

SAVING TIR NA NOG

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

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Faith, hope, and love

Prompts for Discussion and Writing

How can we overcome prejudice?

The *Sidhe* view the Fomorians, the *Fir Bolgs*, the *Sidhe Sluagh* and even the *Far Darrig* with distrust, generally believing the worst in them. They make very little effort to understand why these creatures behave the way they do. Their views toward one another have fueled violence, conflict, and war. What does this tell us about prejudice? How does Grania challenge these perspectives? How can we overcome prejudice?

Good vs. Evil, the problem with labeling others.

We learn in the prologue that most *Tuath*, also known as the *Sidhe*, are good and kind, like the Goddess Danu, but they don't always treat others with kindness. For example, Bevyn drags the *Far Darrig* Perth by his collar, and Fianna slams him against a brick wall. What does this tell you about people we label as "good?"

The *Far Darrig* Perth describes several ways in which the nightmares he causes help children. The Fomorians, who once enslaved the *Sidhe*, end up helping them in the end. When Grania and Dain confront one another, they are both trying to save their mothers. What does this tell us about those we deem "evil?" What dangers lie in labeling others?

Pigeonholing

When the *Sidhe* visit *Ogham* they are gifted knowledge and skills that will help them fulfill their purpose. This purpose becomes part of their identity. “She’s a guardian.” “He’s a warrior.” “I’m a druid.” Kane gave Fianna a hard time when she tried to teach Grania how to heat water. He warned her she was a guardian, not a druidess. Ainle didn’t believe Grania could catch him if he fell while shapeshifting mid-air because she wasn’t a warrior. Still, she generated a solution that would enable her to complete the task. Finally, in the battle at the end, Grania tells Maolisa and Niamh they were meant to reflect all three (faith, hope, and love). She didn’t believe they should limit themselves to just one, even though each girl’s purpose had been clearly established in *Ogham*. She taught the *Sidhe* to question what they perceived as their limits. Why is this important? Can you think of a time when others doubted your abilities and you proved them wrong? What limits have you placed on yourself? Is it possible you aren’t as limited as you previously believed?

Lessons we learn from board games

Sidhe warriors are required to master Fidchell before they go into battle. Several lessons are drawn from this game. Those lessons are applied to the battle at the end; lessons like thinking three steps ahead, how it helps when you outnumber your opponents, and how you might have to create a diversion or sacrifice some of your defenders in order to win. Of all the lessons Ainle learned from Fidchell, he claimed this was the most important one: “There are an infinite amount of possibilities, more choices than any one person can possibly comprehend.” Why do you think that is? What sort of lessons have you learned from board games? How have they helped you in “real” life?

Environmentalism

The *Sidhe* age slowly in the human realm, but they don’t really age in *Tir na nOg*. Why is that? What is different between the environment in *Tir na nOg* and the environment in the human realm? How does the environment in *Tir na nOg* help them stay healthy and live longer? Can you name some activities in the human realm that threaten our environment? How does this impact our health? What can we do to improve the environment so we can stay healthy and live longer?

Our dependence on technology

There are no cell phones, no cars, no television, and no electricity in *Tir na nOg*. Grania and her friends still manage to communicate, eat, drink, train, and play without this technology. In fact, they don't seem to miss this technology at all. Their lives are simpler but more advanced in a lot of ways. Technology may help us, but there are some ways in which advancements in technology limit us. Can you identify a few? Imagine an entire week without technology, as if the whole world were experiencing a power outage. How would you communicate? How would you study? What would you eat? What would you do for fun?

What is in a name?

Names are extremely important in this book. The names chosen for these characters quite literally mean warrior, fighter, guardian, violence, evil, darkness, faith, hope, and love in Irish. Names are equally important in our world. What is the origin of your name (ie: Old English, Irish, French, Hebrew, Arabic) What does your name mean? How is this meaning consistent with who you are... or is it? Why did your parents choose this name for you? If you don't know, do a little research, record your thoughts, and report back to the class.

The Kindness Challenge

Every shunned creature in this story seems to be drawn to Grania; the *Fear Gorta*, the *Far Darrig*, the *Kelpie*, the *Ellen Trechend*, and the *Dullahan*. Why do you think this is? There were several instances where her kindness and compassion diffused a tense situation or resolved a threat. Her kindness and compassion also transformed relationships. Countless lives were saved in the end. Why is kindness so important? Identify three kind things you can do. Make a prediction about what might happen if you complete those kind acts. Give yourself three days to complete the tasks, then report back to the class. Answer these questions: How did this kind act make me feel? How did the other person (or people) react? In what ways might this improve our relationship? In what ways might this change their behavior? Is kindness contagious?

Self-sacrifice

“Would you sacrifice your life for those you love?” That is a pretty tall order for a twelve-year-old. Why must Grania sacrifice her life? Do you see a connection between this sacrifice and her purpose to reflect kindness and love? How does this sacrifice empower the other *Sidhe*? Do you think the *Sidhe* would have won that battle at the end if she hadn’t made that sacrifice? While there are people in our world who are willing to sacrifice their lives to save us (people like police officers, soldiers, and fire-fighters), there are other, less dangerous forms of self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice occurs when a person gives up her interests or wishes in order to help others or to support an important cause. You might give up watching TV for a few hours on Saturday so you can pick up litter in your neighborhood, to collect food for a homeless shelter, to rake your grandmother’s lawn, or even to save worms that washed up on the sidewalk. In each instance, you have sacrificed your own interest in watching TV so you can help others or to support an important cause. Can you think of a time when you gave up doing something you were interested in so you could help someone? If not, can you write up a plan to do so, offering enough details to answer the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” questions?