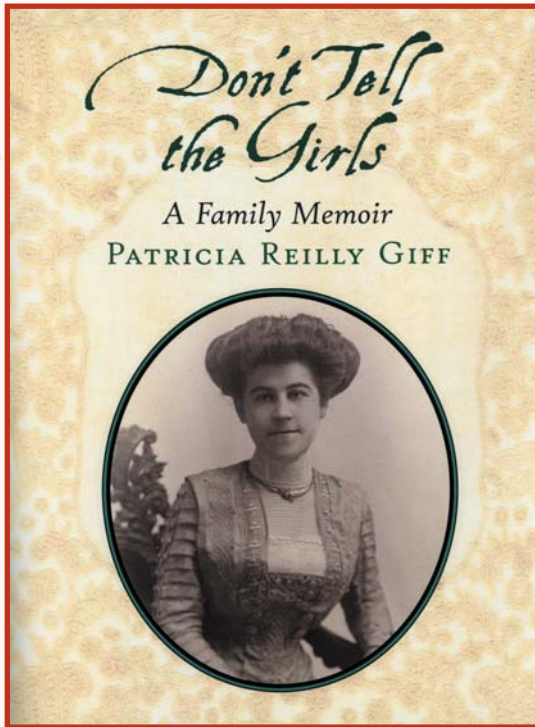


EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Don't Tell the Girls: A Family Memoir

by Patricia Reilly Giff
ISBN 0-8234-1813-8
Hardcover, \$16.95, 131 pages
Ages 10 & up

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this sometimes funny, sometimes wistful memoir, two-time Newbery Honor Book award-winning author Patricia Reilly Giff discovers surprising information about, as well as unexpected connections to, her Irish ancestors. Using family stories as a starting point, she follows clues to search out her family's past.

This takes her to libraries and research centers, homes of relatives, and finally to Ireland. While chronicling this journey, she shares cherished family photos and documents, many from her own collection.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After earning a B.A. degree from Marymount College, Patricia Reilly Giff took the advice of the school's dean and decided to become a teacher. During the twenty years of her teaching career, she earned an M.A. from St. John's University and a Professional Diploma in Reading and a Doctorate of Humane Letters from Hofstra University. When she's not writing, she enjoys reading in the bathtub and going to the movies and eating popcorn. She and her husband reside in Trumbull, Connecticut. They have three children and five grandchildren.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This educator's guide is designed to incorporate *Don't Tell the Girls* into an already established curriculum about family history, Irish history, or immigration. Educators may choose to follow the lesson plan exactly, or they may choose to include activities that tie in closely with their planned curriculum.

TEACHING IDEAS

Genealogy & Family Ties • History of American Immigration



Holiday House
www.holidayhouse.com



The author in front of Nana's house in the 1940s

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Have your students read the book according to the chapter groupings below. They may read during silent reading time in the classroom or at home. Some questions are provided to quiz them on the reading material and some can be used as a starting point for discussion.

READING ASSIGNMENT #1

Nana's Stories

- What does the title of the book mean? Who are “the girls”?
- On Christmas, Nana throws all the wrapping paper and ribbons into the fireplace. What else does she throw into the fireplace?
- The author tells us Nana is “neat,” and the author’s mother says Nana is “flighty.” Which characteristic do you think she is?

READING ASSIGNMENT #2

Mary's Picture

- Does Albert make the author cut her hair?
- Why does Nana cut her face out of family photographs?
- What are in the boxes in Nana’s attic?
- What is a hair rat?

Mary's Sketches

- What is a persimmon? Has anyone tasted one?
- What can we infer about Mary Redfern and Nana’s relationship?
- Why does the author look for more information about Mary’s life?
- Mary was very young when she died. What caused her death?

READING ASSIGNMENT #3

Jennie's Shawl

- Nana was part of a large family of fifteen children. What would it feel like to have so many brothers and sisters?
- Who is Jennie?
- Where is Coney Island?
- Why is the shawl so important to the author?

Jennie's Storm

- Why were the baby chicks brought into the house?
- Why did the girls visit the cemetery?

