



Winds of Change

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Teaching Guide

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RATIONALE AND THEMES

This guide has been designed to complement a class reading of the text in a way that brings the text alive whilst also enriching students' critical abilities. The activities aim to inspire young readers by encouraging them to question the characters' motivations and the overall themes. The guide 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 as well as those that encourage students to develop their ability to collaborate with others. This historical novel is based in Ireland around the time of the Land League and follows the lives of three friends from very different backgrounds. There's also a different narrative strand as a boy living in 2020 examines his family background which leads back to the events of the main narrative of the novel. Themes include:

- Friendship,
- Courage,
- Equality,
- Family,
- Justice.

SUMMARY

Winds of Change begins with three children living in County Westmeath during the Land Wars. There's Clara Parkinson, the daughter of wealthy landowners, Molly, the daughter of the local RIC sergeant and Aidan Daly, the son of local tenant farmers. Despite their different backgrounds, the three share a love of music and enjoy spending time in each other's company. However, due to the division in the country, they have to meet in secret. As tensions rise, life in rural Westmeath becomes more and more dangerous, but their friendship strengthens. In 2020, a young man is tracing his ancestors

back to these three friends and finds some fascinating stories.

APPROACH

This is a very enjoyable and entertaining read, with many opportunities for discussion on topics as diverse as family secrets, land ownership, class divides, inequality and injustice. This guide has divided the story into three sections and the activities and discussion points aim to initiate the development of an understanding of the themes, techniques and characterisation within the novel.

Section 1 Change in the Air. Pages 9 -92

SUMMARY

The year is 1880. 12-year-old Clara Parkinson is riding her father's horse through the family lands when she has a fall. As she lies injured, a local boy, Aidan Daly, comes to her aid. At first, he's worried he might get into trouble as he isn't meant to be on Clara's family land, but she soon puts his mind at ease. They agree to go fishing the following week.

Molly O'Hara, one of Aidan's school friends, is the daughter of the local RIC sergeant, which has led to some tension with other children at school. Despite his close friendship with Molly, Aidan doesn't mention his meeting with Clara.

The Land League is also the subject of conversation at the Daly and Parkinson homes – but Aidan and Clara's parents have very different views. It becomes clear to Aidan that his uncle is very involved in the more active protests against the landlords when he overhears a discussion between his father and his uncle Sean.

Clara and Aidan go fishing and get to know more details of each other's lives and families. Two local boys, the Tobin brothers, arrive and Aidan has to hide. They're keen to pick a fight with Clara, but she deals with them coolly, much to Aidan's delight. The next day at school, the Tobins pick on Molly, making her feel uncomfortable about her father's involvement in the Land Wars. However, Aidan soon comes to the rescue and eases the tension. Aidan lets Molly know about his friendship with Clara and she agrees to socialise together.

For the adults in the friends' lives, the conversation is centred around the Land Wars. Clara's father brings news about the retaliation against the tenants as part of the Land League. While Aidan is practising his tin whistle before meeting Clara and Molly, his uncle starts a discussion about how a letter published in the *Times* will start trouble in Ireland. They discuss how they will retaliate by shunning anyone who tries to help the landlords.

Aidan organises a meeting between Clara and Molly. Despite their nerves and different backgrounds, they're soon great friends. At school, Molly reveals to Aidan how much she is impressed by Clara's musical ability and how she has no airs or graces.

However, the good mood is spoiled when Molly's father rides past the school with a team of bailiffs on their way to an eviction. This prompts some harsh words from the Tobins, which greatly upsets Molly. Meanwhile, Aidan's uncle's involvement in local activism means Aidan has to miss school to help on the farm.

The next time the three friends meet, they clear the air and decide that despite everything going on, they will be friends – their music club will be a no-politics zone.

In a separate narrative thread, we jump into present-day Dublin, where Garrett Byrne

is researching his family tree for a school project. Through this section, he finds images of his great-grandfather and is surprised at the strong family resemblance. As part of his research, he interviews his granny, but it's clear there's something she's not telling him.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p. 12.** Why do you think someone might refuse help if it's offered? Aidan worries Clara might be resentful – do you think this is a common reaction? Has anyone ever refused your help? What happened? How did you feel?
- **Read p. 15.** Do you agree with Clara that it's rubbish to say you can't catch a fish as you're meant to be a lady? What other things have you heard said girls 'shouldn't do'? What do you think of this?
- **Read p. 16.** Why do you think some people believe people from different backgrounds shouldn't mix? Do you think it's right for there to be any divisions between friendship groups? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 21.** When his granny says 'just let the dead be' do you agree with her? Why do you think some people try to forget the past? Do you think this is a good idea? Why? What do you know about your own ancestors? Why do you think some people are interested in finding out about their ancestors?
- **Read p. 25.** Molly and her father are discussing the behaviour of the police. Do you agree with Molly when she says 'people expect the police to behave better than that'? Why do you think this? How do you think the police should behave? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 52.** Why do you think the Tobin twins are trying to make Molly uncomfortable? Why do you think no-one else in the class stands up for her? What do you think of the way Aidan draws the tension out of the situation? Was this the right way to stop the argument? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 62.** When Garrett is exploring his past, he finds that skills like cooeping no longer exist. He wonders if there will be a need for jobs like computer programming in the future. Do you agree? What other jobs do you think will disappear in time? Are there any jobs or professions you think will always exist? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 65.** Why is Molly so surprised her father is supportive of commemorating Daniel O'Connell? Is it important to name public places after great figures? Can you think of any public figures you

