



THE LOST GIRL KING

CATHERINE DOYLE

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PACK



Step into the world of Tír na nÓg for the adventure of a lifetime ...

The unmissable new book from bestselling Irish author Catherine Doyle is the next page-turning read for fans of Rick Riordan, Piers Torday and Kiran Millwood Hargrave.

Dear reader,

This educational resource pack is based on Catherine Doyle's spellbinding middle-grade novel *The Lost Girl King* and is an ideal learning resource for children in Key Stage 2. It includes a range of discussion questions and activities designed to keep children engaged and keen to explore the themes of this book. Key themes include 'Adventure', 'Irish myths and folklore', 'Loyalty' and 'Bravery'.

We hope you enjoy reading this action-packed adventure and working your way through this pack.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Amy and Liam Bell have been packed off to stay at Gran's house in the wilds of Connemara for the summer. Out for a walk on the first morning of their holiday, they trace the flight of a hawk to a nearby waterfall – only to watch the bird disappear through it. Intrigued, the children follow and soon realise they've discovered the entrance to Tír na nÓg, the legendary land of eternal youth.

But they've been tricked. Almost immediately Liam is captured by a troop of headless horsemen who take him to Tarlock, the ruling sorcerer of Tír na nÓg, who is seeking the bones of a human child for a sinister new spell.

Packed with edge-of-your seat adventure, incredible imagination, humour and warmth, *The Lost Girl King* is the rare kind of story that has you reading long past lights out.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Doyle grew up beside the Atlantic Ocean in the west of Ireland. Her love of reading began with great Irish myths and legends, and fostered in her an ambition to one day write stories of her own. She is the author of the bestselling Storm Keeper trilogy, set on the magical island of Arranmore where her grandparents grew up. Catherine lives in Galway.





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EXTRACTS AND NOTES FOR KS2 TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

Suitable for: Age 9+

Explores themes of: ✓ Fantasy ✓ Adventure ✓ Quest stories ✓ Irish myths and folklore ✓ Loyalty ✓ Bravery

Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ Art ✓ Drama ✓ Geography

The activities included here are suitable for the classroom or library sessions.

CONTENTS

- **THEME 1 – THE STORY OF TÍR NA NÓG**

Activities: Sequence and retell the story of Tír na nÓg.

Objectives: Understand the plot of the novel so far; retrieve and retell information from the text.

- **THEME 2 – AMY AND LIAM**

Activities: Use a Venn diagram to compare the characters of Amy and Liam.

Objectives: Describe characters based on information in the text; make inferences about characters' thoughts, feelings and motives.

- **THEME 3 – MEETING TARLOCK**

Activities: Draw pictures of characters in the book; match characters to character descriptions.

Objectives: Identify and retrieve key information from the text; visualise characters in the story.

- **THEME 4 – NO ESCAPE**

Activities: Write a prediction about what might happen next in the story.

Objectives: Make predictions based on details stated and implied.



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BOOK COVER PROMPTS



- What do you notice about the front cover?
- Can you make any predictions about the story based on the front cover?
- Does the front cover remind you of any other books you've read?
- Can you think of five questions about the book based on the front cover?
- The book is set in Connemara in Ireland. Can you find this region on a map?





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THEME 1 – THE STORY OF TÍR NA NÓG

EXTRACT 1 (TAKEN FROM PAGES 52–54):

In this extract, Oscar is telling Amy the story of Tír na nÓg ...

'Fadó fadó ... Long, long ago, when the world was young and the skies were starless, five ancient gods came to settle on the island of Ireland. The place you now call home,' Oscar began. *'Though by then their lives had spanned entire centuries, the gods were still young, because they were blessed with magic in their bones. When they settled in Ireland, the land and its people became blessed too. The gods had many children, who grew strong and brave and clever, and while they lived, the flowers bloomed and the animals thrived. Food was plentiful, the seasons were gentle and warm, and there was no illness. No suffering.*

'But happiness breeds jealousy, and magic that bright attracts darkness. For there must be balance in all things,' Oscar went on. *'There were others who wanted the land for their own. A breed of reckless giants emerged from the silt and stones under the sea and stalked the waves, until they reached the shores of Ireland. They called themselves the Formorians, and they were not gods, but monsters. They sowed greed and chaos in the heart of the country.'*

Amy shuddered, imagining the giants, drenched in seaweed and old fish guts, crashing through the ocean.

