



## Unit 7:

*The Irish War of Independence,  
1919-21*

TEACHERS HANDBOOK

*Senior Cycle*



## Senior Cycle Lesson Plans

### UNIT 7: THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1919-21

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<b>Field of Study:</b>	Later Modern Field of Study
<b>Syllabus Topic:</b>	Later Modern Ireland, Topic 3: The Pursuit of Sovereignty and the Impact of Partition, 1912-49
<b>Perspective:</b>	Politics and administration
<b>Unit:</b>	The War of Independence
<b>Key Personalities:</b>	Éamon de Valera; Michael Collins;
<b>Key Concepts:</b>	Sovereignty, Republic; IRA, Allegiance, Physical Force
<b>Required Time:</b>	The teacher may choose from the suggested lessons and worksheets according to the requirements of the class
<b>Resources:</b>	How to Read a Map ( <a href="http://irishrevolution.ie">irishrevolution.ie</a> ) Atlas of the Irish Revolution Document Pack and Student Activity Sheets Projector, Internet connection, Computer Lab

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this series of lessons, senior history students will engage with primary source material and maps based on historical data relating to the Irish War of Independence, 1919-21 in the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*. In line with the broad aims and objectives of the Leaving Certificate History Syllabus, engagement with these literary and non-literary texts should enhance students' 'knowledge and understanding' of the three phases of the Irish War of Independence, the military and intelligence dimensions of the conflict, the propaganda used by both sides during the conflict and the most significant events between 1919 and 1921. These lessons are also designed to reinforce the procedural concepts of 'source and evidence' and 'fact and opinion', and the interpretative concepts of 'cause and consequence' and 'comparison and contrast'.

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The lesson plans and activity sheets are designed to promote the development of skills in working with evidence. The interrogation and interpretation of documents, images and map will bolster the students' appreciation of the nature and variety of historical evidence. As preparation for 'life and citizenship', students are prompted to think critically and make judgments based on the evaluation of evidence and to be aware of bias, and strive to be objective.

*At the conclusion of these lessons students will have*

- An deeper understanding of the key concepts of Sovereignty, Republic; IRA, Allegiance, Physical Force
- Gained deeper knowledge of the military aspects of the Irish War of Independence
- Identified some of the key personalities and groups associated with the War of Independence  
An understanding of the roles played by the IRA, the RIC and the auxiliary police force during the conflict
- A deeper appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of different types of historical sources.
- Examined controversial historical topics from a variety of perspectives
- A greater appreciation for the role of women during the War of Independence
- Worked effectively as part of a group in a series of group work assignments.
- Practised the research and evaluation skills required to engage in the documents-based questions and to complete their own research study.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### *Assessment For Learning:*

During these lessons students are encouraged to engage in self-assessment and peer assessment. Collaboratively compiling research checklists, pair and group work and personal and peer assessment are effective strategies for Assessment For Learning, as is constructive teacher feedback – oral and written.

### *Assessment of Learning*

Students are assessed by the teacher in class, on their homework (essay) assignments and on the results of the group presentations. Students are given feedback verbally from their teacher, through comments on their work and also through grading.

## **DIFFERENTIATION:**

Higher and ordinary level students are usually in the same class, which means that there should be an important emphasis on differentiation. Differentiation strategies are incorporated into the lesson plans and activity guidelines. These include:

- Giving students the option to choose a task that they are interested in.
- Group work
- Use of Pre-assessment
- Tiered Assignments etc.

## LESSON 1: THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY

### Summary:

This lesson is designed to introduce students to the first phase of the War of Independence. Two *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* maps depicting the closure of rural barracks and the consolidation of the RIC between 1919 and 1921 provide a sense of the country-wide nature of the conflict. The first lesson also introduces students to the fact that the Irish police force, primarily Irish Catholics were at the front line of the conflict from beginning and subjected to boycotting, harassment and attack. The lesson concludes with a short student task designed to consolidate learning.

**Key Question:**     *What were the characteristics of the first phase of the Irish War of Independence?  
How did the Royal Irish Constabulary react to IRA attacks on barracks, 1919-21?*

**Learning Outcomes :** At the conclusion of this lesson students should

- Be able to explain the reasons for, and effects of IRA attacks on RIC barracks between 1919 and 1921
- Better understand the experience of an RIC officer during the War of Independence
- Have extracted evidence from maps to answer questions and complete report.

