

the Irish Cinderlad

By Shirley Climo
Illustrated by Loretta Krupinski



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Ever since he was a baby, Becan's only worry has been his big feet - until his widowed father remarries. His new stepmother and her three daughters feed him crusts of bread and banish him to work in the fields. So Becan runs away.

With the help of his only friend, a magical bull, he defeats a giant, slays a dragon, and rescues a princess. But before she can thank him, Becan disappears, leaving behind him one of his enormous boots. The princess scours the kingdom for the owner of the giant boot. Will Becan's feet give him away? And what will his fate be if they do?

Folklorist Shirley Climo retells an age-old Irish tale that is an unusual twist on the popular Cinderella story. Just like his female counterpart, Becan has a mean stepmother and stepsisters. Unlike Cinderella, Becan has large feet and a magical bull for a fairy godmother. He defeats a sword-swinging giant, slays a fire-breathing dragon, and rescues a princess. But before the princess can thank him, he runs off, leaving her with only an enormous boot to aid her in the search for her rescuer. And, as in all Cinderella stories, true love prevails.

The Irish Cinderlad Details

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Author : Shirley Climo , Loretta Krupinski (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Irish Cinderlad for online ebook

Lindsay Johnson says

"The Irish Cinderlad" is a traditional folktale because it descended from the original folktale, Cinderella. The Irish Cinderlad is an Irish version of the original fairy tale. This version is a bit different than Cinderella. Becan, a male, is the main character whose dad marries his step mother and gains three older sisters. The step mother and step sisters treat Becan poorly, so Becan decides to leave his family, where he meets a magical bull who feeds him lunch each day. Becan's stepsister follows Becan to the pasture where the bull is at and witnesses Becan being fed by the bull. The stepsister tells the step mother, and the step mother decides that the bull needs to be butchered. The bull and Becan disappear from Becan's home and start a new journey. Becan ends up saving the life of a princess, who acquires Becan's boot, but Becan leaves the kingdom before the princess can talk with him. The princess looks for the man who fits the boot for a year before Becan tries it on. Becan and the princess marry and live happily ever after.

This book would be a great book to introduce to students when learning about different cultures throughout the world. Most children would be familiar with the original folktale, Cinderella, so the students would be shown how different countries and groups of people have different story lines for similar stories. An idea I have for a writing lesson for students in intermediate grade levels to go along with the reading of "The Irish Cinderlad" would be to prompt the students to write their own version of Cinderella or The Irish Cinderlad.

Elizabeth Hendy says

Summary: This book gives the classic "Cinderella" book a new twist, but this time with a whole new twist! Becan rescues a princess, and instead of leaving behind a heel, he leaves behind a boot. He is gone before the princess can say thank you. But, will she be able to find him?

Evaluation: I gave this book 4 stars simply because it was so fun to read. The images were so detailed and the text used incredible descriptive language. It was a interesting and easy to follow book.

Teaching Idea: I would use this to compare and contrast two stories in order to help my students pick apart details of a text. I would read this and the original Cinderella, and complete a compare and contrast chart about things that they found in both texts.

Virginia says

WE STAN IRISH FAIRY TALE ROMIONE

Dolly says

This is another interesting story that brings the Cinderella tale alive from the perspective of a particular country. Shirley Climo has written several of these books and we've read them all .

This Irish tale presents the basic story with a boy as the lead character. The addition of a magical bull is an unusual facet of the story and we liked the way in which he defeats the giant and the dragon. The story is entertaining and the colorful illustrations complement the story nicely. We enjoyed reading this story together.

Our oldest daughter was convinced that the author also had a Japanese version of the story. We didn't find any such books, but we did google the terms and found a three-page play about a Japanese Cinderella, adapted by Carole L. Cooney here. It was a short story and very fascinating.

This book was selected as one of the books for the March 2014 - Ireland discussion at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

Colleen Smith says

I found the story The Irish Cinderlad by Shirley Climo in my school library. I liked that the protagonist is a male compared to the typical female who needs to be rescued in traditional literature.

