



Fin M'Coul: The Giant of Knockmany Hill

Tomie dePaola (Retelling)

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Stories about the popular Irish giant, Fin M'Coul, have been handed down from generation to generation.

Fin M'Coul: The Giant of Knockmany Hill Details

Date : Published January 1st 1981 by Holiday House

ISBN : 9780823403851

Author : Tomie dePaola (Retelling)

Format : Paperback 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Cultural, Ireland, Fiction

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From Reader Review *Fin M'Coul: The Giant of Knockmany Hill* for online ebook

Ronda says

Fin M'Coul and his wife Oonagh live happy at the top of Knockmany Hill, their days filled with work--Fin working on the great causeway between Scotland and Ireland and Oonagh spinning and cooking and keeping house. All is well with these two friendly giants until Cucullin, the great bully, comes knocking on their door. Till now, Fin had been able to avoid the beating Cucullin is determined to give him, but he can't avoid him forever. Oonagh, with the aid of a fairy charm, sets about helping her husband outwit this giant bully--with riotous results.

Great to use around St. Patrick's day or for a series of readalouds featuring folk tales from different cultures. Also offers a good chance to introduce how legends can make for entertaining tales about how something is created. I showed the students a picture of the real Giant's Causeway and we talked about other geological formations that have fun legends associated with their beginnings. Be sure to take time to enjoy DePaola's illustrations--which are humorous in and of themselves--especially when you look closely at the details. Still wondering what the leprechauns do with those teeth. . . .

Kelly says

The adults really enjoyed this one with gorgeous pics and a very clever leading lady!

Sidney Chumbler says

This is another folk tale I have never heard of. It is about a giant who is hiding from another mean giant who has beaten up every other giant but him. This giant is so scared of him, but his wife comes up with a sneaky plan to defeat the mean giant so that they can live peacefully. This book is a great example of woman power and how to be creative in any situation. My favorite part is when she makes her husband dress up and act like a baby to scare the mean giant. She is so creative I love it!

Stephanie Littig says

Fin was scared of the giant and always trying to outrun him and get home with his wife. When he realized he could not outrun him, his wife hatched a plan to trick the giant. It worked and the giant left Fin alone from there on out. Cute book. Gives a good lesson about treating others nicely.

Malbadeen says

Silly wimpy sissyninny of a giant is prodded into facing his foe the giant, Cucullin by his wife and thanks to

her smarts he prevails.

It's the plot of many a sit com, I believe:

1 stupid husband (preferably fat) + 1 smart wife (preferably thin) = 1 hour of non-stop knee slapping laughter. Except that it's actually entertaining in this book.

Jc says

The lovable Irish giant of legends makes an appearance in this book.

Dolly says

Several years ago we read a different version of this story in the book, *Mrs. McCool and the Giant Cuhullin: An Irish Tale* by Jessica Souhami and so this story was very familiar to us. But we love Tomie dePaola's illustrations and we read as many of his stories as we can find at our local library. We thought it would be fun to read this in honor of St. Patrick's Day this year.

This version of the story has Mr. dePaola's inimitable illustrations and a short, entertaining narrative. I'm not sure which of the two stories we prefer, but we enjoyed reading them both together.

Tanner Markle says

Title: *Fin M'Coul The Giant of Knockmany Hill*

Author: Tomie De Paola

Genre: Non-European Folktale

Theme(s): Helping others, facing your fears

Opening line/sentence: In olden times, when Ireland's glens and woods were still filled with fairies and leprechauns, giants, too, lived on that fair Emerald Isle.

Brief Book Summary: A giant by the name of Fin M'Coul lives with his wife Oonagh. One day Fin discovers a fearsome giant named Cucullin is set to fight him. Although afraid, Fin faces Cucullin with the support of his wife to cleverly outsmart the giant and send him on his way. Fin & Oonagh proceed to live on happily.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1: LibraryThing-

Tomie dePaola's retelling of the legendary Irish giant, Fin M'Coul, has captured the imaginations of children for decades. In his characteristically primitive style, dePaola's illustrations support the story of how run-from-a-fight giant Fin M'Coul and his clever wife Oonagh got the better of bully giant Cucullin one day. The story's text is consistently displayed in equal-sized, scroll-work frames at the bottom of each page. Readers will enjoy adding a lilt to the Gaelic-inspired dialogue, and listeners will enjoy comparing the size of everyday objects with that of the giants. Though *The Giant of Knockmany Hill* is a fun example of dePaola's work, it is not a necessary purchase.