## LESSON 1: THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY

### Overview/Starter:

The teacher might begin by projecting the image of Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) Barracks, Brookeborough, Co. Fermanagh, early 1900s in order to begin a discussion about the police force.

- Who were the RIC?
- Why would a young Irish man join the force?
- What was their role in Irish rural communities?
- Why would the RIC have been valuable as the eyes and ears of the British administration in Ireland.

### Teacher Led Learning (input):

The brief questions and answers session will lead to teacher-lead learning about the police boycott and how in 1919 republican tactics expanded to include harassment and attacks on barracks in order to undermine and intimidate the force. It would also important to point out that in the first phase of the Irish War of Independence, the British government refused to recognise the Irish Republic or to admit that a state of war existed between this republic and the UK. The violence in Ireland was described as 'disorder' and the IRA was a 'murder gang' of terrorists and assassins. For this reason, it was the job of the police rather than the 50,000-strong British army garrison in Ireland to deal with the challenge to the authority of the British administration.

### Student Task

**Step 1:** Working individually or in pairs, the students read Docs A-E relating to the closure of rural police barracks and answer questions 1-7 that follow. The teacher may choose to move between groups to assess answers, or to field answers once the task is completed.

**Step 2:** Students take on the role of RIC District Inspector in Cork in 1921 and are required to write a report on barracks closures in the city and county in the past three years. Using the maps and captions (*Docs C and D*) as evidence, students write the report on the template provided in the *Student Worksheet*.

## LESSON 2: MICHAEL COLLINS AND THE INTELLIGENCE WAR

### *Summary:*

During these lessons students will learn about Michael Collins' role as IRA Director of Intelligence, the importance of the intelligence network to the republican movement and involvement of double agents such as Ned Broy and David Nelligan. An *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* map of the locations in Dublin associated with Michael Collins during the War of Independence will enhance students understanding of the centrality of key personality. An account by Piaras Beaslai, a Bureau of Military History witness statement and the transcript of an interview with David Nelligan encourage students to consider the content but also the reliability of these different sources. The lesson finishes with a pair-work task asking students to extract information from the map to create a police profile of Michael Collins.

*Key Questions:*                      *What roles did Michael Collins' assume during the War of Independence?*

*Learning Outcomes : At the conclusion of this lessons students should have*

- A greater understanding of Michael Collins' role in establishing an intelligence network during the War of Independence
- Gained a deeper insight into the key personality of Michael Collins
- Explained the importance of intelligence to the republican movement
- Assessed the strengths and weaknesses of an interview as a historical source
- Presented the findings of their research in a structured but creative way
- Practised concision in their writing.

## LESSON 2: MICHAEL COLLINS AND THE INTELLIGENCE WAR

### *Part 1: Overview/Starter:*

The teacher might begin by drawing student's attention to the Map of Location associated with Michael Collins during the War of Independence. If students have access to computers, asked them to choose three of four locations from the map and using Google maps, establish if those locations are still there today, and if so what is their function - i.e. pub, restaurant, residence, shop etc. The exercise will engage student interest and increase the relevancy of the topic.

### *Part 2: Teacher Led Learning (input):*

The teacher may need to provide some biographical details on Collins and information on the formation of the 'Squad' before directing them to documents in the Student Worksheet.

### *Student Task*

**Step 1:** Working in pairs, the students read Docs F-I relating to Collins and the GHQ Intelligence Department and answer questions 1-13 that follow. The teacher may choose to move between groups to assess answers, or to field answers once the task is completed.

**Step 2:** Explain that students will take on the role one of Collins' intelligence operatives in the Telegraph Office. They have just intercepted a message from a 'G' man providing information on Michael Collins' background, appearance and his movements during the previous week. The first part of the message is written in English. The final sentence, giving the location in Dublin for a planned RIC stakeout, is written using code.

