

Barbara Mauch – St. Monica School

Novel Resource

Patricia Reilly Giff

Water Street

Random House Children's Books-2006

Ms. Giff is the author of many children's books both for young students and then quite a few also for older readers. She was trained as a teacher, she loves to read, in the bathtub. She has written more than 60 books. She loves Brooklyn and the Bridge, she described walking by it many times. She wants her books to show that ordinary people are special.

Author's own site: [www.patriciareillygiff.com](http://www.patriciareillygiff.com)

Publisher's site: [www.randomhouse.com/features/patriciareillygiff/patriciagiff.htm](http://www.randomhouse.com/features/patriciareillygiff/patriciagiff.htm)

Connection to the Book. She is an Irish American and she loves the Brooklyn Bridge, admits to admiring it for a long time.

Other Books: Polk Street School Books, Polka Private Eye Books

Willow Run deals with WWII; Fourth Grade Celebrity, deals with little sister competing with an older sister; Gift of the Pirate Queen, Diabetes; Maggie's Door, Irish Immigrants; Picture of Hollis Woods – foster homes Her new book: Eleven, a boy discovers he has been kidnapped.

Her awards: Lily's Crossing received a Newbery Honor, it also claimed a Horn Book Prize. Picture of Hollis Woods received a Newbery Honor. Nory Ryan's Song was named an ALA best book for young adults.



ANNOTATION: Bird is a member of an Irish immigrant family. Her father is involved with the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. They are a nice family. Her older brother, Hughie, was injured and now is involved in illegal bare knuckle fighting. Her sister, Annie, works at a box factory but loves to bake. They get new neighbors, Thomas, his alcoholic father who really neglects Thomas. Bird's family helps him. This story compares the two types of immigrants and the problems that they have. It was a good story, the characters are believable and we get a good idea of living in New York City during the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. The book also includes a bit of history.

GENRE: Fiction – Historical

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**POINT OF VIEW:** Third Person

**THEME:** History of an Irish immigrant family in New York in the 1870's. The family lives on Water Street, next to the river where the Brooklyn Bridge is being built.

**CONFLICT:** Thirteen year old, Bird, an Irish immigrant, has many problems, she feels responsible for her family's happiness. She worries about her brother getting caught by the police and being hurt badly. She worries about her sister, working so hard in the box factory and not being married. She is upset about the boy upstairs who seems to have joined the family. She has always wanted to be a nurse and now she is doubting herself.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** Everything wraps up nicely. Hughie is helped and becomes a farmer in New Jersey. Annie ends up marrying the baker's assistant. Thomas, the neighbor boy, became a friend and writer, Bird goes to school and becomes a nurse. The highlight is that they get to watch the first person cross the BRIDGE.

**CHARACTERS:** Bird (Bridget Mallon);(13) Irish --- Momma-a midwife;--- Da – a worker helping to build the Brooklyn Bridge---Annie,(17) sister, works in the box factory and likes to bake---Hughie(18)- her big brother who is injured building the bridge, and bare knuckle fights to earn money to buy some farm land. Thomas, (13) the boy upstairs, her family takes him in. There are other minor characters.

**SETTING:** New York City, Summer, 1875 on Water Street, underneath the Brooklyn Bridge.

Interest Level: 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade    **READING LEVEL:** 5.0

**BOOKTALK:** How many of you have a family heritage of being Irish? Lots of you!!! Do you know where your family started in the United States after they came from Ireland? Have any of you been to New York, to see the Brooklyn Bridge? Do you know that several people died while working to build it? This book is about an Irish family that lives in New York and whose family is involved with the bridge. Could this be your family story, too?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** {Pre-reading}

1. Who is Bird and what is her real first name?
2. What is Thomas's family like?
3. What are some of the duties that Bird does for her family?
4. From the description of the apartment, do you think that Thomas's family is rich?
5. Does Bird enjoy going with her mother on the healing trips?
6. Do you think that Bird will find her brother, Hughie, fighting?
7. How does Thomas describe the Mallon family?
8. Would Bird be able to stay in the bloody room?
9. Will Thomas be able to find Bird, when she disappeared?

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10. What grade are Bird and Thomas in when school starts?
11. What made the girls tease Bird? What did she do?
12. What might Bird write about in her 8<sup>th</sup> grade essay that is due in June?
13. What do you think that Thomas might write about?
14. Is the story true about the lady in the basement? Did she really disappear?
15. What does Thomas do, when he sees that Bird doesn't find Hughie in the cellar?
16. Does Bird's family have a book to let her take to school?
17. Why do Bird's family think she can talk to Hughie the best?
18. What does Thomas imagine about his own missing mother?
19. Why will Ma and Da never leave Water Street?
20. What will the Mallon family do about Hughie's arrest?
21. What does Thomas think of Hughie?
22. Why do you think that Bird hid her "Cure Book?"
23. Will Bird go and help the girl and her family?
24. How will Ma comfort Bird after she goes to help that family?
25. How does Bird learn that Lillie is not Thomas's mother?
26. What will Thomas's dad tell him about his mother?
27. Will Thomas and Bird be able to stop Hughie from fighting?
28. Will Thomas be honored at graduation?
29. What does Thomas say about Bird's sharing her family with him?

