

POST PRIMARY LEVEL AWARD

Cold by Evelyn Hamilton

Adjudicator's Comments:

This is a very impressive piece of writing.

The title 'Cold' refers to the apparently cold manner of the main character who is described as being "cold, detached" in her response to her husband's passing some hours earlier, and it also refers to her cold demeanour at her husband's funeral. Her grown children wept, but "she was cold". Even her "neighbours thought that she was a cold woman".

But appearances can be deceptive, and rarely does the outward show reveal the inner feelings. Despite her children's and her neighbours' perceptions, she has deep feelings for her husband that are evident in the significance she gives to their last moments together, when, gripping each other's hands was the only means of expressing their mutual love for each other. It is a love that she chose not to display in the form of grief at the funeral, but is a love that will, hopefully, sustain her in the aftermath of her loss.

This story also shows how 'touch' can sometimes have the capacity to elicit a stronger emotional experience in a relationship than that of verbal or eye contact. The act of 'touching' is referred to tenderly on four occasions in the words "gripped", "feel" and "grasp", and counterbalances the image of coldness in a see-saw of emotions and impressions

Apart from its finely balanced structure, this story is graced with some very evocative images that are not just an adornment to it but are an intrinsic part of the way in which the story is told: "the still-warm husk of her husband", "row after row of empty faces", "before the sun had even made light of the sun", "the dew dyed red and gold by the glorious sun", etc.

Well done, Evelyn.

- COLD -

Evelyn Hamilton,

4th Year Sligo Grammar School

SHE WAS WITH him when he left.

Middle of the night, pitch black; something woke her. His breathing was slow, his heart fluttering like a bird, and she felt him trying to speak. They gripped each others hands. Softly, gently, he left her.

She stayed with the empty, still-warm husk of her husband until the sun rose. She was cold, detached, running the memories through her mind. When the alarm clock rang, she left the room, and made the call.

During the funeral, with flowers and speeches and row after row of empty faces, she smiled. All she thought of was the feel of his hand in hers, the many unsaid things which had passed through that final grasp in the night. Her

children, grown children now, wept. She was cold.

One week later, before the sun had even made light of the moon, she walked up the hill to his grave. Sitting in the dew soaked grass, she waited. Her children didn't understand. The neighbours thought she was a cold woman.

The sun was rising now, thin golden rays over the mountain. And someone gripped her hand. Warmth began to radiate up, enveloping her arm and around her body. She was warm again.

Her eyes were hot, two droplets of water running down. They fell into the dew, dyed red and gold by the glorious sun. They were, in the end, her last gift to a husband who left without saying goodbye.

PRIMARY LEVEL AWARD

The Key by Domhnall McHugh
Adjudicator's Comments:

This is a well-written, well-crafted story with an interesting twist at the end. There is a very effective fusion of description and natural dialogue that gives the story a momentum, pace and realism befitting its story-line.

The plot and structure are interesting. In the first part of the story, the main characters, David and Daniel, are with their classmates and their teacher going to and arriving at the castle on Treasure Island. The story closes with them rejoining their classmates and teacher. In between, we have the pivotal part of the story when David and Daniel leave their group on an unplanned, separate adventure during which they discover "The key". This discovery links in with their teacher's revelations at the end of the story of the reported existence of a treasure chest that is in need of a missing key.

The reader is left with the lively but baffling feeling of conjecture. What happened next? Conjecture has rarely diminished a good story, and that is the case with this story also.

Well done, Domhnall.

THE KEY

Domhnall Mc Hugh
4th class, St Joseph's,
Killenumery, Dromahair

THE SENIOR room in St Joseph's NS agreed that it would be a good idea to go on a History trip to Treasure Island off the coast of county Leitrim. They had spent the last week learning about castles of Ireland and famous tombs. They got a bus to

farmer's pier where they caught the 11 AM ferry to the island. Mr. Higgins their teacher warned them to be careful and not to stray away.