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- Step 3:* divide the class into groups of three students. Each group will compose the ‘G’ man’s message using the template in the Student Worksheet.
- Step 4:* Student's conduct research into the biography and appearance of Michael Collins and succinctly complete the first paragraph of the telegraph.
- Step 5:* The second paragraph of the telegram briefly describes Collin's activities during the previous week. During the week in question, Collins inspected the locations in Dublin associated with the ‘Squad’. Using the information in the map (Doc H), write a short report on his movements around the city and his possible activities
- Step 6:* Using the code provided by Liam Archer in his witness statement, (Doc I) and the map (Doc H) students write a short sentence giving the location of a planned police stakeout. They should choose a location on the map where Collins would be very likely to visit and the stakeout could be staged inconspicuously.
- Step 7:* The last step in the task is to collected all of the telegraphs and redistribute them among the groups making sure that no group receives their own telegraph. Working together, students attempt to crack the codes.

#### *Part 4: Plenary Review:*

The winning group is the one that correctly breaks the code first. To consolidate learning, the teacher may choose to pose the following short essay question for homework.

***'What was the significance of the role of Michael Collins during the War of Indendence?'***



## LESSONS 2-5: WARRING FACTIONS

### *Summary:*

This lesson is designed to guide students in identifying the significance of the deployment of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries to Ireland in 1920. By examining a retrospective interview with a British soldier posted in Ireland from 1920, students will also consider the military situation in Ireland from more than one perspective. A selection of maps from the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* introduce students to the sophisticated structure and organisation of the Irish Republican Army from 1920, IRA mobilisation in each county and membership of flying columns, 1920-21. These unique sources allow students to identify IRA structure in their own localities bringing relevancy to the topic and enhancing student engagement. Witness statements, an issue of the IRA news-letter, *An tOglach* and a list of IRA outrages between 1919 and 1921 complement the cartographic sources to enhance student understanding of the aims and methods of the IRA.

*Depending on considerations of time and class requirements, teachers may choose to use some or o all of the documents and students tasks included in this lesson.*

**Key Question:**                      *How did the British Government reinforce the RIC in 1920?*  
                                              *How was the IRA organised on a national level?*  
                                              *In what areas of Ireland was IRA membership at its highest?*

**Learning Outcomes :** *At the conclusion of this lesson students should*

- Be able to explain why the arrival of the Black and Tans was a key event during the Irish War of Independence.
- Have a deeper understanding of membership numbers of the IRA and Cumann na mBan
- Be more familiar with the key concepts of Physical Force, Republic and IRA
- Know the primary methods used by the IRA during 1920-21
- Explain the nature and importance of Active Service Units (Flying Columns)
- Have interrogated several primary source documents relating to the same topic
- Be more aware of the bias in oral history accounts
- Have examined the strengths and weaknesses of autobiography as a historical source
- Have responded creatively to a selection of historical texts.
- Have made judgments based on evidence extracted from a variety of sources
- Have engaged in a group research task and a verbal review of that research process.

## LESSON 3-5: WARRING FACTIONS

### *Overview/Starter:*

The teacher begins by explaining the learning outcomes for this lesson before surveying students about their prior knowledge about the Black and Tans, Flying Columns and Cummann na mBan.

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### *Student Task 1: Reinforcing the RIC*

- Step 1:* Working in pairs, the students read Docs J-L: a recruitment poster for RIC reinforcement, a map showing the dates of arrival and the distribution Auxiliary companies and the transcript of an interview with a British soldier about his memories of serving in Ireland during the War of Independence.
- Step 2:* Working individually or in pairs, students answer question 1-11 that follow. These are comprehension questions based on the text of the documents and criticism questions about language and reliability.
- Step 3:* When the task is complete, students should volunteer their answers as part of a class discussion on the RIC reinforcements.
- Step 4:* Students may choose on of the following writing tasks based on the transcript of the interview with Major Reginald Graham (Document L)
- (a) Imagine that you are fifteen-year old Reginald Graham. Write a letter to your brother in Devonport in England describing your experience in Ireland during your first year of service. Using the evidence from Docs J and K, you should also include some details about the Black and Tans and the new Auxiliary Division of the RIC which began to arrive in Ireland in July 1920.

**OR**

- (b) In his interview Major Graham mentions the IRA attack on Tramore barracks in 1921. Research the details of that event and write a short account of the attack comparing your findings with the information provided by Major Graham.

### *Student Task 2: The Irish Republican Army*

- Step 1:* Working in pairs, the students examine Docs M-R: a map showing the brigade structure of the IRA; extracts from *An t-Óglach*; a map showing the density of IRA membership by county, extracts from the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act (1920); witness statement by flying column members, a map showing the locations and membership of Flying columns and a list of IRA 'outrages' against Crown forces, 1919-21.

