

Roger Casement's Bones: Teacher's Guide

Overall Concept of the Teaching Unit

Since his execution by the British government on 3 August 1916, the afterlife of proto-humanitarian, Irish Nationalist and “Black Diarist” Roger Casement has grown in both cultural and material significance. Casement’s material remains, his bones, which were interred in a lime pit in Pentonville Prison London in 1916, were subject to a political controversy that stretched across half a century, eventually resulting in the 1965 re-interment of Casement’s bones in Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin – notably not, as was Casement’s express wish, in Northern Ireland due to Ireland’s continued partition. By focusing on Casement’s bones, this teaching unit examines the practice of using the physical to imagine the non-physical, of establishing a physical connection to something that is lost. The “secular relics” and tangible memory places linked to Roger Casement are the focus of four texts that underlie this teaching unit: an article by Lucy McDiarmid, a radio play by David Rudkin, a dictionary entry by Frank Biletz and a poem by Richard Murphy.

General Learning Aims of the Unit

The aim of this unit is for students to understand the cultural significance and apply the abstract concept of tangible memory objects and places by engaging with the material remains and symbolic marks left by Roger Casement. His cultural afterlife inspired the different textual and audio-visual materials incorporated in this teaching unit. Students can explain and apply the concept of “secular relics” to their own experience and are able to demonstrate their understanding in both speaking and writing. Students can comprehend non-standard English dialects and standardise colloquial usage, they are able to distinguish and employ different grammatical tenses, and they can identify the structural and lexical features of a poem.

The Tasks

The teaching unit comprises five tasks, two of which are optional. It is suggested that the tasks are completed in the order from a)-e), with tasks d) and e) being optional additions to the teaching unit. Since task d) simultaneously serves as a summary of Casement’s life, it can also be used to begin the teaching unit. The core task a) revolves around the conceptualisation of “secular relics” through the interpretation of an introductory video on Casement’s 1965 State Funeral and a guided reading comprehension using extracts from Lucy McDiarmid’s 2002 article “Secular Relics”. Task b) is a language production task, in which students relate this concept to their own lives by writing and discussing a paragraph on the importance of memory objects and places of their own. Task c) is a listening comprehension from the BBC production of David Rudkin’s 1973 radio play *Cries from Casement as His Bones Are Brought to Dublin*. This fill-in-the-gap exercise serves both as a vocabulary exercise and as an opportunity to engage with two non-standard varieties of English. Task d) is an optional grammar exercise on mixed tenses using Casement’s biography. Task e) is an optional textual and structural analysis of Richard Murphy’s 1968 poem “Casement’s Funeral”.

Teaching Materials

The appendix contains all the necessary in-class materials for tasks a)-e), as well as in-depth explanation of the tasks, their respective learning outcomes, the types of student activity and key skills involved, as well as references to the source texts and further reading.

References

Texts used in class

- Biletz, Frank A. "Casement, Sir Roger (1864–1916)." *Historical Dictionary of Ireland. Historical Dictionaries of Europe*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2014. 69–70.
- Rudkin, David. *Cries from Casement as His Bones Are Brought to Dublin*. 1973. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974.
- McDiarmid, Lucy. "Secular Relics: Casement's Boat, Casement's Dish." *Textual Practice* 16.2 (2002), 277–302.
- Murphy, Richard. "Casement's Funeral." 1968. *Windharp: Poems of Ireland since 1916*. Eds. Niall MacMonagle. Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2015. 75–76.

Further Reading

- Cole, Teju. "The White-Savior Industrial Context". *The Atlantic*, 21 March 2012.
- Grant, Kevin. "Bones of Contention: The Repatriation of the Remains of Roger Casement". *Journal of British Studies* 41 (2002), 329–353.
- Koch, Ursula E. "Female Allegories of the Nation." *Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe* (online), <https://ehne.fr/en/node/12185>. Accessed 14 Nov. 2021.
- McDiarmid, Lucy. "The Afterlife of Roger Casement: Memory, Folklore, Ghosts, 1916–." *The Irish Art of Controversy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005. 167–210.

(Audio-)Visual Elements (in chronological order)

- Picture of 1965 State Funeral: McMahon/Getty Images. From Battersby, Eileen. "Roger Casement: A Romantic Defender of the Oppressed". *The Irish Times*, 3 Aug. 2016.
- Video of 1965 State Funeral: British Pathé. "Irish Honour Sir Roger Casement (1965)." YouTube, 13 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCwFuURQqR4>. Accessed 15 Nov. 2021.
- Picture of relics: Richard Huber, Wikicommons. "Ganzkörperreliquie des Heiligen Hyacinthus in der ehemalige Zisterzienser-Klosterkirche St. Mariä Himmelfahrt im Kloster Fürstenfeld in Fürstenfeldbruck". Sept. 2010. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/31/Kloster_F%C3%BCrstenfeld_Heilige_Hyacinthus.JPG.
- Picture of Banna Strand: "Banna Strand, Tralee". Visit Ireland Pinterest. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/298011700323801299/>.
- Picture of Casement Monument on Banna Strand: Sheehan, Dennis. "Banna Strand". 25 Sept. 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banna_Strand.
- Picture of "Dea Hibernia": DeoMercurio. "A Hymn to Hibernia". Blog-Post. 31 Aug. 2017. <https://deomercurio.wordpress.com/2017/08/31/a-hymn-to-hibernia/>.