It was a, bright, sunny day, without a cloud in the sky. They saw a castle in the distance. The walls were covered with ivy, the roof had fallen in. Moss had grown on the roof and walls. Mr Higgins showed the class all the rooms in the castle explaining each one. The class and Mr Higgins went out the back door. And then they went to the servant's quarters, where they gathered in the kitchen.

David and Daniel strolled slowly behind the others. As they were about to follow the class, David spotted a pathway blocked off to the right hand side of the door. He looked at Daniel. "I wonder what is down there, we should go and take a look" and without looking back they started off down the path. The boys pulled back the hedge and bushes and weeds carefully. Behind it was dark, narrow, musty and low. The boys had to stoop carefully so they didn't bump their heads. David took out his mobile phone and turned it on. It lit up the cave. Suddenly, a rat scurried across the floor. It darted into the hole. In the brightness Daniel saw a bat hanging upside down. "David" he said "I want to get out of here. These cobwebs are giving me the creeps.

There was light up ahead. The boys looked at each other and walked quickly

toward it. Suddenly David felt something hard under his shoe. He shone the phone onto the floor. There was a large, rusty, old key lying in the mud. He stooped down and picked it up. "What is this?" he asked. "A key" Daniel answered. "I wonder what will it open?" David queried. "Maybe there is something else on the floor" Daniel suggested. They continued to search the dusty, rocky ground but found nothing else. The boys walked towards the light. It seemed to take forever to reach the end.

Daniel and David's eyes hurt as they came into the bright sunshine. Together they looked at the key. The rust was falling off in flakes. It looked very old and was too big to fit in their pockets. "We should get back to the others Daniel said. "Mr Higgins will kill us if he misses us. "You are right" said David. "We need to sneak in quietly" Daniel suggested. They walked back up the path and joined the rest of the class. Mr Higgins was standing with his back to them telling the rest of the class about the legend of the missing treasure. He explained that many years ago pirates attacked the old castle treasure and stole many things including jewellery and diamonds. He continued to explain that the pirates were unable to open the chest as they had lost the key. "It was never found" Mr Higgins concluded. David and Daniel looked at each other and smiled both thinking the same thing. Where could the treasure be!

SPECIAL LITERARY AWARD 2016

How the 1916 rising has impacted life in Ireland in 2016 by Lorna Devine

Adjudicator's Comments:

The Leitrim Guardian is to be commended on its decision to commemorate the 1916 Rising with an Essay Competition for young writers.

The title of the essay presented all of the entrants with a tough but exciting challenge. It was one that Lorna Devine handled most fruitfully.

Having set the Rising in context, she went on to argue that while people today may no longer share "Pádraig Pearse's romantic ideals", the Rising has impacted modern Ireland in a significant way. It's a view that she expressed fluently and persuasively, citing examples of where this impact is most apparent. Well done, Lorna

HOW THE 1916 RISING HAS IMPACTED LIFE IN IRELAND IN 2016

Lorna Devine
Transition Year
Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown
Co Roscommon

THE 1916 RISING had a significant impact in the way Ireland is run today. The aftermath of the Rising, Padraig Pearse's ideas, Ireland in the 60's, 70's and 80's and the proclamation, all originated from the 1916 Rising and has effected the way we celebrate the 1916 Rising and how the country is run.

At first the majority were against the rising however, their opinions swiftly

changed in the aftermath. When the leaders of the Rising and eight other men and women who were associated with the rising were executed, the people of Ireland became enraged. The media completely turned against the British and started supporting Sinn Fein and the other Irish political parties. The final straw that made the Irish public want to fight for independence was when the government in Westminster threatened to introduce conscription. Men and Women were furious at the thought that young men may have to sign up to fight for Britain.

All these results encouraged and influenced men and women to stand up their rights and fight for their independence. It was the ideas coming from the leaders of the rising that encouraged future leaders like Michael Collins and Eamonn De Valera to organise the war of Independence and fight against the British.

