

---

# NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS

---

## Teacher's Guide

---

© GemmaMedia 2009

---

This **Teacher's Guide** is intended for educational use only. It may not be resold.  
For more information on this and other guides and the Gemma Open Door Series, please contact  
[info@gemmamedia.com](mailto:info@gemmamedia.com).

GemmaMedia LLC  
230 Commercial Street | Boston, Massachusetts 02109 | 617.818.2133  
[www.gemmamedia.com](http://www.gemmamedia.com)

**Preliminary remarks**

- The following assignments offer tasks and activities, which the teacher or students can choose from.
- Many tasks are suitable for talks or presentations to the class.
- Some tasks overlap with others.
- Since the material can be edited, the teacher may enlarge the tables, diagrams, and charts, or the students may copy them into their exercise books.

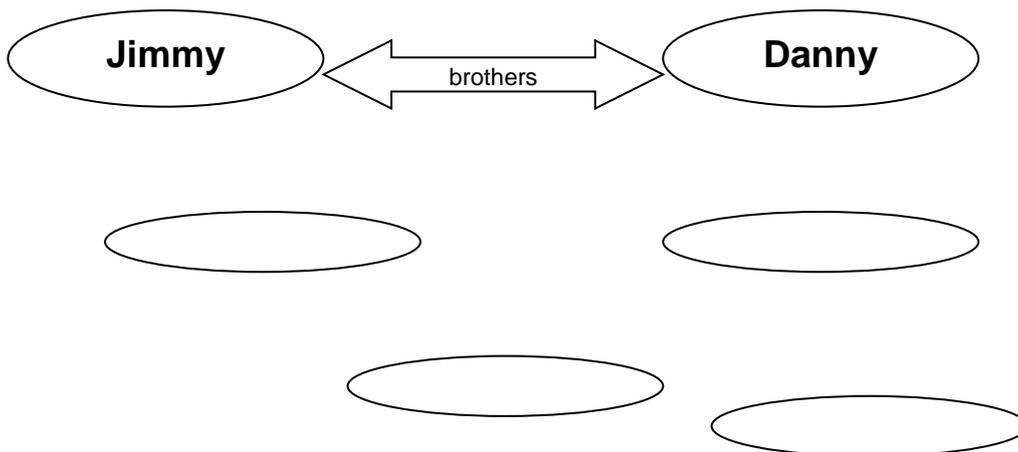
**Pre-reading activities**

- 1 Look at the picture on the **cover** and use your imagination. Who are the two boys? What are they doing?
- 2 Two brothers meet again after a long time. Twenty-one years ago, an argument drove them apart. Try to imagine what this argument was about and tell the story.

**While-reading activities**

**1 Constellation of figures**

This is a story about two brothers. Fill in the chart below to show how the minor characters are connected to Jimmy and Danny.



**2 Titles**

Create titles for each chapter.

**3 Summaries**

Write a very short summary of each chapter (2 or 3 sentences each.)

**4 Narration**

As you read each chapter, fill in the following columns:

Chapter	Flashbacks	Chronological narration of the meeting in the pub after 21 years

**5 Tension**

From the beginning of the story, we know that Jimmy and Danny haven't met for more than 20 years. At the end of each chapter, think of a possible reason for the brothers' long separation.

Chapter	Possible reasons
	[r1]

**6 Characterization of Jim (Jimmy) and Daniel (Danny)**

Throughout the story, Jimmy seems to be the dominant brother. Find examples:

Chapter	Examples of Jimmy's dominance

Also find examples of Danny's (little) triumphs over his dominant brother, Jimmy.

Chapter	Examples of Danny's triumphs

## 7 Setting

Find the settings of the story. Use a map for illustration.

## 8 Themes

While reading the book, make notes about the following themes:

- 1 What **typical behavior and rites** of little boys and teenagers do Jimmy and Danny show?
- 2 What **rivalries** between the brothers play a role?
- 3 What **changes in their home town** do Danny and Jimmy notice when they meet again after 21 years?
- 4 In what way is the **behavior of the barman** typical?

## 9 Narrator, point of view, and change of perspective

- 1 How is the story told (narrator and point of view)?

*(You can find a definition of narrator and point of view in a library or on the Internet, or your teacher may have one ready for you.)*

- 2 Imagine you are Jimmy's and Danny's mother. What would you tell someone who asks you about their childhood?

## 10 Interpretation by acting

- 1 Chapter 1, pages 2 and 3: Act the scene.
- 2 Chapter 4, p. 13 through p. 17, line 2: Act the scene.

*(These are just two examples. There are more opportunities for acting in other passages.)*

## 11 Freeze frame

Make a freeze frame of Danny, Kay and Billy Dunne (Chapter 6, p. 22, lines 4–9). A freeze frame is like a snapshot of a situation.

1st step: Imagine your character's body position in this situation and decide what your character's face looks like. Then find and freeze your pose. Don't talk.

2nd step: Hold your pose while the rest of the class interprets the freeze frame.

3rd step: Rejoin the class and participate as students discuss this interpretation.

*(This is just one example. More freeze frames are possible in other passages.)*

## 12 Style

Have a close look at page 42, lines 2–9 and page 54, line 14 through page 55, line 12. What do you notice about the structure of the sentences? Try to imagine why the author writes in this style.

**Post-reading activities****1 Book review**

Write a critical book review and state your personal opinion.  
(If you liked the book, you may encourage other students to read it.)

**2 Letter writing**

In the story Jimmy phones Danny to arrange the meeting. Imagine instead that he writes a letter. Write this letter from Jimmy to Danny.

**3 Ending**

Imagine that Jimmy actually has cancer, with only a short time to live. Write a different ending to the story.

**4 Gossip**

Imagine you are the pub's barman. After the brothers' reunion, tell your next customer what you just saw and heard. Try to make the story interesting. You may exaggerate and change or add a few things.

**5 Comment**

- 1 Write a short comment on the following topic: "Brothers and sisters can never be real friends."
- 2 Explain the phrase *Dogs are for life, not just for Christmas* (Chapter 18, p. 92).

**6 Summary**

Write a summary of the story in 90–100 words or 180–200 words or 270–300 words.  
(It is more difficult to summarize a story like this in 100 words than in 300 words.)

**7 Book cover**

Design your own book cover.  
(Your teacher may hold a contest for the best entry.)

**8 Title**

Think of other titles for the story.  
(Your teacher may hold a contest for the best suggestion.)