

Teacher's guide – modular teaching unit - Roger Casement

Introduction

This teacher's guide will present the details of the various tasks which make up a modular teaching unit concerning the Irish historical figure Roger Casement and provide suggestions for teaching methods and main learning aims of the exercises. The purpose of the whole modular teaching unit is for the students to improve their various English skills through a variety of activities with a focus on a topic meant to stir their interest. If taught effectively, it will improve their fundamental English skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) plus train their language production, language practice and reading comprehension via grammar and vocabulary exercises.

The tasks below are all based upon the life story of Roger Casement, an Irish historical figure whose life had stages which were altruistic, rebellious, nationalistic, controversial and tragic at various points. The material provides a general overview of who Roger Casement was including his place in history. It is broken down into a core reading/research task, including an additional two-part speaking task, plus three supplementary exercises investigating further into his time as an activist and nationalist as well as how his legacy is perceived. The tasks have been created with a focus on analysis of language via a variety of themes that may be unfamiliar to the students. In each case, this is followed by communication activities, meaning that the students will be participating in regular discussions, plus presenting work to each other, to create a balance between the theoretical and practical elements of the language and also to challenge the students to relay information/facts learnt to test understanding.

The order of the exercises below is recommended if the teacher is interested in using the material to complete the core task plus the four supplementary tasks across two double lessons (3 hours of teaching) plus homework activities. However, the second and fourth additional tasks could be interchangeable (Eva Gore-Booth's Poem and the passive investigation), if the teacher felt it necessary. The tasks in this modular teaching unit are intended for students at B2-C1 level according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) language learning scale.

General learning aims

As this modular teaching unit is based upon the life story of Roger Casement, the core task has been designed for the students to understand the principal aspects of who Casement was and why he is a notable historical figure. The additional speaking task trains the students' ability to relay the information learnt in the core task by testing their understanding of the key areas of Casement's life and training their communication skills. Therefore, the core task plus additional speaking task should be taught before any of the supplementary exercises but can also be taught independently. However, the additional tasks (2-4) are only recommended to be taught in support of the core task and additional speaking task, unless the teacher is willing to present a summary of Roger Casement's life to the class, to provide context for the additional exercises before undertaking them.

The core task – reading comprehension and research into the life of Roger Casement

The core task is one which separates the main elements of Casement's life and then divides them amongst the class. This is done for two principal reasons: firstly, the essay: *The Butterfly Collector* by Rebecca Solnit, which accompanies the homework assignment, could be excessive for the whole class to read in its entirety. Therefore, as a minimum, the students can just focus on the section listed on their information card. Secondly, by dividing the elements of Casement's life amongst the class, it creates a situation where the class members need to share their findings and encourages the natural speaking task which follows. The method of answering the reading comprehension questions has been created for the students to have the knowledge of where in *The Butterfly Collector* to find the information they need, but also have the opportunity, if they wish, to investigate further to obtain better understanding of Roger Casement via further reading of the text or independent research. This encourages the students who enjoy reading and research to extend their homework task, and those who are not as motivated to work with the minimum reading quantity required. This lead-in homework task has also been chosen for that purpose, as the students can spend as much time as they deem necessary to answer the questions and therefore makes the task more suitable as a homework activity. The questions have also been designed to not have a clear or definitive answer, hopefully generating discussions when they return for the speaking tasks.

The first additional task – two stage speaking task based on the homework activity

On returning, the students must be placed with the other class members who have also drawn the same area of Casement's life to research, to see what information they have discovered and

share their answers amongst the group. Due to the openness of the questions, some disparity could exist within the groups. However, this should make the first stage of the speaking task more discussion based, instead of the groups quickly checking and agreeing on answers, and therefore discussing their element of Casement's life in more detail. Once the groups feel they have come to an agreement about what the answers to the questions are, they must then pool their information and all the group members should take notes, so they are able to present a reasonably comprehensive representation of their element of Casement's life to the rest of the class. Once this is complete, the second stage of the speaking task can take place.