However, in the modern Ireland we currently live in, I do not believe people share Padraig Pearse's romantic ideals. In the last one hundred years the people of Ireland have remained quiet on how the country has been run. We do not stand up for ourselves against the government when they introduce a new law or tax. We complain but do not take action. Pearse's ideas were to take action when you are strongly against something but I think we, as a nation, have lost that motive. Now that

we are a free independent country, I do not believe any Irish citizen is willing to fight for their country. Padraig Pearse's ideas are more or less irrelevant now, even though they motivated people one hundred years ago. Irish society has evolved and become more selfish!

As a result of the IRA being formed in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising and how it has changed over the years has effected how we celebrate the 1916 Rising. In the 60's, 70's, and 80's many people disowned the celebrations of the 1916 Rising due to the troubles in Northern Ireland and the IRA's reputation. During the Troubles of Northern Ireland, celebrations created difficulties for the Irish government as they could not condone the activities of the provisional IRA. This caused people to hold back on the celebrations as people did not want to be associated with the IRA. The celebrations died down with the passing of time. The demise of the generation involved in the Rising legacy of the 1916 became to be seen as less relevant in modern Ireland.

The 1916 Rising did however, impact modern Ireland in a positive light. It provided the country of Ireland with a national flag. The colours in the flag represent nationalism and unionism with their respective colours of green and orange. The two colours are separated by the colour white, which represents peace and neutrality between the two groups. It shows that even though

this was a war with many lives lost between the opposing groups, there are no hard feelings and people just want peace. We also received our national anthem from the 1916 Rising.

The lyrics from the anthem were based upon the soldiers ready to fight in the rising, and finally getting our long awaited independence from Britain. The most important item we received from the 1916 Rising was the proclamation which was read out on the steps of the GPO by the leaders of the Rising. William T Cosgrove and the other members of Ireland's first government used the proclamation when making the constitution. The constitution is what the Irish State follows, it is our rules and laws for the country of Ireland. The proclamation heavily influenced the constitution because it was one of the first documents which recognised Ireland as an Independent country.

I think the 1916 Rising did impact modern Ireland in a significant way. It may not have been a direct link however, if we did not have the rising we may never have got our Independence from Britain. Padraig Pearse's romantic ideas may never have inspired future leaders. The 1916 rising may have been less celebrated in the 60's, 70's and 80's but it has encouraged us to celebrate this year and has reminded people where we came from. Most importantly it provided us with a constitution, which makes us an independent country which was the ultimate goal in the Rising.

Poetry

ANGELA MCCABE

FLY FISHING

Soapy water on lawns
under bright moon
worms emerge in the shadows.
We collect jam jars
of red wrigglers in soil
grubs added to the mix.

Father rises at five;
sorts out his fly box,
metal muddler minnows
dabblers, hemp.
Rods glint in starlight.

His broad hands steady, sure, patient.
The hunter at the wheel
shines headlights along the lane.

Passes the Darty Mountains,
through Tullaghan
to the Bundrowse river.
Stands all day in waders,
casts, spins, reels,
netting memories in,
throwing pike back.

We in unspoken anticipation
cool wheaten bread;
cast-iron pan, buttered and ready.

Bedtime, the fog is thick.
No sound of wheels on gravel.
Turn and turn again old newspapers,
stifle thoughts of life without him.

Bang of car door.
We run out to see empty nets.
Forget migrant salmon.
Our itinerant is home.

JOHN FOX

Sometimes he works
at the wooden table in the office,
angled like an ancient school desk.
The indentation of his hand
smooth as an old leather glove.

Under a low sagging roof
he sticks papers on spindle
then shuffles around tyres
past gas tanks, bales of briquettes
and bags of kindling.

Out at the pumps
all weathers, all hours.
Leitrim people queue
for petrol, diesel and extra fills
in plastic drums.

A man from America
photographs him.
John complains he doesn't
give him time to comb his hair.

A portrait is painted.
He shakes his head,
It sold for big money
I don't know why.

Nor does he understand why
the McGahern summer school
comes by bus to view the garage
and meet him:
Not a drop blood between me
and the writer,
he says with pursed lips.

He walks back to the office
where tools hang askew,
spider webs in the corners,
gossamer memorials
of time gone before.