Professional Recommendation/Review #2: LibraryThing-

Fin M'Coul is the story of an Irish giant and his wife who must stand up to a bully. The characters embody good or evil, never a mixture. Fin and Oonagh embodied good, while Cucullin was evil. Cucullin isn't an evil extreme like many "bad guys" in fairytales are, but more like a bully that young children can identify with. The plot is very simple. Cucullin was coming and Fin needed to stop him from hurting him. There are little episodes that move along the plot until Fin finally beats Cucullin. The whole plot is thought of by his wife, making a smart female character that many fairytales have. I can see the story as a warning to children not to bully. The illustrations are full page. They convey the action of the text throughout the story. They are brightly colored conveying the fairy-tale atmosphere of the book. This is a great book to have in an elementary library. Except for some complicated names that younger children might have trouble with, the words are easy and could be a great book to help children learn to read at a higher level.

Response to Two Professional Reviews: I agree with the reviews when they acknowledge the fun storyline and easy ability for children to relate to the story. I overall thought the story was a great early read. Where I disagree with the reviews is when they state not to buy this book. I believe this is a great book for your classroom.

Evaluation of Literary Elements: I enjoyed how Tomie De Paola played with gender roles throughout this book. You can see the husband working while the wife stays at home then a few pages later the husband is in baby clothes while the wife deals with the threatening giant. I also find this "bully" figure to be easily relatable for young students.

Consideration of Instructional Application: I would use this story to develop handwriting skills. There are many silly/complicated names contained throughout this book. By taking these names and adding your students and a few other commonly known silly names students can practice writing out the names and drawing a picture to represent that name.

Paula says

My advanced students created a readers theater with this story and they had so much fun!! It is a fun story to create a readers theater with.

Jeanne O'Hara says

Genre: folk tale

Tomie dePaola is a wonderful illustrator and writer. He likes to write about his ancestry, which is Italian and Irish. This book is based on an Irish folktale. Finn is a giant who lives a peaceful life on Knockmany Hill. His one fear is another giant, Cucullin, who lives on a neighboring hill. When Cucullin comes to pick a fight with Finn, Finn's wife Oonagh ends up tricking him into leaving without a fight.

This book is a wonderful read aloud for St. Patrick's Day. It is a folk tale, I could have a pre-read discussion questions: what is a folk tale? Have you heard other folk tales? How is it different from a fairy tale or tall tale? It is a nice change from dePaola's Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato.

Other ways this book could be used in interactive read aloud is to discuss the plot twist at the end. Other questions: Why is Finn afraid of Cucullin? Should he fear him? Do you think they will fight? Who will win

the fight? Who or what finally defeats Cucullin?

This book would be included in a 2-4 grade classroom library. Although it is a picture book, the text is more appropriate for a fluent reader. For read alouds, I would include all grade levels. It can also be included in a genre study as an example of a folk tale.

Amy says

The only thing I know about Fin M'Coul is that a pub in the University District near my job is named after him. Oh, and that he was an Irish folk hero for some reason. I picked this book up for the kids because we like Tomie dePaola, and because I thought that this work might expose the kids (and me) to folk heroes from another country.

I think that this book started out kind of slowly for the kids, but as the story unfolded the kids really began to enjoy the humor, and ended up liking the book. My niece noticed all kinds of funny things in the pictures, and my nephew enjoyed how the bully Cucullin was cleverly tricked by Fin M'Coul and his wife Lovely Oonagh. I enjoyed the story and the pictures, too, but I also enjoy that I now know that Fin M'Coul is more than just a pub that serves mediocre food.

Vicki Kier says

Tomie dePaola's retelling of the legendary Irish giant, Fin M'Coul, has captured the imaginations of children for decades. In his characteristically primitive style, dePaola's illustrations support the story of how run-from-a-fight giant Fin M'Coul and his clever wife Oonagh got the better of bully giant Cucullin one day. The story's text is consistently displayed in equal-sized, scroll-work frames at the bottom of each page. Readers will enjoy adding a lilt to the Gaelic-inspired dialogue, and listeners will enjoy comparing the size of everyday objects with that of the giants. Though *The Giant of Knockmany Hill* is a fun example of dePaola's work, it is not a necessary purchase. (Ages 4-8.)

Connie says

First let me note that if you want to read up more about this character of folklore you should use a more common rendition of his name such as Finn McCool or Fionn mac Cumhaill. If you believe the stories, he was singlehandedly responsible for much of the geography of Ireland and Scotland, in the same way that Paul Bunyan is responsible for the Great Lakes!

The story is hilarious, from Fin's worries to his tricky solution to his problem of not wanting to fight, and the illustrations only enhance the words.

I will note that, like most traditional stories, there is some gratuitous violence, but what can you do? That's how the story goes. Besides, most children are such bloodthirsty beasts that they're quite happy with fingers getting bitten off, so long as it's clearly over-the-top and unrealistic :)

However, if that's the sort of thing that concerns you then you should definitely read this book before you

buy it.

Mary says

Always a favorite at school for St. Paddy's Day!

Melanie says

What a cute Irish tale. Hooray for all those women who help their husbands work out their problems!

Re-read in 2011 preschool.