think should be commemorated but aren't? Why do you think this is?

- **Read p. 80.** What do you think about Molly's view that 'keeping things secret was actually part of the fun'? Do you agree with this? Why is it important that some things should never be kept secret?
- **Read p. 81.** Why do you think Molly feels guilty at ignoring her father? What do you think she should have done?

ACTIVITIES

1. GIRL POWER

On page 15, Clara tells Aidan that she's forbidden from catching fish because it's not a suitable activity for a lady. For years, girls have been forbidden from doing many things because they weren't considered 'suitable' – like voting, education, playing certain sports. In pairs or small groups, create a small handbook giving guidance the sorts of things you think are important for girls of Clara's age to do. Think about women famous for their courage, their kindness, their intelligence and determination. What sorts of things do you think they might have done as children?

2. RESEARCH

Clara and Aidan are living through difficult times. Ireland was divided – particularly in the countryside. But what were the Land Wars? Create a short presentation on the history of the Land Wars. Who was involved? What happened? How were things resolved?

3. WORD ROOTS

On page 29, Clara's father uses the word 'ostracise'. What does this mean? In small groups, research three other words we use today that originate from the ancient Greek. Create a poster for each word with information on what the word means and where its roots lie.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA BURNOUT

On page 37, Garrett's father has advised him 'You don't have to respond to a message at once.' Do you think this is good advice? Why do you think this? Create a leaflet with five pieces of advice on how to use social media and mobile phones in a way that is good for mental health.

5. FREEZE FRAME

On pages 46-49, the Tobin twins try to intimidate Clara. In groups of four, create three freeze frames showing what happened. In each frame, each character should also explain what they're thinking at the time.

6. LAND LEAGUE ACTIONS

In his speech to the Land League, Parnell instructs the people to shun anyone who takes the home of someone who has been evicted (page 69). What other methods could the people have used to show their displeasure? Do you agree with Aidan's uncle? In small groups, create a leaflet outlining what local people can do to protest against the actions of the landlords. Make sure they are legal!

Section 2 Escalation Pages 93 – 175

SUMMARY

Molly's home is firebombed. It's a terrifying experience, but luckily none of her family is hurt. However, there are some in the community who see it as revenge for Molly's father's role in local evictions. At school, Aidan defends Molly from the taunts and is attacked by the Tobin twins.

Clara also finds herself in a strange situation. On a trip to Dublin, she's shaken out of her comfort zone by an encounter with a woman begging.

When the friends next meet, Molly needs support so they break their rule and discuss the events. Despite their different views, they manage to be honest without causing offence to one another and they feel satisfied to have cleared the air.

Hallowe'en arrives. Tensions have grown and Aidan is disappointed when his father advises him not to visit Molly's house. He almost has an argument with his uncle. The land league wars are a topic of conversation at the Parkinson home as well. At the O'Hara household, Molly and her mother discuss Molly's worries about how everything is changing and how the local community are treating the family with more coldness. Clara is upset when she experiences open hostility from local youths when on a shopping trip to Mullingar. Back in Ballydowd, Aidan takes advantage of his uncle's absence to explore his home and makes an unsettling discovery.

Despite everything, the three friends continue to meet on Sunday afternoons in secret on the abandoned cottage on Clara's estate. There's much laughter as they share jokes and riddles. After a while, they are comfortable enough with each other to confide secrets. Aidan shares his ambition to become a draper. Molly's main concern is that the conflict over land ownership is sorted. Clara reveals her musical ambitions.

Molly finds herself at the mercy of the Tobins when Aidan is absent from school. She's shocked by the story of another eviction and speaks to her father about the unfairness of evicting a family just before Christmas. At the Parkinson home, Clara is enjoying scones and shortbread with her family as they plan their Christmas ball and festivities. Aidan has gone shopping in Mullingar with his uncle Sean and the rest of his family.

As Christmas approaches, the three friends are hoping for some relaxation. However, these hopes are dashed when there's an explosion at the Parkinson Christmas ball.