As there are six documents in this section, the teacher may need to provide background and/or some context for one or more of the documents.

- Step 2:* Working individually or in pairs, students answer questions 1-13. During a survey of student answers, focus particularly on (q. 11) reinforcing how the harsher regulations in Military Law areas meant that an increasing number of Volunteers went on the run. If time permit, this may move to a brief discussion of the provision of safe-houses by a sympathetic public and the connection between fugitive Volunteers and the formation of flying columns.
- Step 3:* Having discussed answers to questions 1-13, students should work individually or in pairs to complete the remaining questions 14-23 which look more closely at the formation and complexion of the flying columns. The teacher might choose to move between pairs to assess answers to ask student to share their answers in a class forum.



*Step 4:* Explain the concept of the group research and design task.

A new book has been commissioned on *Flying Columns during the Irish War of Independence*. As local historians, the class has been asked to **contribute a short chapter** on IRA guerrilla activity in your local area. You have also been asked to submit **artwork for the cover** of the new book, to **suggest a title** and **write the blurb** for the back cover.

The chapter will include:

1. An introduction about the War of Independence in general
2. A brief account of the establishment of the local flying column
3. Information about the column and any particular activities or engagements that they were involved in
4. Any conclusions about the IRA activity in your area

*If there was little guerrilla activity in the student's own county, it may be more a fulfilling research exercise if different groups are assigned brigade areas with active flying columns.*

*Step 5:* Divide the class into groups of four students.

*Step 6:* Using the information in the Student Worksheet and Documents J-R as a starting point, each group should discuss ideas about the book title and cover art. The title should be historically relevant but also memorable. The artwork should reflect the atmosphere of the period as well as the topic of the book.

All group members will conduct research before the next class. Before the class finishes, group should decide who will take on the editorial duties of:

1. **Artist:** Creating the Cover Art
2. **Promotions person:** Writing the Blurb
3. **General Historian:** Writing the chapter's general introduction about the War of Independence
4. **Local Historian:** Combining the research of each group member into one short chapter

*Step 7:* In the next class group members should present their findings before holding a group discussion about how to incorporate their research into a coherent chapter.

Once the group has agreed what to include and what to omit, the relevant research should be given/sent to the Local Historian and/or the General Historian. Before the class finishes, the group should finalise a name for the book and agree on the nature of the cover art. To assist promotions in writing the blurb, the group should also consider the unique selling points of the book and compile a list of persuasive words and phrases.

#### *Part 4: Plenary Review:*

Once all groups have completed their task explain that the publishers have asked them to participate in an interview with RTE about their contribution to the book. Students will prepare interview questions in advance focusing on the research process, the marriage of images and choice of title. The interview format serves as a verbal review of research process and serves as a valuable form of peer assessment .

## LESSON 6: WOMEN OF THE IRISH REVOLUTION

### Summary:

This lesson is designed to inform students about the important role of women during the War of Independence. Witness statements, maps and documents reveal their work in areas such as carrying dispatches, first aid, the storage and transportation of arms, the provision of safe houses and the distribution of aid from the White Cross. Students will also consider the experience of ordinary women during the conflict. Lastly, students consider the evidence and discuss whether the work of women during the conflict has been adequately recognised.

*Key Questions:*      *What part did women play in the Irish War of Independence.*

*Learning Outcomes :* *At the conclusion of these lessons students should*

- Better understand the role of women during the War of Independence
- Have considered the strengths and weaknesses of autobiography as an historical source
- Have examined maps and documents and extracted evidence about women's part in the 1918-21 period.

## LESSON 6. WOMEN OF THE IRISH REVOLUTION

### Overview/Starter:

The teacher might choose to begin by playing a short excerpt from *Guns and Chiffon - Women of 1916 and the Irish War of Independence*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTC6kWQDXFc>  
From 35:47- 53:12, this documentary written by Sinead MacCoole and directed by Geraldine Creed, provides an interesting overview of the role of women in the War of Independence. Of particular note is the original footage of the protests for Kevin Barry outside Mountjoy, armored cars in Dublin and house raids. The voiceover includes testimony from female participants in the revolutionary period. The clip provide background to the lesson and the original footage engages student interest.

