

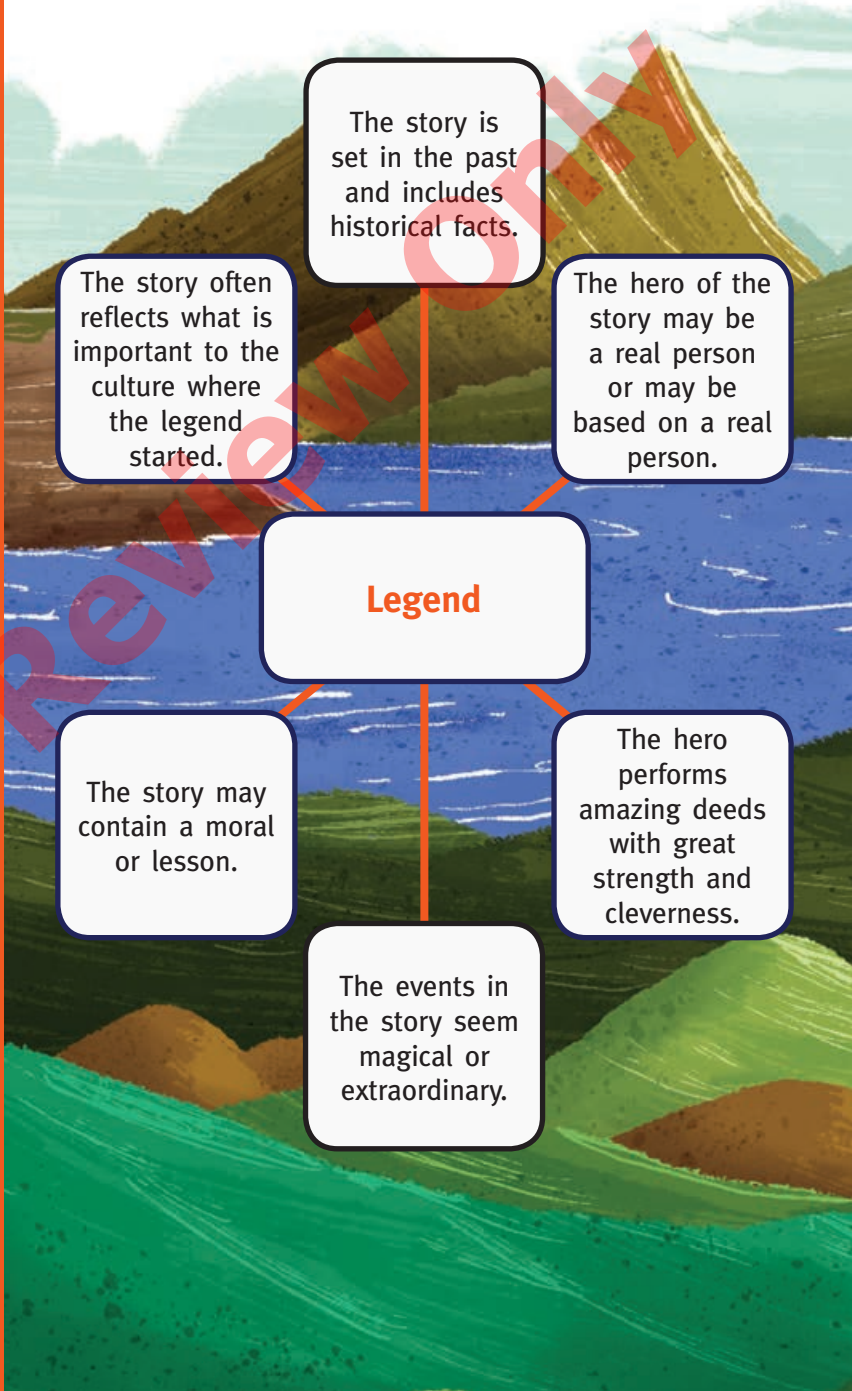
Finn McCoul

And the Red Giant



Legend

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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A Bridge to Scotland

“Why are you still awake?”

Liam quickly leaped off the windowsill and ran into bed at the sound of the booming voice. He covered himself with his blanket. He was perfectly still, barely daring to breathe. *If I lie still, he thought, no one will know that I'm awake.*

The door flew open, and the lights flicked on. Still, Liam refused to even breathe too loud. Heavy footsteps stomped next to his bed.