After this reading assignment, it may be a great idea to ask your librarian to show your students how to use microfilm to research events that occurred on their birthdays. Have your students fill out work sheets with various facts about “their” day: the weather, the movies playing, the major world events taking place, how much the newspaper cost.

READING ASSIGNMENT #4

Michael's Story

- What is a blacksmith?
- Using the map on page 85 of the book, locate County Longford in Ireland. Is it on the shore or is it landlocked? What kind of jobs could people have there (e.g., farming, raising livestock, sheepherding)?
- What do you know about Ireland?
- What happened in Irish history that made so many people leave Ireland and come to America?
- What do you think happened to Michael? How do you think Jennie and her family felt when they arrived and he wasn’t at the dock to meet them?

Michael's Horses

- On a trip to the library, the author learns that many immigrants arrived on ships. What do you think life was like while traveling overseas on a ship for many weeks?
- Use the librarian's guidelines on page 79 to show students where each port is located in Ireland. From which port do you think people from County Longford sailed? Where in America could they land to make the trip shorter?
- What problems did the author encounter when she was looking for Michael Monahan's name in the ships' lists?

READING ASSIGNMENT #5

Margaret's Birth Certificate

- Nana had many names in her lifetime. What does your name and nickname mean? Do you like your name?
- Who is Brian Boru?
- What is Joyce House?
- Locate Dublin and Cornacullew on the map on page 85 of the book. Now locate these two cities on a map of Ireland. Follow the author's journey from Dublin to Cornacullew. What cities does she pass on the way?

Endings

- How does the author feel when she sees the house in Cornacullew?
- What is the real story of Michael Monahan? How does it make you feel?
- What is the symbolism of the horseshoe the author and her sister find years later?

READING ASSIGNMENT #6

Nana's Cup

- What is Nana's cup?
- The author recalls the beginning of World War II. Where is Pearl Harbor?
- Nana sings "The White Cliffs of Dover" to the author to comfort her. What is the song about? Where is Dover?
- How did the author feel when the war was over?

VOCABULARY

This is a small team activity. A vocabulary list could be distributed to each team, making each team responsible for one or two words. Homework or class time could be used for the teams to look up meanings for each term. The meanings would be shared by each team with the class and recorded. A study sheet for all the terms should be distributed. Assessment of the students' vocabulary skills could be conducted with a term-and-definition-matching test. Here is a sample list of terms.

pageboy

parasol

caul

diphtheria

amnion

litter basket

census

Gaelic

dickey

brogue

sarsaparilla

foal

aigrette



(From left to right) The author, her sister, Anne, Nana, and cousins Billy and Franklin, 1943

BEYOND THE BOOK

Family Trees

Throughout the book, the author mentions many different family members, including their birth and death dates. You may ask your students to draw their own family trees, starting with simple questions such as: How many brothers and sisters do you have? How many brothers and sisters do your mom and dad have? Do you have any cousins? How old are these family members? Once the students have names and ages, have them write each name and age on a piece of paper and attach it to branches on a tree. Display the family trees in your classroom or school. To help instruct the students, you may want to make your own family tree, or you can make one for the author based on the information provided in the book.

To enrich the family tree, ask your students to find a storyteller in their family. It could be their mother or father, a grandparent, or an aunt or uncle. Some good questions to ask the storyteller can be found in the book: How much did it cost to mail a postcard when you were my age? What movies were popular? What did you do for fun? Tell me about a happy time in our family, and tell me about a tragedy. Use the question ideas in the chapter entitled “Jennie’s Shawl” for more inspiration.

Photo Work

Pictures tell a thousand words. Students may be reluctant to bring in their own family photographs, particularly old ones. Find a book with many old photos in it and have students create a story around one photo—they should create names, ages, and occupations for the people in the photograph, and a place where the photo was taken. Was the photo taken to commemorate a special event?

Immigration and the American Dream

“Michael’s Story” provides a wonderful opportunity to introduce Irish history and American immigration. You may show a video about Ellis Island or tie this book’s literature lesson into a social studies lesson.

Read or play a recording of the song “The White Cliffs of Dover” in the classroom. Provide students with a copy of the lyrics and have them respond to the following questions in an essay. How does the song make you feel? What other song makes you feel a similar way?



The girls: Alice, Jeanne, and Marjorie, 1920



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