

## Teacher's Guide

The **focus** of this teaching unit lies on the **cultural aspect of Irish nationalism**, in which Roger Casement himself was deeply involved. Specifically, in this teaching unit, the students will learn about **the importance of having a language and a history for the creation and maintenance of a national identity**. Roger Casement wrote in *The Crime Against Ireland* that “The Irishman is denied the right of having a history, as he is denied the right of having a country” (87), therefore it is important to familiarise the students with (some of) Irish history. The Irish Gaelic (*Gaeilge*) language forms a large part of this history. Notably, the belief that “Irish was the very source of national spirit” was “embodied in the Gaelic League” (Mitchell 52), of which Roger Casement was a member. A shared language gives a sense of belonging to a group and remembrance of a shared history furthers the bonds. Language and history, then, can be translated into belonging and remembering. Roger Casement was both involved in the Gaelic revival during its heyday, and then became part of Irish nationalist history himself.

Students are usually taught about African or Asian countries when learning about colonialism and imperialism. This means that Ireland as the original British colony is usually not recognised as such. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge that the Irish underwent a process of “mental colonisation” (52). The history of the Irish and their language were actively suppressed by the British, resulting in the fact that even almost a century after proclaiming independence, there is only a small percentage of native Irish speakers in the Republic of Ireland. **The purpose of this unit, then, is to (re-)trace the process of decolonising the mind (a concept introduced by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o) with the students through reclamation of Irish history and the Irish language.**

The general **learning aims** for this teaching unit are for the students to be able to

- a) explain key facts about Irish history and the Irish Gaelic language (*Gaeilge*) in the context of Irish nationalism.
- b) discuss and assess their importance for an Irish national identity and national identities in general.
- c) produce their own take on the abstract concept of national identity.

Naturally, there are **many more aspects to cultural nationalism** that would be interesting to address within a classroom setting. For instance, there are the questions of who gets to speak for nationalism or who gets to claim an identity. The religious aspect to Irish national identity has

been largely left unaddressed (e.g., the supposedly clear opposition between Catholics and Protestants), as that element could be turned into an entirely self-contained teaching unit. However, it may of course be brought up for discussion in class. Furthermore, nationalism is also often very masculinist, an aspect which is also visible in the poem “The Irish Language” and might be interesting to discuss. There are great compilations of information and further material on [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) (an initiative of public libraries together with local museums and archives).

As to the **five tasks** in the unit, they are to be completed mostly in sequence.

- Preceding the first task, there is an **introductory handout** for the students. The purpose of this handout is to **glean the amount of knowledge that the students may already have of the Irish question**. The handout is comprised of a few differences between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to underline their (political) separation that the students might not be fully aware of. The students should freely discuss what comes to their minds when they see the pictures, purely as an introduction into the topic.
- After that, the first task is the **core task** of the unit, in which the students are asked to reconstruct (some of) Irish history. **The purpose of the core task is for the students to be introduced to the complex history of the Irish island and how linguistic and personal history interlink with political history.**
- After the core task, there are two **vocabulary practice tasks**, only one of which should be done with the students. The teacher is free to choose between the **listening exercise with the “Dunluce Castle” poem** and the **LearningApps exercise with the “The Irish Language” poem**. The task with the “Dunluce Castle” poem is more oriented towards classes with higher language proficiency, as the vocabulary is rather tricky, and the students are asked to identify mispronunciations in the recording as part of the task. This might be too challenging for lower-level proficiency classes. With these tasks, the students delve deeper into the significance and importance of language for Irish nationalist identity. The idea is that the students learn to appreciate that language involves more than simply communicating information. Within the tasks, students first remain on the literal level of vocabulary revision but are then asked to go beyond that level and consider the language and the terms as a whole.
- Depending on which task was chosen for the vocabulary practice, there are **two options for the grammar task**. The grammar tasks in themselves are identical, but the poem must match the one chosen for the vocabulary task, so that the students are already familiar with the text. **The grammar tasks are partly revision and partly preparation for the type and format of questions that might be asked in the Matura exams.** Students can practise writing

constructive comments within a (restrictive) set number of words. The answers to the task may be collected and used for assessment but may also just function as practice.

- The **final task** is a more **creative task meant to be done as homework**. This task is **optional**; however, it is recommended to round off the unit and make possible an appraisal of what has been learnt in the course of the unit. The amount of creativity is purposefully left open, in order to accommodate for students that struggle with creativity. The question may be amended in order to fit different needs and strengths within a class.

Regarding the number of compulsory tasks, as Irish nationalism – even “just” the cultural aspect of it – is a large and complex topic, **it is not recommended to only do the core task**, as a history lesson in isolation cannot provide the students with an appropriate picture of Irish nationalism. It is therefore recommended to do at least the core task, and the vocabulary and grammar task.

#### Works Cited:

Casement, Roger. *The Crime Against Ireland and How the War May Right It*. Digitised by the Internet Archive, 2014, [archive.org/details/crimeagainstirel00case\\_0](http://archive.org/details/crimeagainstirel00case_0). Accessed 21 Nov. 2021.

Mitchell, Angus. “An Irish Putumayo’: Roger Casement’s Humanitarian Relief Campaign Among the Connemara Islanders 1913-14.” *Irish Economic and Social History* 31, 2004, pp. 41-60.

#### Further reading:

Mitchell, Angus. “A Strange Chapter of Irish History’: Sir Roger Casement, Germany and the 1916 Rising.” *Field Day Review* 8, 2012, pp. 4-21.

*This article includes more information on Roger Casement’s involvement in the Easter Rising.*

O’Callaghan, Margaret. “With the Eyes of Another Race, of a People Once Hunted Themselves’: Casement, Colonialism and a Remembered Past.” *Ireland in Transition, 1867—1921*, ed. D. George Boyce and Alan O’Day, Routledge, 2004, 159-175.

*There are many more poems by Roger Casement in this article that can be used to discuss his affiliation with and attitude towards Irish national identity.*

Rudkin, David. *Cries From Casement as His Bones Are Brought to Dublin*. 1973. BBC, 1974.

*The radioplay includes further interesting sections on the nationalist reclamation of Roger Casement’s person and the problems these reclamations cause(d).*