'Wherever the giants roamed, darkness followed. The trees fell into decay, the animals got sick. The crops died and the sun dimmed. Cold, rain and thunder came to Ireland and, before long, life gave way to death. The gods began to age. Their magic was leaving them, and the earth they had watered, now stamped with the footsteps of their enemies, began to weaken them. The soil of Ireland and everything that grew there became poisonous.'

'That's why we can never cross the veil into your world,' Jonah whispered to Amy.

Oscar ignored him and went on.

'The gods and their descendants fled west until the land ran out. It was there that Danú, goddess of nature and new beginnings, discovered a last whisper of earth magic that had not yet been destroyed. A waterfall that trickled backwards, as slow and golden as honey.'

Amy gasped.

Cade shushed her.

'Danú used the waterfall to tear an opening in the side of the world, just wide enough for her people to slip through. When they stepped through the crack, they found themselves in a new world, untouched by darkness. Hidden from the evils of the Formorians. They called their country Tír na nÓg, the land of the young. It was to be a place of hope. Of new life.'



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Oscar begins his story with the words 'fadó fadó'. What language do you think this is? What do you think it means?
- According to Oscar, what happened when the gods first settled in Ireland?
- Oscar uses lots of descriptive language to tell the story. How many adjectives can you find in the first paragraph?
- What do you think the word 'descendant' means?
- Why do you think the gods and their descendants fled west? What did they find?
- Does this story remind you of any other myths or legends you have heard?

ACTIVITY 1: SEQUENCE THE STORY OF TÍR NA NÓG!

Read to the end of Oscar's story on page 57 to find out what happened next in the kingdom of Tír na nÓg. How did the sun end up chained in the sky? Who put a curse on the kingdom and why?

Now, cut out the boxes on the next page and see if you can put them in chronological order.

CHALLENGE: SEQUENCE THE STORY OF TÍR NA NÓG!

Can you retell the story of Tír na nÓg yourself?

You could write the story in your own words or create a comic strip with illustrations. Or perhaps you could create a short drama piece or shadow puppet performance to tell the story?

Think about the atmosphere you want to create and how you can keep your reader or audience on the edge of their seats waiting to see what happens next!



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Take extra care when handling scissors or ask an adult to help with this part



The gods fled west. There, the goddess Danú discovered a magic waterfall. She used the waterfall to tear an opening in the side of the world. The gods slipped through the opening and found themselves in a new world. They called their country Tír na nÓg, the land of the young. It was to be a place of hope.

When Tarlock grew old and withered, he didn't want to die. So he created a spell that would stop time. To complete his spell, he took a child from the land of the Formorians and chained the child to the sun. The land of Tír na nÓg was frozen in time by Tarlock's curse.

Five ancient gods came to settle on the island of Ireland. The flowers bloomed and the animals thrived. Food was plentiful, the seasons were gentle and warm, and there was no illness. The gods had many children.

Tarlock sealed the veil between the worlds.

The gods watched over this new kingdom for five thousand years. When they grew weary and wished to pass to the heavens, they left the last of their magic to the earth, so the land would be forever beautiful, and its people would live long, peaceful lives.

A breed of reckless giants emerged from the sea. They called themselves the Formorians and they were not gods, but monsters. The trees fell into decay, the animals got sick. The crops died and the sun dimmed. The soil of Ireland and everything that grew there became poisonous.

But Tarlock, the last living son of the goddess Danú, stole the final drops of her magic when she was on her deathbed and used it in secret for his spells. He became the most powerful being in the kingdom.





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THEME 2 – AMY AND LIAM

EXTRACT 2 (TAKEN FROM PAGES 76–77):

In this extract, Amy is riding with Oscar and the Fianna. Meanwhile, in another part of the Kingdom, the shadow riders are carrying Liam away ...

The sun beat down on them as they left the enchanted forest behind. Far from the protection of the Elderglen, the curse grew stronger. It pressed down on Amy's shoulders and gathered between her ribs until her breath grew shallow and her neck ached. It rolled around inside her skull like a marble. But every time the pain flared, she scrunched her eyes shut and thought of Liam.

