting heavy on Kevin's mind. Do you think he is right to feel guilty? What advice would you give him? Write him a letter with your thoughts on his actions with reasons to support your thoughts and ideas.

5. PRINCIPAL'S SPEECH

Mary and Roisin/Rachel are surprised by the speech given by their principal on pages 146-147. Imagine you are the principal of a school giving a speech to your students on their last day. What sort of things would you say to encourage them to go out and live decent, healthy, happy lives? Write a short speech.

6. HERO WORSHIP

What defines a hero? In Chapter 14, we meet Mary's father again. What sort of man is he? Do you think he is a hero? Why? Imagine the war is over and write a letter to the government arguing that he should be given a medal of honour for his bravery and heroic actions. Make sure you use persuasive language and make reference to specific parts of the text.

7. IN DEFENCE OF DENNIS

Kevin and Roisin/Rachel are appalled to discover Dennis has been working as a collaborator, but is there anything that can be said in his defence? Work in small groups to prepare a defence of Dennis and his actions, thinking about the influence of his father on his opinions and his feeling isolated due to his social class.

8. ROISIN/RACHEL

When her aunt finds out she has shared their secret with her friends, Roisin/Rachel is distraught to have put her aunt in danger. What sort of person is Roisin? Think about everything that she has done in the novel so far – how she has acted, what sort of things

she has said and done. Imagine you are Roisin. Write a letter to your parents about your thoughts and feelings about everything that has happened in the novel so far.

Section 3 Showdown Pages 1947-end

SUMMARY

This final section takes place at the camp, where phone calls from Dublin reveal that the Gestapo have learned Roisin/Rachel's true identity. It's a race against time to try and get Roisin/Rachel to safety before the Gestapo arrive. Unfortunately for the three friends, Dennis O'Sullivan is determined to capture Roisin/Rachel and hold her captive until the Gestapo arrive. However, they have help from an unexpected source and come up with an elaborate (but risky) plan to get their friend safely out of harm's reach.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read pp. 197-199. Are you surprised by the actions of Kevin's father? Has he done the right thing? What would the consequences be if he is caught warning Kevin? Has this changed your view of him? How?
- Read pp. 202-204. Vogts is really determined to catch Roisin/Rachel. Do you feel any sympathy for Dennis? What sort of a man is Vogts? Do you think Dennis has any regrets about getting involved? Would it be easy for him to walk away and stop being involved? Why?
- Read p. 212. What are your impressions of the postmistress? What sort of risk is she taking? Do you think many people were prepared to take these risks? How important is it for individuals to stand up for one another? Do you think that courage and bravery needs to be about huge gestures? Why?
- Read pp. 214-215. Are you surprised by Kevin's courage in standing up to Dennis? What sort of threat is Kevin making to him? How do you think their neighbours in Dublin would react if they found out that Dennis was an informer?
- Read pp.243-247. Why do you think Dennis is so determined to catch Roisin/Rachel? What sort of a person does this make him? How would you respond if you were Kevin?
- Read p. 256. What do you think really happened to Dennis? Do you think this is a suitable ending for him? Why/why not? Do you think everyone's fate was

deserved? What about Kevin's father?

ACTIVITIES

1. CODED MESSAGE

When Roisin/Rachel discovers that her secret has been uncovered, her first instinct is to warn her aunt Nuala. However, she needs to do it without being caught – which means writing in code. Create your own secret code and write a message from Roisin/Rachel to her aunt Nuala warning her of the danger. Your code can be either numbers, symbols or letters – but make sure you keep a note of how to crack it!

2. RISKY BUSINESS

Although Mary's father is sympathetic, taking Roisin/Rachel with him on the submarine could put his whole mission at risk. Should he take her with him? Work in pairs or small groups to draw up a list of reasons for and reasons against why he should take Roisin/Rachel with him on his submarine. Try and think about the bigger picture – if his mission succeeds, he could save hundreds of thousands of lives. Is that more important than anything else?

3. GUNS: HELP OR HINDRANCE? NEWS REPORT ON BLOODY SUNDAY

On pages 220-221, Kevin steals the farmer's shotgun for protection. Why has he done this? Do you think it is brave or stupid? In small groups, debate why carrying a weapon such as a gun or a knife can make people more vulnerable to violent attacks.

4. DRAMA: TENSIONS RISING

There is a lot of action in pages 216–229, with the action jumping from scene to scene. How has Gallagher built tension in this section? Work in small groups and create a series of freeze frames to show the tension in each of the scenes. Make sure you use body language and facial expressions to illustrate the drama in each frame.

5. HOTSEAT: ROISIN

Before Commandant Flanagan arrives on page 237, Roisin/Rachel is alone and waiting to be rescued. What do you think is going through her mind? Create a series of questions to ask her and imagine how she might respond. Someone in the group should imagine they are Roisin/Rachel and respond to these questions in an interview.

6. DRAMA: INTERROGATION

Mary is proud of herself for withstanding the

interrogation by Kriminalkommissar Vogts. What do you think happened? What sort of questions do you think he asked? Do you think he managed to control his temper? In small groups, create a script for this scene and act out the interrogation between Mary and Vogts.

EPILOGUE

We are told that Kriminalkommissar Vogts was tried for war crimes. What does this mean? Create a speech arguing why Vogts (and the other men like him) should be convicted of war crimes. Imagine you will be delivering this speech in court, so keep your language formal and your tone appropriate – and try to use some persuasive devices in your writing.

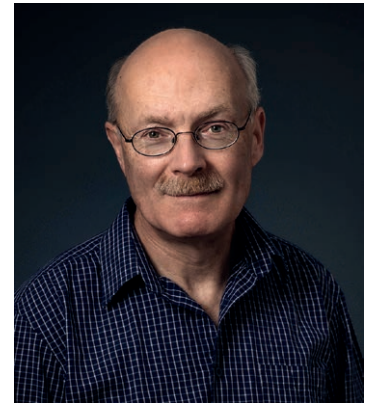
ADDITIONAL TEXT

The famous phrase 'Keep Calm and Carry On' was used on posters in Britain during the Second World War to try and encourage people to have hope. Imagine you are part of the Irish Resistance and have access to a printing press where you can print motivational posters / flyers to encourage people to have hope and try to resist German rule. What would these posters say? Would they be obviously anti-German or would they have a more secret message? Work on your own or in pairs to create one or two motivational posters.

HISTORICAL NOTE

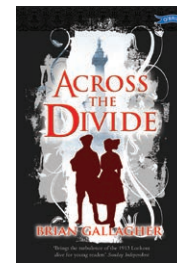
Operation Green was a real plan for the invasion of Ireland. Work in small groups to research this plan – what were the Nazis planning to do? Do you think it would have worked? Why? Present your findings to the rest of the class.

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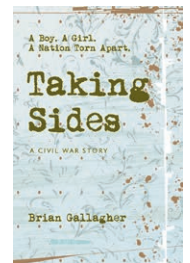


Brian Gallagher has written children's novels based on real historical events: *Resistance* is the first to feature an alternative history. You can find out more, and read extracts, on www.obrien.ie/childrens/brian-gallagher.

1913 Lockout



Civil War



1916 Easter Rising



World War II



War of Independence



1969 Belfast



War of Independence



Ontario, 1920