Liam knew this meant trouble.

“It’s after midnight. I sent you to bed hours ago,” Uncle Aidan said, pulling the blanket off of Liam’s head.

“I was watching for Dad’s car,” Liam said, motioning to the window.

“Liam, your Da is working overnight. He won’t be back till morning,” Uncle Aidan reminded him.

“This room is strange,” Liam said. “It smells different. There are weird shadows. I miss my own bed.”

“It’s only for a little while. Until your Da can find a new job,” Uncle Aidan said. Liam looked toward the window again. He still felt unsure about staying in Uncle Aidan’s house at night. It always smelled like mothballs—and also burned potatoes, mostly because Uncle Aidan wasn’t a good cook.

“You staring at that window reminds me of someone,” Uncle Aidan said. “Did I ever tell you about Finn McCoul?”

“Who? Mac Cool?” Liam asked.

“Mc-COWL,” Uncle Aidan pronounced.

“Is he one of your and Dad’s friends from back in Ireland?” Liam asked.

“Close.”

Then Uncle Aidan started to tell Liam about Finn McCoul.



Finn McCoul was the biggest, strongest giant in all of Ireland. In days of old, he ruled the roost in that green land. Finn lived at the top of Knockmany Hill with his clever wife, Oona. From the hill, he could look out and see all of his territory.

One day, Finn was looking out over his lands from atop Knockmany Hill. He stood on the hill and thought and thought. He thought from day until night, just looking out into the distance. It was as if he was waiting for trouble to happen.

Finally, Oona got annoyed.

“Stop standing there!” Oona yelled.

“It’s tiring being the best at everything. I want a new adventure,” Finn said.

“What does that have to do with you gazing out into the distance?” Oona asked.

“It’s time to expand my land,” Finn said. “I should build a great stone bridge over to Scotland. Over there.”

Finn pointed off into the distance where he had been staring for days. There, across the water, was Scotland.

Oona was clever enough to know that, when Finn set his mind to something, there was no changing it. But she also knew that building a bridge might not be the best idea.

“Don’t you go looking for trouble,” Oona warned Finn. But Finn was already off to gather the Fianna.



Finn had a group of loyal warriors called the Fianna. When Finn went on adventures, these men were always at his side. When Finn wasn't on an adventure, the warriors would practice their sword fighting and write and recite poetry.

*“Purity of our hearts,
strength of our limbs,
action to match our speech.”*

This is our motto, these words we preach.”

The Fianna said this to each other as they practiced their sword-fighting skills. The motto always managed to inspire Finn.

“Followers! I have decided to add more land to my territory. Come help me build a bridge to Scotland,” Finn said. “It will be called the Giant’s Causeway.”





“Wait a minute!” Liam said.

Uncle Aidan stopped in the middle of his story.

“The Giant’s Causeway? Isn’t that the grocery store downtown?” Liam asked.

“No. It’s actually large stone columns in Northern Ireland. They link onto each other and stretch out into the sea,” Uncle Aidan explained.

“Link? Like blocks?” Liam asked.

“Kind of,” Uncle Aidan said.

“How can rocks link like blocks?” Liam said.

“Some say the causeway was caused by a volcanic eruption, but I’m telling you how it was really made,” Uncle Aidan said. “Now, as I was saying ...”

The Flight of Finn

Finn went to the Fianna and said, “Come help me build a bridge to Scotland. It will be called the Giant’s Causeway.”

The Fianna didn’t have much else to do. There were no wars to fight or new poetry to recite, so they put all their effort into building the bridge. In no time, the project was under way. The warriors cut huge columns of stone. Then Finn carried the pillars out and stood them side by side in the water.

While the Fianna cut rocks for the pillars, Finn decided to work on a motto of his own. Loud enough for all to hear, he sang:

“I never lose. I always win.

For I am Finn McCoul of Ireland.

I’m big and strong and tough and mighty,

And no man out there would dare to fight me!”

Now Finn sang his song so loud that his voice carried across the water. Over in Scotland, another giant heard Finn’s words. He saw Finn and the men building the bridge. This other giant was not only larger than Finn but stronger, too. Finn’s words made him very angry.

“No man would dare to fight you? We’ll see about that, Finn McCoul!” roared the Red Giant of Scotland.

