

Deepening Understanding
YR6 Fiction Text

The Irish Twins
by Lucy Finch Perkins



One day of the world, when it was young summer in Ireland, old Grannie Malone sat by her fireplace knitting. She was all alone, and in her lap lay a letter. Sometimes she took the letter in her hands, and turned it over and over, and looked at it. Then she would put it down again with a little sigh. "If I but had the learning," said Grannie Malone to herself, "I could be reading Michael's letters without calling in the Priest, and 'tis long since he passed this door. 'Tis hard work waiting until some one can tell me what at all is in it."

She stooped over and put a bit of peat on the fire, and because she had no one else to talk to, she talked to the tea-kettle. "There now," she said to it, "'tis a lazy bit of steam that's coming out of the nose of you! I'll be wanting my tea soon, and no water boiling." She lifted the lid and peeped into the kettle. "'Tis empty entirely!" she cried, "and a thirsty kettle it is surely, and no one but myself to fetch and carry for it!"

She got up slowly, laid her knitting and the letter on the chair, took the kettle off the hook, and went to the door. There was but one door and one window in the one little room of her cabin, so if the sun had not been shining brightly it would have been quite dark within. But the upper half of the door stood open, and the afternoon sun slanted across the earthen floor and brightened the dishes that stood on the old dresser. It even showed Grannie Malone's bed in the far end of the room, and some of her clothes hanging from the rafters overhead. There was little else in the room to see, except her chair, a wooden table, and a little bench by the fire, a pile of peat on the hearth, and a bag of potatoes in the corner.

Grannie Malone opened the lower half of the door and stepped out into the sunshine. Some speckled hens that had been sunning themselves on



the doorstep fluttered out of the way, and then ran after her to the well. "Shoo--get along with you!" cried Grannie Malone. She flapped her apron at them. "'Tis you that are always thinking of something to eat! Sure, there are bugs enough in Ireland, without your always being at my heels to be fed! Come now,-- scratch for your living like honest hens, and I'll give you a sup of water if it's dry you are." The

well had a stone curb around it, and a bucket with a rope tied to it stood on the curb. Grannie let the bucket down into the well until she heard it strike the fresh spring water with a splash. Then she pulled and pulled on the rope. The bucket came up slowly and water spilled over the sides as Grannie lifted it to the curb. She poured some of the water into the dish for the hens, filled her kettle, and then straightened her bent back, and stood looking at the little cabin and the brown bog beyond.

"Sure, it's old we all are together," she said to herself, nodding her head. "The old cabin with the rain leaking through the thatch of a wet day, and the old well with moss on the stones of it. And the hens themselves, too old to cook, and too old to be laying,--except on the doorstep in the sunshine, the creatures!--But 'tis home, thanks be to God." She lifted her kettle and went slowly back into the house. The hens followed her to the door, but she shut the lower half of it behind her and left them outside.

She went to the fireplace and hung the kettle on the hook, blew the coals to a blaze with a pair of leaky bellows, and sat down before the fire once more to wait for the water to boil. She knit round and round her stocking, and there was no sound in the room but the click-click of her needles, and the tick-tick of the clock, and the little purring noise of the fire on the hearth. Just as the kettle began to sing, there was a squawking among the hens on the doorstep, and two dark heads appeared above the closed half of the door.

A little girl's voice called out, "How are you at all, Grannie Malone?"

And a little boy's voice said, "We've come to bring you a sup of milk that Mother sent you."

Grannie Malone jumped out of her chair and ran to the door. "Och, if it's not the McQueen Twins--the two of them!" she cried. "Bless your sweet faces! Come in, Larry and Eileen! You are as welcome as the flowers of spring."