In 2020, Garrett moves closer to finding out about his great-grandfather Thomas Donnelly. However, despite having the name and place of birth, things are difficult. He explains to his parents who offer to help. His mother volunteers to travel with him and they take the train to Ballydowd to find out more. He tries not to get his hopes up, but things are looking promising.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p. 98.** With their home on fire, Molly is told to stay with her sister while her parents fight the blaze. Why is she correct to stay with her sister? Why do you think this was her mother's advice? Why is it important she listened to her mother? What could have happened if she had disobeyed?
- **Read p. 105.** Why do you think Aidan doesn't want to report on the Tobins? Do you think he should report them? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 109.** Do you agree with Clara that the extremists are taking things too far? Why do you think this? Do you think there are other ways to make their point? What could these be?
- **Read pp. 111-112.** Clara's Aunt Esther gives a begging woman some money, Clara's mother doesn't agree. What do you think about Clara's mother's reaction? Is she charitable? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.116.** What do you think about Molly's argument that the fault isn't always with the person carrying out the orders that it's with the people giving the orders? Do you think she is correct? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.119.** Aidan says 'I'm glad we spoke our minds.' Why do you think he says this? Do you think it was important that they air their views? Why do you think this?
- **Read p.122.** Why do you think Aidan believes his uncle was involved in the

attack on the RIC station? Should he have confronted him about it? Why do you think this? Do you think he should tell someone? Why?

- **Read p. 124.** What point is Esther making about the army having to protect the landlords? Do you think the situation would be so bad if the landlords had treated their tenants fairly? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 153.** What do you think of Molly's father's argument? Do you think this is a good idea? Why do you think this? Why do you think some people might object?
- **Read p. 160.** Aidan tries to gather the courage to tell his father about his dream of working with clothes. Why do you think he is so nervous? How do you think he should approach the subject? Why? What are your ambitions for the future?

ACTIVITIES

1. FIRE ATTACK

Molly's home is attacked by a firebomb. Write or create a news report, detailing what happened. Make sure you include eyewitness accounts and the views of people from the local community.

2. TRAIN JOURNEYS

Re-read page 110. Clara says she loves glimpsing other people's worlds from the train. Think about a journey you've taken where you were able to look into someone else's world. What did you see? Write a descriptive piece detailing everything you could see, hear and smell.

Extension: Read 'Adlestrop' by Edward Thomas. poetryfoundation.org/poems/53744/adlestrop. Write a poem imagining a train has stopped at a station somewhere. What can be seen? What sounds are there? Are there any smells? How do you feel?

3. LETTER FOR CHANGE

On page 118, Aidan explains his family's situation to the girls. Why is it so important that things change for families like Aidan's? Imagine you are one of Aidan and Molly's classmates. Write a letter to the local paper explaining your views. In your letter, remember to use persuasive language. Make sure you explain the importance of equality and how an equal society is good for everyone.

4. LANDLORD DEBATE

Clara defends her family on page 118 by declaring that there's 'good and bad on

both sides.' Do you agree? Based on what you've read and some research into the Land Leagues, create an argument either in support or against the evictions. Think about Mr Campbell's position. How should the situation change? Debate as a class.

5. HALLOWE'EN

Hallowe'en is a very important festival in Ireland – but why? What are the origins of the festival? In groups, create a short presentation for someone who has never heard of Hallowe'en. What is the history of Hallowe'en? What traditions do we still follow? What do they mean?

6. BREAKING IN

When his uncle is away, Aidan slips into his house for a look around. In small groups, freeze frame three scenes from Aidan's visit to Sean's home.

Extension: Imagine Aidan was discovered by his uncle. How would he explain his actions to his family?

7. CLARA

On pages 170-175, Clara and her family are hosting a ball. What do we learn about Clara in this passage? What sort of girl is she? Choose four adjectives to describe her personality. Write an analysis of her character, using at least three different quotes from the text to support your ideas.

Section 3 Consequences Pages 178 – end

SUMMARY

It's New Year's Eve and the three friends are hoping for a more peaceful year. Thankfully no one was killed in the bombing, but Aidan is troubled as he thinks his uncle may have been involved.

Despite their hopes, the year starts with difficulties for each of them. After more trouble from the Tobins at school, Molly decides to play truant from school to see an eviction for herself. She is shocked and deeply troubled by the violence she witnesses.

Clara questions her family about the inequalities she has witnessed in society, leading to a difficult conversation with her mother. Things get even worse when she finds herself in a very dangerous situation that affects the entire community.

Aidan tries to speak to his uncle about his concerns and is even more worried by his

uncle's responses. He's put in a very difficult situation when tensions reach dangerous levels in the community.

Molly has a daring plan to help Clara and resolve the situation. However, things go from bad to worse for the three friends when they place their trust in someone who betrays them, leading to a tragic ending.