For a long time, all Liam had heard was the steady *th-thump* of hoofs and the panicked staccato of his own breath as the shadow riders carried him fast and far from the forest. He sat wedged in front of the leader, a burlap sack tugged roughly over his head, while his hands were fastened to the horse's reins. At first, he bucked and struggled, shouting until his voice ran out, but it was no use. There was no one to help him.

I should have been quicker, he scolded himself. I should have been smarter.

For Amy.

His annoying little sister, who was now all alone without him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does Amy do when the pain of the curse flares up?
- What do you think Amy would like to say to Liam if she could?
- Why does Liam scold himself?
- Who is Liam worried about? Why?
- What do Amy and Liam have in common in this extract?
- Has Amy and Liam's relationship changed in any way since the start of the story?



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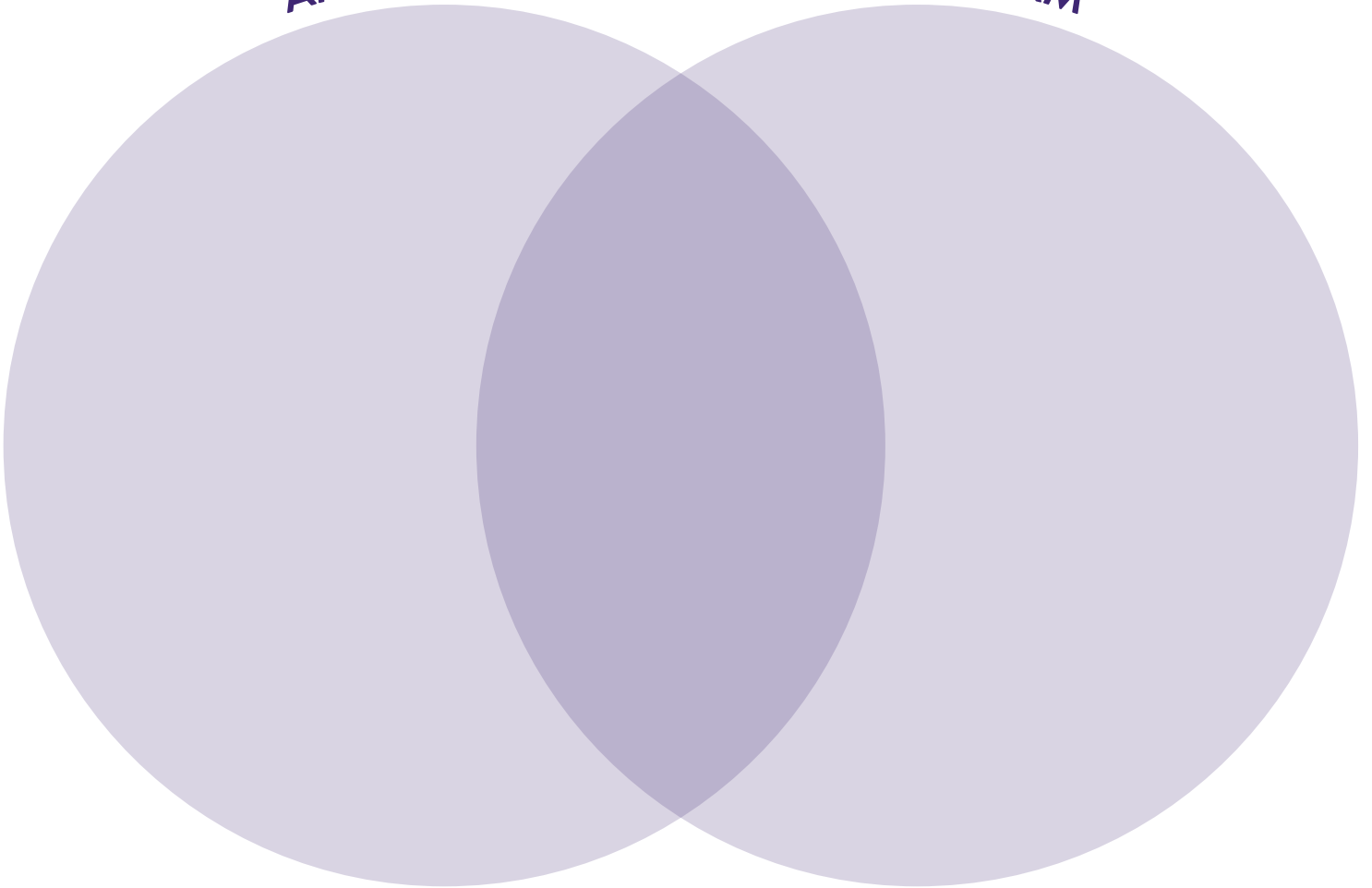