The Irish Cinderlad starts off with the birth of the protagonist Becan. He grew into a young lad with unusually large feet and bright red hair. The author describes his feet as "so large he'd splash a puddle dry just by stepping in it." Unfortunately, his mother passes away and his father is often away because he is a peddler. Becan's father came home one evening with a new mother and three new sisters for him. His new mother tells him that he needs to go and watch the cows in the heard. Becan does not want to go because there is a speckled bull that is dangerous. One day, Becan runs into this speckled bull but Becan sees commonalities between the bull and himself. They both have large feet/hooves, a white face with freckles, and red ears. They become fast friends. The speckled bull takes care of Becan and takes Becan away from his awful step mother and step sisters. The speckle bull dies but leaves Becan his tail which is magical just like the bull was. Beacn goes on and fights a giant using the tail to win and finally gets some shoes that fit his large feet. He hears about a fair maiden named Princess Finola who will be the sacrifice to the dragon that wreaks havoc on the town. Becan uses the magical tail to save Princess Finola. He rides off once he has defeated the dragon, but the Princess pulls off one of his boots. Princess Finola goes around the land to see whom's foot fits this large boot. She eventually finds Becan and they get married.

At the end of the story, the author writes a note about Irish storytelling and how there are many versions of a Cinderlad. Along with explaining that in Ireland, cattle that had a white face and their red ears were magical. The authors note helped me to better understand why the speckled bull was like his fairy godmother. The pictures in the book are detailed, however a student who was just reading the pictures would not be able to completely put the story together. The words are important for the reader to understand the story and the pictures just add imagines for the reader to visualize the characters better. This is a book that would be good for third grade and above, because it has a lot of text. I could see using this book for comparing and contrasting plot for fiction literature.

Jenny says

This Irish version has a young lad, Becan, who befriends a bull and runs away from his unkind stepmother and stepsisters. The bull then fights a gray bull and dies, but tells Becan to take his tail and use it when he needs help. Becan has to face some difficult challenges, but uses the bull tail along with his considerable

courage to overcome these challenges. I appreciated the author's note.

Katrina Lybbert says

I have read many Cinderella retellings, but this was the first Cinderlad retelling I have read. I loved it. The story was similar to Cinderella, but very unique in its own way.

Manybooks says

An evocative, descriptive retelling of an Irish Cinderella-type fairy tale, featuring a male Cinderella (author Shirley Climo is actually combining two traditional Irish tales), I quite enjoyed Shirely Climo's [The Irish Cinderlad](#), both as a tale in and of itself, but also and for me even more importantly, as an interesting addition to the many Cinderella type folktales that can be found throughout Europe and beyond.

In the excellent and massively informative author's note, Shirley Climo states that tales of male Cinderellas can be found in Scandinavia, England, Hungary, the Balkans, as well as India, Japan and Africa (my own personal collection of global fairy tales contains a number of different Cinderella-type tales, including both an Estonian and a German variation that feature a male Cinderella). One of the intriguing aspects of this particular tale, of [The Irish Cinderlad](#) is that the fairy godmother is actually a huge and magical bull which feeds and protects the young (and male) protagonist. And according to the author, according to Shirely Climo, the concept of a magical bull is likely Celtic in origin (as cattle were often thought to come from the sea and possess magical and mystical, divine powers). Personally though, I am by no means certain that the concept of, the belief in magical cattle, magical animals is necessarily purely and only Celtic in origin, as I have quite a number Cinderella variations in my own fairy and folk tale collection that feature cows, bulls, sheep and even magical deer as the helpers, the fairy godmothers of the orphaned and generally bullied heroes and heroines. And while some of these tales certainly do seem Celtic in origin, others have their origin in Afghanistan, Turkey and Greece (perhaps the concept of magical cattle or other types of magical hooved animals might thus rather be a pan-Indo-European belief, and even ancient Turkey could and should be considered part of this diaspora, as the ancient Hittites are now considered to have been an Indo-European speaking people and while their languages are now extinct, their culture likely has retained at least some folkloristic roots even in modern Turkey and its environs).