In 2020, Garrett's mum asks the sacristan in Ballydowd to delve deeper into the maternal side of their ancestors. Her hunch proves correct and reveals there's an ancestor buried in the chapel grounds. A search through the archives in Mullingar reveals a link to the three friends and a very sad tale. At their ancestor's graveside, Garrett's granny thanks him for persevering and forcing her to accept the truth.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read pp. 180-181.** To convince the sacristan to help them, Garrett's mum says 'women have tended to be written out of history.' What do you think she means by this? Do you agree? Can you think of any women we should know more about? Why do you think this?
- **Read pp. 185-186.** Why are the other children treating Molly so badly? Do you think this is fair? Why? What are your thoughts on Aidan's responses that we are not responsible for the actions of our relatives?
- **Read p. 188.** Do you think it's a good idea for Molly to witness an eviction? Why do you think this? What does this tell us about Molly? What do you think she is going to see?
- **Read pp. 189-190.** Clara challenges her mother about the inequality in society. Clara's mother says that 'the world has never been fair' What do you think about her response? Do you think Clara's family should do more to help those less fortunate? Do you think we do enough to help those less fortunate? Why do you think this? What could be done differently?
- **Read pp. 192-193.** Do you think Aidan's uncle is threatening him? Why do you think this? Why do you think he might do this? What are your impressions of his uncle? What do you think Aidan should do? Why?
- **Read pp. 217-219.** Do you think Aidan needs to speak to an adult? Why do you think this? What do you think of Molly's reaction to Aidan's fears? How does this affect your view of Molly? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 238.** What do you think Garrett's

mum has found? Why do you think the writer has ended the chapter this way? Do you think it works in building tension? Why do you think this?

- **Read p. 246.** Garrett's mum explains that 'sometimes people dealt with tragedy by not talking openly about it.' What do you think of this strategy? Do you think it's healthy? Why do you think this?
- **Read p. 258.** Aidan is angered by his uncle's actions and wonders why 'fanatics always think they're right and that that excuses anything?' Why do you think he feels like this? Do you agree with him? Do you think he supports fanatics? Why? Do you agree with him? Why?
- **Read p. 260.** In 2020, Garrett's gran comes to terms with her past. But why do you think she hid the RIC members of her family? Do you think this was right? Do you think Molly should have been forgotten or do you think they should have been proud of her courage? Why do you think this? What lesson do you think Garrett should learn from this?

ACTIVITIES

1. SNOW DAY

On page 185, a flurry of snow makes Molly remember previous winters when there was heavy snow and school was cancelled. Imagine you have a snow day. What would you do? Write a piece of descriptive writing that describes the scene outside on a snowy day.

2. EVICTION DRAMA

From page 195, the Nolan family are evicted from their home. Create a news report for the evening news outlining what happened. Make sure you present the story in a balanced way with viewpoints from all sides. If it's a video report, is there a clip of the eviction happening?

3. PRISON DIARY

Imagine you are Clara. If you could write in a diary what would you say on the first night of your kidnapping? What happened? What are your main fears? Do you think they will hurt you? Do you think you should try and persuade them to let you go? Is there anything you could say? Write the diary entry.

4. KIDNAP APPEAL

Clara's parents are desperate for their daughter's release and make an appeal to the adults in the community. How do you think they should present their case? Do you

think people would be more sympathetic if they knew how kind Clara is? Do you think the Parkinsons should explain how they try to be fair landlords? Write a speech for them to use in their appeal for Clara's safety, using at least three persuasive techniques.

5. FIGHT!

When it becomes clear that their demands have not been met, the kidnappers are forced to take action. But do they all agree with killing Clara? In small groups, imagine you are the kidnappers. Some of you want to set Clara free. Others want to take more violent action. Act out the scenario.

6. UNCLE SEAN IN THE HOT-SEAT

In small groups, think about the questions you would ask Uncle Sean. Will he really betray his nephew? Is the cause more important than family? Take it in turns to imagine you are Uncle Sean and respond to the questions.

7. MOLLY'S PLAN

Molly plans to set fire to the barn so they can escape. Do you think this will work? In small groups, devise another plan for their escape. In your group, decide on which plan is the most likely to work. This can be a debate, but it's important to draw up a list of pros and cons for each.

8. MOLLY OBITUARY

Clara and Aidan want to write an obituary for Molly, detailing her positive qualities. Write the obituary for them, outlining four or five of Molly's most positive characteristics. Use quotes and evidence from the text to support your points.

Extension: Write an obituary for someone you admire you has died. What features of their life are important?

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Brian has written drama and documentaries for television, as well as many books for children, set at interesting

and challenging historical time. You can find more information at briangallagherwriter.com