#### During Reading Questions

1. What does the new mother name her baby? Page 9
2. What does Thomas looking in Gallagher's window? Page 15
3. How did Bird feel when she saw the two new tenants? Page 21
4. Which bedroom did Thomas choose and why? Page 26
5. What are the people hoping that the Brooklyn Bridge will do for them? Page 33
6. What is a caisson? Page 38
7. Who is visiting the Mallon Family? What is her relationship to them? Page 41
8. How was the milkman's son injured? Page 46
9. Why does Thomas think that he can find Bird? Page 51
10. What did the family eat back in Ireland, when they had no food? Page 55
11. Why did the boys and girls have to be in the same room this year? Page 61
12. Why doesn't the Mallon family have any books? Page 69
13. What does Thomas take home from the Bridge as a souvenir? Page 75
14. How did Bird feel about being home alone? Page 81
15. What does Hughie tell Thomas about New Jersey? Page 84
16. What does Da tell Bird about the ship that brought him and Ma to America? Page 87
17. What did her Ma tell her to practice a thousand times? Page 98
18. What does Bird do with the gingerbread cookies? 104
19. What does Annie think they should do about Hughie in jail? Page 109
20. Why is Thomas afraid for Mr. Mallon when he confronts Hughie? Page 112
21. What is Hughie do with Thomas that he shouldn't tell Bird? Page 115
22. How does Ma comfort Bird about nursing? Page 118

23. How does the neighbor, Mrs .Daley, feel about the bridge? Page 126
24. How does Bird realize that Thomas knows that she will be a nurse? Page 136
25. How does Bird discover that Lillie Langtry is not Thomas's mother? Page 139
26. Did Thomas's mother die? Page 143
27. How does Bird know that she help the family with the fever? Page 146
28. Does Thomas's father go to Graduation? Page 157
29. What did Thomas get when he wrote the best essay? Page 160

#### Post-reading questions

1. Why didn't a doctor deliver the baby in the hospital? Page 6
2. What would you do, if you saw someone fighting and getting hurt? Page 15.
3. Why did Bird think that Thomas was lucky when she saw the books? Page 22
4. How did Thomas feel when he was listening over the heating grate? Page 28.
5. What is the graveyard shift? Page 29
6. What is the dreaded caisson disease? Page 38
7. Why is the man covered in blood? Page 43
8. How did Bird react when her mom was stitching up the head wound? Page 47
9. Why is Bird changing her mind about being a healer like Ma? Page 52
10. Did the family have enough food when they lived in the old country? Page
11. What was unusual about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom? Page 60
12. Why is Bird feeling jealous about Thomas? Page 69
13. What is Thomas always thinking about? Page 74
14. Why is Bird afraid of Hughie being arrested? Page 80
15. Why is Hughie bare-knuckle fighting? Page 83
16. Why did Bird leave her book at home? What didn't Thomas take any of his books?  
Page 90-91
17. Who is Sister Raymond? What did she give Bird? Page 99.
18. What is Thomas wondering about his mother? Page 102
19. Bird is saving money for her own book, what does she spend it on? Page 108
20. Why does Hughie want to get away from his family? Page 112
21. Why does Hughie think he is a coward? Page 114
22. What does Bird tell Thomas when they pass Emily Roebling? Page 120
23. What does Bird do when she finds the baby with the high fever? Page 130
24. How does Thomas show that he thinks that Bird is really special? Page 136
25. What happens when Bird sees the picture of the woman Lillie? Page 139
26. What does Thomas' dad say that his mom's name is? Page 144
27. How does Bird help Hughie after the BIG fight? Page 151
28. Who was the class Valedictorian? Page 156
29. What happened to the members of the family? Page 161

## LANGUAGE

1. glimpse – a very short look - p.10
2. persimmon – a fruit that is rare - p.20
3. scattered – to spread things around – p.42
4. shirtwaist – an old-fashioned term for a blouse p. 51
5. volunteer – to offer to do something p. 60
6. impale- to go through something - p73
7. cellar – an old-fashioned term for a basement p.76
8. trudging – to walk while tired or carrying a heavy load – p.98
9. valedictorian – the top student in the class - p156

## INDIANA STANDARDS:

Read words with several syllables	3.1.2
Use sentence & word context to find the meaning of unknown words	3.1.6
Recognize different genre	3.3.1
Determine what the characters are like	3.3.3
Identify speakers or narrators	3.3.6
Use context clues to determine meanings	4.1.7
Use appropriate strategies	4.2.2
Identify main events in plot	4.3.2
Determine causes of character's actions	4.3.13
Structural Features:	5.2.2
Recognize main ideas	5.2.3
Draw inferences, conclusions:	5.2.4
Distinguish among facts, conclusions, generalizations:	5.2.4
Identify main problems:	5.3.2
Contrast the actions and motives of the characters:	5.3.3

## ANTICIPATION STATEMENTS:

True or False

1. The Brooklyn Bridge was built in 1875.
2. Midwives (healers) didn't have to go to school or have a license.
3. In the 1870's in New York, boys and girls were in different classrooms when they were in grade school.
4. In the 1870's in New York, everyone went to high school in those days.
5. John Roebling designed the Brooklyn Bridge.
6. Emily Roebling (his daughter-in-law) built it.
7. Workers died when helping to build the Brooklyn Bridge.