### Teacher Led Learning (input):

Outline the learning outcomes for the lesson and direct students to documents S-U in the *Student Worksheet*.

### Student Task: 1 Comprehending

Working individually or in pairs, the students read Docs S-U on the role of different women during the War of Independence before answering questions 1-11 that follow. The teacher may choose to move between groups while students consider the comprehension questions or moderate a class discussion once the task is completed.

### Student Task: 2 Composing

Using documents S-U as source material, students compose a letter to the editor of the *Irish Times* expressing an opinion about how the role of women during the Irish War of Independence has been unappreciated. The letter should include:

- Factual historical information about the experience of women generally, and of Cumann na mBan in particular during the War of Independence
- An opinion about how these women have been remembered
- A suggestion for an appropriate tribute to the women of that period

## LESSON 7-8: REPRISALS AND REPUBLICAN PROPAGANDA, SEPT-DEC 1920

### Summary:

During these lessons students will consider the consequences of the British official and unofficial policy of reprisals on the civilian population. Two maps drawn from the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* offer a local and national perspective on the attacks on property by Crown Forces between September 1920 and February 1921. These are complemented by a selection of images and documents which highlight the far-reaching effects of these attacks. Having interrogated primary and secondary sources, students will have a deeper understanding of how the conflict was characterised by violence and counter-violence, ambush and reprisal.

These lessons are also designed to introduce students to the significance of the Dáil's Department of Publicity/Propaganda and the *Irish Bulletin* news-sheet. Using original extracts from the *Irish Bulletin* as a guide, students will write about the deaths of Kevin Barry and Terence MacSwiney in October 1920, for publication in the republican news-sheet.

**Key Questions:** *How did the Crown Forces respond to republican guerrilla warfare?*  
*What was the significance of the deaths of Kevin Barry and Terence MacSwiney?*  
*What was the role of the Irish Bulletin in republican propaganda?*

**Learning Outcomes :** *At the conclusion of this lessons students should have*

- Developed a deeper understanding of the effect of the War of Independence on the civilian population
- Explained the concept of Reprisal
- A clear understanding of the significance of deaths of Kevin Barry and Terence MacSwiney in October 1920
- Evaluated a ballad and a photograph as historical sources
- Compared historical documents relating to the same topic
- Collated evidence from a variety of sources on the same topic
- Presented the findings of their research in a structured and logical manner

## LESSON 7-8: REPRISALS AND REPUBLICAN PROPAGANDA

### Part 1: Overview/Starter:

As a starter exercise, project Document Y: the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* map, Attacks on property by the Crown forces, September 1919–February 1921, as compiled and listed by the Dáil Éireann Publicity Department. Introduce the map and pose first impression questions for students such as:

- Who were the 'Crown Forces' and why do you think they were attacking property?
- In what areas of Ireland were the highest number of attacks on property?
- What types of attack on property were the most and least frequent?
- What type of attacks and how many occurred in the areas closest to your school?
- Who do you think these attacks affect the civilian population.
- What is the source of the data in this map, and why do you think that data was collected in 1921?

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## Part 2: Teacher Led Learning (input):

It may be necessary to spend some time providing background information on the policy of reprisals generally and the Sack of Balbriggan in County Dublin in particular before directing student to Documents V-Y in the Student Worksheet. A short Pathe video clip of the evacuation of Balbriggan in the aftermath of the reprisal can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkWhvTCpwWM>

### Student Task 1. Reprisals

- Step 1:** Working individually or in pairs, students examine Docs V-Y before answering comprehension and criticism questions 1-9 that follow. The documents include extracts from the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, Interim Report, March 1921; a map showing the properties affected by the sack of Balbriggan by Crown forces on 20–21 September 1920; a photograph of the town in the aftermath of the attack and a ballad written after the event.
- Step 2:** Oversee a class discussion once the task is completed - particular focus should be on student responses to the photograph and ballad analysis questions before discussing in more detail the students' answers to question 11: the national and international reaction to news of the event.