ACTIVITY 2: CHARACTER VENN DIAGRAM

What have you learned about Amy and Liam in the story so far? What are their skills, interests and hobbies? What characteristics and personality traits do they each have? Write down words to describe Amy and Liam in the Venn diagram below. How are they different and what do they have in common?

AMY

LIAM



As a class, choose someone to get into role as Amy at this point in the story. Can you 'hot seat' them by asking them questions about their experience so far? Then repeat with somebody else in role as Liam. How do Amy and Liam each feel? What are their worries and fears? Why did they make the choices they've made? Do they have any regrets? What are their hopes or plans?



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THEME 3 – MEETING TARLOCK

EXTRACT 3 (TAKEN FROM PAGES 212–213):

In this extract, a guard has dragged Liam from the dungeon and marched him to a room at the top of the castle ...

The door creaked open with a low groan, and Liam was shoved through it.

He stumbled blindly into Tarlock's tower room and the door slammed behind him. Liam turned back and jiggled the handle, but it was no use. He groaned as he pressed his head against the wood, willing it to open. 'Please. Please. *Please.*'

'Have you always been a quivering coward?' came a voice from behind him, followed by a deep, rippling laugh. 'Or does my reputation precede me?'

Fear flooded Liam's body, turning his blood to ice. He turned round slowly.

The mage was sitting at his desk, his face hidden beneath the folds of a bright silver cloak.

Tarlock.

Liam pressed himself up against the door. 'P-p-please d-don't hurt m-me', he stammered.

The mage removed his hood as he stood up, revealing a pale, slender face and a long grey beard. His skin was paper-thin and impossibly wrinkled. Liam hadn't met very many people since he had arrived in Tír na nÓg, but he was certain this man must be the oldest in all of the land. In any land. His nose was long and sharp, and his hooded eyes were ringed in silver.

Tarlock crooked his finger at Liam. 'Let me look at you.'

Liam stuck to the door like a starfish.

Tarlock peeled back his lips, revealing the yellow glint of his teeth. 'Very well. I will come to you,' he said, gliding right through his desk, as though it were made of nothing but air.

Liam screamed, but there was nowhere to run. The door was locked, and the window was too narrow – not to mention too high – to leap through. Tarlock paused at a bookcase halfway across the room, slipping his hand under the topmost shelf and sliding the wooden panel away to reveal a secret compartment.

Liam's eyes widened as he removed a long golden sword from it. It was almost half his size, and the hilt was encrusted with emeralds.

Tarlock swept towards Liam, and angled the blade at the tip of his chin.

Liam stiffened as a terrified whimper seeped out of him.

'This is *Fraganach* – the Answerer,' said Tarlock, like he was introducing Liam to an old friend. It belonged to my mother Danú, many, many centuries ago. She used it to cut a hole in your world, and carve out another one for us. A better one.'



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you underline any words or sentences that tell you how Liam feels in this extract?
- Can you define the word 'reputation'? What does it mean in this context?
- Does Tarlock remind you of any other characters you have read or seen?
- If *The Lost Girl King* was made into a film, what kind of music do you think would play when Tarlock entered?
- Why do you think Liam is important to Tarlock? What do you think Tarlock wants to do with Liam?
- Highlight any parts of the text that help you picture what Tarlock looks like. Can you use this information to draw a picture of Tarlock in the box below?

TARLOCK



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ACTIVITY 3: MATCH THE CHARACTERS TO THEIR DESCRIPTIONS

Next to each description, write the name of the correct character or characters.