## READ-ALOUD PASSAGE:

- 1 .Chapter 'Before' - Pages 3-4 This is the "before" section and we meet Thomas and learn his dream: to write.
2. Chapter 8 - Pages 44-49 This is the passage about the boy who injures his head and Bird and her mom have to help him.

## IF YOU LIKE...YOU'LL LOVE:

Maggie's Door, Giff, Wendy Lamb Books, 2003  
Nory Ryan's Song, Giff, Delacorte Press, 2000  
Lily's Crossing, Giff, Delacorte, 1997  
A House of Tailors, Giff, Wendy Lamb Books, 2004  
Pictures of Hollis Woods, Delacorte Book, 2002  
Immigrant Kids, Freedman, Scholastic Inc. 1992  
So Far from Home: the Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl, Denenberg, Scholastic, 1997

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

1. Social Studies – We have a family heritage day in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I ask all of the children to complete a family tree. (with at least 4 generations) Use your imagination to show the information.

### Social Studies Standards

- 3.16 Use a variety of community resources to gather information.
- 4.1.15 Create a time line that shows relationship between people.
- 5.1.5 Causes of the movement of people from Europe to America.
5. 1.18 Read fiction and non-fiction about conflicts between and among groups.

2. Math – Research the measurements of the Brooklyn Bridge. If it is a nice day, go out on the playground and draw the outline with chalk.

### Science Standards

- 3.6.3. Models and Scales
- 4.1.5. Demonstrate how measuring instruments can be used.
- 4.1.6. Explain how a good design could fail.
- 5.5.1. Make precise and varied measurements.

## RESOURCES –

Internet Website, These sites will help with understanding the bridge.

Brooklyn Bridge, [www.nycroads.com/crossing/brooklyn](http://www.nycroads.com/crossing/brooklyn)

Brooklyn Bridge, [www.greatbuildings.com/BrooklynBridge.htm](http://www.greatbuildings.com/BrooklynBridge.htm)

Brooklyn Bridge, [www.endex.com/gf/buildings/bbridge](http://www.endex.com/gf/buildings/bbridge)

Helping to search for Irish immigrants.

Irish Heritage, [www.history.com](http://www.history.com) (search Irish-American)

Irish Heritage, [www.aihs.org](http://www.aihs.org) (American Irish Historical Society)

Irish Heritage, [www.americanhistorymed.net](http://www.americanhistorymed.net)

Irish Heritage, [www.EllisIsland.org](http://www.EllisIsland.org)

The Roebings, [www.bbs.co.uk/history](http://www.bbs.co.uk/history)

Lillie Langtry, [www.LillieLangtry.com](http://www.LillieLangtry.com)

People-- Invite any known Irish Immigrants to speak to the class. Some volunteers could be found through the Indianapolis International Center.

#### BOOK ACTIVITIES:

Individual activities: 1. Research a recipe from your family heritage. Prepare it with your family and bring it to school. Most of the kids in my class have an Irish heritage, so it will be perfect. 2. I notice she also has written books about other family heritages. They will do the same.

Social Studies: 5.1.18 Historical Comprehension and Research

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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Indiana Standards – [www.doe.in.gov/standards/welcome2.html](http://www.doe.in.gov/standards/welcome2.html)

Author's Website – [www.patriciareillygiff.com](http://www.patriciareillygiff.com)

Publisher's Website – [www.randomhouse.com/features/patriciareillygiff.htm](http://www.randomhouse.com/features/patriciareillygiff.htm)

Brooklyn Bridge – [www.nycroads.com/crossing/brooklyn](http://www.nycroads.com/crossing/brooklyn)

[www.greatbuildings.com/BrooklynBridge.htm](http://www.greatbuildings.com/BrooklynBridge.htm)

[www.endex.com/gf/buildings/bbridge](http://www.endex.com/gf/buildings/bbridge)

Irish Heritage [www.aihs.org](http://www.aihs.org)

[www.EllisIsland.org](http://www.EllisIsland.org)

[www.Americanhistorymed.net](http://www.Americanhistorymed.net)

[www.history.com](http://www.history.com) (search Irish American)

The Roebings [www.bbs.co.uk/history](http://www.bbs.co.uk/history)

Lillie Langtry [www.LillieLangtry.com](http://www.LillieLangtry.com)

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