Now as much as I enjoyed both the story and the narrative flow, the same cannot, unfortunately, be said with regard to Loretta Krumpinski's illustrations. While the magical bulls and other animals are generally well enough drawn and even realistically depicted, there is simply too much pink and pastel used throughout, rendering the pictures much too cutesy and rather insipid (at least for my own personal taste). With better and more realistically expressive illustrations, [The Irish Cinderlad](#) would have been a truly magical illustrated tale for me, but as it stands, I can only rate it with three stars, five stars for the narrative, for Climo's retelling, but only two stars for Krumpinski's accompanying pictorial offerings. I would however, my personal dislike of the illustrations notwithstanding, highly recommend [The Irish Cinderlad](#) to anyone interested in variations of the Cinderella story, as it is indeed a wonderful, intriguing, imaginative rendition of the same.

Beverly says

Shirley Climo's retelling of this traditional Irish tale is sparkling with wit and well-paced. Part of the story parallels the traditional western Cinderella story, but also departs from it in several ways.

When young Becan starts growing, his feet outgrow the rest of him, so that he has enormous feet. After his mother dies, Becan's new stepmother tasks him with herding the family cows. (When will these fairy tale men stop bringing home new wives?!) While watching them one day, he meets a large bull, whom he befriends, and who becomes his benefactor by providing him with a noon meal every day. When the stepmother finally finds out, she wants to butcher the bull, but Becan warns him, and they leave together. The bull is destined to fight another bull and die, but before he does so, he tells Becan to twist off his tail after his death. Becan does so, and continues on his journey, until he meets a man who needs a cowherd. Becan accepts the job, and with the bull's tail, defeats a neighboring giant, absconding with his boots. Upon hearing that a dragon will be eating a local princess, Becan hurries to the sea and saves her as well with the tail. The princess wants to thank him, but Becan sees his stepsisters approaching and flees, leaving one of his boots with the princess. She scours the countryside looking for the boy whose feet will fit the giant boots, and eventually finds Becan again, whom she marries.

Loretta Krupinski's colorful, stylized paintings invite the reader deeper into the story, and are pleasantly appealing.

Halle Dean says

Summary:

This book is a twist on the classic tale of Cinderella. This is a story about a little boy, named Becan, whose father married an evil woman. The little boy is starved by his step-mother and forced to live out in the stables. The little boy befriends the spotted bull who ends up having a magical tail. He ran away to escape his evil family who was trying to kill his friend the bull. His bull dies in a battle but gives Becan his magic tail. This tail helps Breca defeat a giant who gives Breca his shoes. Later Breca is faced with fighting a dragon who tries to kill the princess. He saves her but has to run away from his family. In the end, the princess found Breca and married him.

Evaluation:

This book is a type of traditional literature. The story is relatable because most of the kids will know the story of Cinderella and will be able to follow along to the story. The book had Irish words in them which could be tricky for most kids.

Lesson Plan:

I would use this book as a way to make inferences in texts. I would ask the kids who were familiar with Cinderella to share what they know. I would read the book and while I was reading I would have the kids practice making inferences. I would also read the original Cinderella for those who haven't read it.

Mary Kay Davidson says

target audience -

Folktale motif orphan summary – Becan, an irish orphan and cowherd makes friends with a magical bull, who feeds him lunch everyday. His jealous stepmother discovers the bulls helping Becan and plots his slaughter for stew. Becan saves the bull and flees far away. The bulls magic protects the boy, even after he

dies. The boy keeps the bulls tail as a belt and it gives him powers to defeat his foes. Bevan eventually fights off a dragon to save an Irish princess. Of course he wins the day with his bull tail, and then returns to his cowherd job. A year later the princess searches for him, and once discovered they marry and live happily ever after.