In the second stage of the speaking task, the teacher has the option of how the students share their element of Roger Casement's life with the rest of the class. This decision can suit the preference of the class or teacher, as in either method (presentation or jigsaw task) the students will have to relay their knowledge about Casement, but these two different methods provide slightly different challenges. The presentation task would involve a team effort to inform the class of the group's topic plus field questions, whereas the jigsaw task takes potential pressure from the students, as they can do this in small groups, but each student must be able to relay their information plus field questions independently from their classmates. Therefore, the teacher should decide which method is more suitable for the class.

The second additional task – Eva Gore-Booth's poem

Once the core task and the first additional speaking task are complete, the remaining three exercises can be undertaken. These tasks look deeper into the significant stages of Casement's life, namely his time as an activist, a nationalist and his legacy.

The listening task of Eva Gore-Booth's poem would be recommended to proceed the core task and additional speaking task, as it is shorter than the passive investigation task, and should fill the remaining time of the first double lesson sufficiently. The task has been designed for the students to be gradually drip-fed information about the poem, initially functioning as a listening task via the recording supplied, then allowing them to gain some background knowledge via the second handout, then finally giving the whole written version of the poem to the students to analyse more comprehensively.

The poem features an array of poetic techniques which are interesting to analyse, such as alliteration, repetition and rhyme structure. Additionally, each stanza refers to a different part of Casement's life, which the class would have just been made familiar with via the core task and first additional task, making the poem a perfect follow-on exercise. Lastly, an analysis

of the vocabulary choices reveals a lot about the poem, some words of which may need defining, but could also create an interesting discussion regarding how vocabulary choice affects meaning and presents perspective. A recommended method of teaching for each stage of the task would be for the students to work individually, then be put into pairs or small groups to confer and discuss their answers to the questions, then for the teacher to discuss the topics with the whole class, before moving on to the next stage.

The third additional task – *Ruling Passions* writing task followed by presentations

The third additional task should be introduced briefly as the first double lesson closes. The handouts provided should be distributed, one set per student, throughout the class. Then the class members should be reminded or asked about what stage of Casement's life is focused upon, details of which are explained on the first page of the handout, along with the details of the task.

The aim of the task is for the students to focus on a highly significant part of Casement's life, a time of rebellion and a historic event which affected his conviction and execution. However, the task features an excerpt from the play which should be rather amusing for the students. It is important to express to the class that they have the freedom in the task to convert the text into anything written, which has the potential to spark creativity and should motivate at least some members of the class to try and create something interesting with the text.

When the students return to the next lesson with their homework, the aim should be to place the students in small groups where they can read their finished pieces to each other. This could be done a number of times, with students being moved to form new groups after a limited time period. Then the students should be allowed to provide some feedback to each other or ask questions concerning genre and language choices etc. However, if anyone has the motivation and they would like to present their piece to the whole class, this should also be encouraged. When this exercise is finished, the teacher may then collect the pieces of work for assessment and additional feedback.

The fourth additional task – A passive investigation into Roger Casement's international humanitarian movement

The fourth and final task, which could also be taught after the first additional task (switched with the poem by Eva Gore-Booth), is a grammatical exercise which focuses on the passive construction via a text written by Andrew Porter concerning Roger Casement's humanitarian

work. This text was chosen as it covers another significant element of Casement's life, which was the reason for his knighthood.

The task would be undertaken in class and could either be done individually or in pairs throughout or individually at first then checked with a partner. The text features eleven examples of passive usage, which have been highlighted in the text, and should be analysed by the students to try and discover why the choice of the passive construction was made and what agent/subject has been omitted or alternatively used as part of a by-phrase. Then the students should attempt to recreate the sentences in the active to see what the sentence would look like and then discuss their findings. Once the students have answers for the various examples, they could either discuss with the whole class via the teacher or first be put into bigger groups to discuss together before the whole class reconvene.

The students must have a reasonable knowledge of the passive voice to undertake the task, should this not be the case, perhaps a passive refresh would be necessary before beginning with the task. Alternatively, if the students have a very strong understanding of the passive voice, then a version of the handout has been provided without the constructions emboldened, for the students to locate the passive construction within the highlighted areas in the text, before beginning their analysis.

If the teacher feels the task would be too long for all the students to analyse the eleven examples of passive, then the task could easily be divided up across the class, with each group focusing on a set number of examples before reporting back to the class and discussing.