The Wolf-riders

The Wardens

The Selkies

The Formorians

The Pookas

The Fianna

The Dullahan

Ghost

The Greencloaks

Tarlock

Creatures who take the form of seals when they are in the sea and humans when they are on land. They are led by Prince Tristan.	
A group of trainee warriors. They wear green cloaks and leather headbands, and carry wooden swords and spears. They have pointy ears.	
Tarlock's white hawk sent to lure children through the waterfall.	
An army of headless horsemen who fight for Tarlock.	
The bravest warriors in all of Tír na nÓg. Led by Oscar de Barra, they wear dark green cloaks and black tunics, and carry swords, shields, whips and spears.	
A breed of reckless giants who roamed Ireland causing death, decay and sickness.	
People that Tarlock has turned into animals or birds.	
The mage. He controls everything in Tír na nÓg. He is the most powerful being in the kingdom.	
Tarlock's spies. They have grey robes and creepy silver eyes. They lurk in towns and villages, keeping watch on everyone.	
A clan of wild-folk who live with the wolves. Their pack leader is Culann, Oscar de Barra's brother. They live in the Fang-lands.	

CHALLENGE

You've drawn a picture of Tarlock ... why not draw some of the other characters too? You could make a class display of the characters in the book. Turn to the following pages for further descriptions of these characters: the Dullahan, page 33; the Greencloaks, pages 37–42; Oscar and the Fianna, pages 47–49; the wardens, page 95; Prince Tristan, page 156; Culann, page 222.





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THEME 4 – NO ESCAPE

EXTRACT 4 (TAKEN FROM PAGES 292–293):

In this extract, Amy and Liam face Tarlock ...

'Perhaps you thought you had saved him,' Tarlock went on, in a mocking voice. 'That your little escapade across Tír na nÓg would amount to something. But the minute that boy cut my sun chain, he doomed himself. There is nothing you can do for him now.'

Amy's eyes darted, scanning the shadows between the trees. The Dullahan were lurking in the forest, waiting for their master to summon them. The children were completely surrounded.

Liam feebly pushed her towards the waterfall. 'Go,' he rasped. 'It's too late for me.'

Amy stepped in front of her brother, positioning herself like a shield. She levelled the mage with her meanest look. 'You're not taking him.'

Tarlock withdrew a glittering golden sword from the folds of his cloak. He angled it towards her. 'If you don't release *my* king, I'll take him by force and I'll take *you* in pieces.' Summoned by some unspoken command, the Dullahan stepped out of the forest, forming a ring of darkness around the pond. There was no escape. The only path left was through the waterfall—without Liam.

Tarlock stepped into the water. 'You wouldn't be the first interloper to abandon their sibling,' he told Amy. 'To flee at the first sign of danger. To save yourself in place of the person you love most in the world. In fact, I would say it runs in your family, doesn't it?'

A blinding rage took hold of Amy. She felt like she'd swallowed a bolt of lightning, and she wanted to spit it at Tarlock. But she had no one to back her up and nothing to fight with, except for the laces in her shoes and the coin in her pocket. Amy froze.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What tone of voice does Tarlock use in the first paragraph of the extract? Can you read Tarlock's words out loud in this way?
- What does the word 'summon' mean? Can you use it in a sentence?
- What decision does Amy have to make?
- What do you think Tarlock means when he says, 'You wouldn't be the first interloper to abandon their sibling'?
- How does Amy feel at the end of the extract?
- What objects does Amy have with her?



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ACTIVITY 4: PREDICT WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

What do you think Amy will choose to do? Use your knowledge of Amy's character and her relationship with Liam plus any clues in the extract or the story so far to help you make a prediction about what will happen next. Write your prediction in the space below.

Will Amy decide to leave Liam and escape through the waterfall? Will she try to defeat Tarlock and save Liam? If so, how? What will Liam do or say? Will any of the other characters be involved?

When you have written your prediction, read to the end of the chapter. Was your prediction right? Did anything surprise you?



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You've now reached the end of this resource pack for *The Lost Girl King*!



We hope these notes have proved to be an interesting and fun introduction to the themes and ideas found within this book.

We would love to see examples of any work created as a result of this pack, so please do email them over to us on:

childrensmarketing@bloomsbury.com

or share on Twitter tagging us at

[@KidsBloomsbury](https://twitter.com/KidsBloomsbury) [@doyle_cat](https://twitter.com/doyle_cat)