strengths/weaknesses - The boy fights giants and dragons and loves his simple life with the cows. He does not seek the hero's life, but rises to the occasion when needed to fight off the foes he comes upon. He is awkward and has big feet, red hair and freckles. He gets the girl in the end, because she knows he is the one for her. This is a male perspective for the orphan story. He makes a friend in the bull, and learns to trust the powers that friendship brings.

personal critique - I would recommend this to a shy boy, in that awkward 7 to 10 years where his feet are big and he is still a little boy. It is basically a mashup of several Irish folktales smoothed over with the popular shoe fit search. It lends itself to many of our popular cliches. The story adds meaning to common and popular phrases and myths. Dragon's breath, bull's tail and many more.

illustrations - Simple pictures filling the whole page, with white panels for text. Easy to read font, and plain and simple style until you get to the dragon. I would say the drawings are formulaic cartoon style as if you were seeing a Disney cartoon until you see the dragon. The dragon is elaborately scaled and more fantasy like in its depiction.

notable awards - The hook for this author is the repetitive motif of the shoe fit story. She has 4 in that flavor and several other myth based stories.

Patty says

Reading Level: Primary

This is a great book to compare with the original Cinderella. It can also be used to demonstrate how different cultures can have different versions of the same story. I love the role reversal in this story. The princess is looking for the man who lost his boot!

LauraW says

I wish I had the money to collect Cinderella tales, as I find the cultural variations rather interesting. This one is, of course, most notable because the "Cinderella" is male. But a further variation is that the "fairy godmother" is a bull.

Unlike Gundula, I rather liked the illustrations, although the colors are very stereotypical (pink for girls; green and brown for boys).

This would be a good book for teachers to add to their collection if one of their writing projects is to take a

familiar fairy tale and change it in some way. I have seen this done with the Cinderella tales, but also with The Three Little Pigs and other standard kids' fare.

Fun.

MaryannP says

This is an irish cinderella tale with a twist. The main character is a boy named Becan whose mother raises him. His mom ends up passing and his dad is a peddler who was often away from his family. His dad ends up coming home with a new wife and three grown girls who become his step-sisters. The three step-sisters and step-mother made him do all the herding work and were often times mean to him.

Becan ends up befriending a bull which makes this story fantasy. The bull ends up providing Becan with food and the step-mother finds out because he doesn't touch the bread crust that she gives him for supper each night. A step-sister finds out that the bull is feeding Becan and they are determined to butcher the bull. Becan runs to warn the bull and off they go to be free. The bull ends up having to fight the grey bull and Becan's bull friend dies. Becan is then greeted by a man on horseback who offers him a ride because he is in need of a cowherd.

This book shows the strength Becan has as he has to fight a giant and then a dragon. The dragon was after the king's daughter. The story then becomes similar to Cinderella again by the princess wanting to thank Becan for saving her life. Becan ends up taking off on donkey when the princess is left with his boot. The princess claimed that she will marry only the person who the boot belongs to so a royal messenger is sent off to find Becan. A year later Becan and the princess end up together and live happily ever after.

This is a nice alternative to the traditional Cinderella story but it doesn't depict Irish culture at all. If it wasn't titled, "The Irish Cinderlad", I would have never known that it took place in Ireland or was an Irish tale. The author could have included better pictures/ illustrations that showed Ireland as well as incorporated more history or Irish traditions. I would read this and do a compare and contrast activity with my students so they can pick out the similarities and differences in this and the traditional Cinderella story.

Kathy Roderer says

I love the reversal of gender roles in this interesting twist on the Cinderella tale. Becan has a wicked stepmother and stepsisters, and bemoans the size of his extra large feet. His "fairy godmother" is a bull who gives his life for Becan, but even after death stays with him, magically helping and protecting him. Becan is a hero, kills a giant, slays a dragon, and rescues a princess. The princess, who decides she wants to marry him, uses the extra large boot that he left behind in order to find him. I love the way it is the girl who is pursuing the boy in this version of the story!
