

Day three - Reading activity - Finn McCool.

Finn McCool was big. Imagine the biggest thing you can and Finn was even bigger. This was to be expected, for Finn McCool was a giant; one of many that once roamed the lands of Ireland and Scotland. As the biggest giant in Ireland, he stood over 30 feet tall with shoulders as broad as a mighty oak tree. It was said that he would exercise by lifting an elephant in each hand and by playing football with mountains. For a long time, Finn McCool lived a happy life with his wife in their enormous watt le and daub roundhouse.

One day, while he was out fishing along the coast, Finn heard a booming song echoing across the ocean.

Finn McCool, there you stand,
Once the biggest in all the land.
Who's the largest now, I wonder?
I'm standing here, Benandonner.

Finn McCool's face turned red, and his blood boiled in his veins. How dare somebody challenge him? He had been the strongest giant in the land for so long that he had forgotten what it felt like to be afraid. In his rage, he acted without thinking. He reached down and pulled a hefty chunk from the cliffs that surrounded him and tried to throw it as far as he could. Even with all his strength, it fell into the sea with a sad little plink.

Once more the song wafted across the waves, carried from Scotland on the harsh winds. Benandonner certainly knew how to anger the Irish giant: it didn't take Finn long to exhaust most of the cliff-face near to him. When he stopped to gather his breath, he realised that the stones had started to form a bridge across the choppy sea. Not stopping to consider the rashness of his actions, McCool raced back and forth along the coast throwing any stone he could find. Before long, he had built a vast bridge that crossed the ocean to Scotland.

There was silence. Cautiously, Finn made his way towards Scotland. Suddenly, the bridge started to shake underfoot. McCool stared into the distance and saw a fearsome behemoth racing towards him. Benandonner was easily twice as big as he was and Finn didn't want to stick around to fight him. Before the Scottish giant could spot him, he raced back to his home and hid behind his wife.

"Quick, my love," his wife soothed him as he cowered in the shadows, "I have a plan."

When she explained her idea to him, Finn was unsure. Unfortunately, his thinking was interrupted by a thunderous knock. Hastily, he put his wife's plan into action as she graciously opened the door to the irate giant.

"Where is he?" grumbled Benandonner through gritted teeth. "I know he's in here."

"Who? Finn McCool? I haven't seen him for months. He's been out hunting." Finn's wife replied coyly. "However, if you do see him, could you tell him to come home and help me raise our baby?" At this point, she pulled back the blanket on a straw pallet to reveal a colossal baby that looked uncannily like Finn.

Their plan worked though, and Benandonner, seeing the size of Finn McCool's baby, beat a hasty retreat. "If that's the size of the baby," he shouted as he ran, "I definitely don't want to meet his father!" As he raced back to Scotland, Benandonner tore up the bridge of stones, and now the Giant's Causeway at Antrim is the only evidence that remains of the battling giants.

Questions:

- 1. How tall was Finn McCool?*
- 2. What did he play football with?*
- 3. Where was Benandonner from?*
- 4. Where did Finn hide first?*
- 5. How did Finn feel when he heard the song?*
- 6. Explain how Finn and his wife tricked Benandonner.*
- 7. What other words could the author have used instead of "wafted?"*
- 8. Retell the story from Benandonner's point of view.*
- 9. What does "hastily" mean?*