### Student Task 1. Republican propaganda

- Step 1:** Working individually, students examine Docs Z-A3 before answering comprehension and criticism questions 1-7 that follow. The documents include edited extract from an account written by Kathleen MacKenna about her role as a member of the *Irish Bulletin* production staff, excerpts from the *Irish Bulletin*, 1920-21, the *Saturday Herald's* front page coverage of the death of Terence MacSwiney.
- Step 2:** Move around the class as the students complete the task to assess answers. Host a class discussion on any of the questions they require further development.
- Step 3:** Explain the concept of the final task to the students:
- You are a writer for the *Irish Bulletin* and are preparing the Christmas edition of the news-sheet. Your task is to provide an short account of the activities of the Crown forces in Ireland between September and December 1920 for your national and international readers. Using the documents and maps in his worksheet and your own research, write about three of the following events using the typical style of the *Irish Bulletin*. Remember to include headlines for each of your articles.
- Premises raided by 'F' Company, Auxiliary Division, RIC, 15 Oct–29 Dec 1920. (Doc A3)
  - The Burning of Cork, 11 December 1920
  - The Sack of Balbriggan 20-21 September 1920 (Doc W)
  - The arrest and execution of Kevin Barry
  - The hunger strike and death of Terence MacSwiney (Doc A2)
  - Any one of the attacks on property by the Crown forces included in Doc Y
  - Any significant event or act of reprisal in your own county between September and December 1920.

## Part 4: Plenary Review:

To conclude this lesson the students who covered different events might be asked to present their articles to the class.

## LESSON 9-10: NOVEMBER 1920: A TURNING POINT IN THE WAR

### Summary:

During these lessons students will gain an insight into the significance of two major events in November 1920: Bloody Sunday and the Kilmichael Ambush and to work together using the skills of the historian to critically compare different accounts of the same event. In the first lesson students compare a selection of sources in order to glean a comprehensive and accurate account of the events of Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920. The anchor documents are two *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* maps compiled using data from the most up-to-date sources:

**Doc B1:** *IRA attacks on British Intelligence Officers on 'Bloody Sunday', 21 November 1920*

**Doc B2:** *Map showing the events at Croke Park on 'Bloody Sunday', 21 November 1920*

Students will examine the maps, before comparing the data depicted with information in four primary sources.

**Doc B3:** *Irish Independent coverage the day after the events of Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920*

**Doc B4:** *An account, written in 1972 by Captain R.D. Jeune, an Intelligence officer in Dublin in 1920*

**Doc B5:** *Bureau of Military History Witness Statement submitted by [Thomas Ryan](#) on 20 January 1953*

**Doc B6:** *Extract from the official Report on 'The Shooting at Croke Park' by Major E.L. Mills*

The second lesson introduces students to the events of the Kilmichael Ambush and the controversy surrounding 'the false surrender'. Having consulting a selection of sources, the students will stage a modern inquiry into the events at Kilmichael. The witnesses will be the authors of the sources:

1. Mike Murphy, Cartographer, "Atlas of the Irish Revolution", 2017 [Document K]
2. Tom Barry, Officer Commanding the West Cork Brigade flying column [Document J]
3. Edward Young, Member of Brigade Column, Cork III Brigade, 1920:
4. The Account of Lieut. H.F. Forde, the sole survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush [Document L]
5. Doctor Jeremiah Kelleher who examined the bodies at Macroom Castle
6. Peter Hart historian, to the editor of the Irish Times, 1 September 1998
7. Meda Ryan, historian

**Key Questions:**     *What happened in Dublin on Bloody Sunday 21 November 1920*  
                              *What was the significance of the Kilmichael Ambush*  
                              *What was the British reaction to the intensification of violence in November 1920*

**Learning Outcomes :** *At the conclusion of these lessons students should have*

- More appreciation for the provisional nature of history.
- Put into practice the skills of the historian
- Explained the events of Bloody Sunday and the Kilmichael Ambush
- Have considered a controversial historical event from more than one point of view.
- A better understanding for the Key Personality, Michael Collins
- Have considered the reliability of different types of historical sources
- Have engaged in research and presented their findings in a verbal format

## LESSON 9-10. NOVEMBER 1920: A TURNING POINT IN THE WAR

### Overview/Starter:

Explain the learning outcomes of these lessons. As a starter exercise, show students the clip relating to Bloody Sunday from 1996 film Michael Collins. Explain that the clip is one of a collection of visual and texts about the event for analysis.

