Why did Fergus change his mind?

Read two adaptations. Find what stays the same and what changes.

Tuiren has been changed into a hound. Fergus, who dislikes dogs, has been asked to care for her. These are two short adaptations of the same episode, not quotations.

A · Lady Gregory

Fergus took the hound out to see what she could do. She was an excellent hunter. He had never known a better hound. After seeing her skill, Fergus began to like dogs.

B · James Stephens

The hound was frightened and trembling. Fergus held her and tried to comfort her. She licked him, and soon followed him happily. He realised that she liked him. Before long, he loved her too.

1. What is the same in both versions?

2. What changes Fergus’s mind in A? What changes it in B?

3. Which version gives more space to feelings? Use a detail to explain.

4. Do these stories prove that a person became a dog? Explain.

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Suggested answers

1. What stays the same?

Fergus begins by disliking dogs, cares for Tuiren in hound form, and changes his feelings. Learners need not use these exact words.

2. What causes the change?

In Gregory, the hound's hunting skill impresses him. In Stephens, comforting the frightened dog and receiving her affection change the relationship.

3. Which gives more space to feelings?

Stephens's version does, through fear, comfort, affection and Fergus's changing response. Accept another reading if it is supported by a relevant detail.

4. What can the sources establish?

They show how two writers tell a legendary episode. They do not prove a magical transformation. The publication dates tell us when these books appeared, not when the supposed events happened.

Try another telling

Ask the learner to retell the meeting from the hound's point of view. Label this as their own invention. Then underline one detail taken from a source and circle one detail they added.

Sources and teaching notes

Lady Gregory: Gods and Fighting Men, first published 1904; consulted 1905 edition. Part II, Book I, chapter III, "Birth of Bran". Read the source.

James Stephens: Irish Fairy Tales (1920), "The Birth of Bran", chapter IV. Read the source.

These are literary retellings, not two independent eyewitness accounts. The extracts are original shortened adaptations for this activity; threats and violence elsewhere in the originals have been omitted. Suggested for ages 9+ with adult support as needed.