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**Clip 1: Michael Collins (1996):** The Assassination of British Intelligence Agents  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-L3zeCNzH8>

**Clip 2: Michael Collins (1996):** The events at Croke Park on Bloody Sunday,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOiQRkK1tyg&list=RDJKPARXPvozK&index=2>

*Part 2: Teacher Led Learning (input):*

It may be necessary to provide some brief context and background for the events of Bloody Sunday and the Ambush at Kilmichael before directing students to Documents B1 and B2 in the Student Worksheet. These Atlas of the Irish Revolution Maps of (a) the IRA attacks on British Intelligence agents and (b) the events in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday represent the anchor texts to which the other texts will be compared.

*Student Task 1. Reconsidering Bloody Sunday*

- Step 1:** Divide the class into groups of four and ask each group to carefully examine the maps before holding a discussion about any inconsistencies between the maps and the clips shown at the outset of the lesson.
- Step 2:** Oversee a class discussion in which the different groups feed back the results of their analysis. Take the time to dwell on the importance of cross-referencing sources to verify facts before making judgments.
- Step 3:** Remaining in the same groups students should examine documents B3-B6 and, working together, complete the *Source Comparison Template* in the Student Worksheet.
- Step 4:** The final step is an individual task where students consolidate learning by writing an account of the events of Bloody Sunday 1920 using the evidence in the maps and information that they have been able to verify by cross referencing. They may also include any details listed in the final column of the Source comparison worksheet as long as they have verified it by cross referencing with a reliable source.

*Student Task 2. Remembering the Kilmichael Ambush*

- Step 1:** Explain the concept of the task to the students:  
Due to the enduring controversy about the Kilmichael Ambush on 28 November 1920 and its significance as the most notorious ambush of the War of Independence, the government has decided to convene a new court of inquiry into the events at Kilmichael. The class will stage the public hearings with testimony from different witnesses about their opinion of the events at Kilmichael and complete the report for the Oireachtas.
- Step 2:** Using the Casting Template on the next page, assign a role to each class member:
- Judge/ Chairperson (x1)
  - Researchers (x7)
  - Questioners (x7)
  - Witnesses (x7)

*Depending on the class size, you may decide to reduce the number of witnesses or questioners.*



*Step 3:* Each witness works with their assigned researcher to help them prepare their testimony. Both students should carefully consult the document or link associated with their character and compile a short statement about the events at Kilmichael from the perspective of that character.

- Map created using various sources by Mike Murphy, Cartographer, “Atlas of the Irish Revolution”, 2017 [Document C2]
- Tom Barry, Officer Commanding the West Cork Brigade flying column at Kilmichael, 28th November 1920 [Document C1]
- Edward Young, Member of Brigade Column, Cork III Brigade, 1920: Witness Statement 1402, Bureau of Military History <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1402.pdf#page=1>
- The Account of Lieut. H.F. Forde, the sole survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush, printed in the “Irish Independent”, 17 January 1921 [Document C4]
- Doctor Jeremiah Kelleher who examined the bodies at Macroom Castle on 29th November 1920 <http://theauxiliaries.com/INCIDENTS/kilmichael-ambush/kilmichael.html> (*Document towards the end of the webpage*)
- Letter from Historian, Peter Hart to the editor of the Irish Times, 1 September 1998 [Document C5]
- Letter from Historian, Meda Ryan to the editor of the Irish Times, 10 November 1998 [Document C6]

*Step 4:* While the actors are preparing their statements, the questioners and the judge should also work together to define what exactly they are investigating - an overriding question. They should also decide

- The order in which the witnesses will be called
- Three questions that should be put to each witness

*Step 5:* The judge convenes the public hearing in the classroom. Each witness is sworn in and provides a statement in response to prompt questions. During questions all students should take note of the main points made in each statement.

*Step 6:* Once the witnesses have presented their points of view at the public hearing, the Court of Inquiry must compile their report for the Oireachtas. Using the template provided in the *Student Worksheet*, all students will write the report of proceedings, setting out any findings that were made or drawing conclusions about the facts of the event or about how Kilmichael has been remembered

#### *Part 4: Plenary Review:*

To conclude these lessons brainstorm the following homework essay:

***Why was November 1920 considered a turning point in the War of independence?***

## LESSON 11: THE FINAL PHASE OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

### *Summary:*

This lesson brings students through the final phase of the Irish War of Independence with particular focus on the proclamation of Martial Law and the burning of the Custom House in May 1921. Students will examine an extract from Lloyd George's speech to the House of Commons in December 1920 about the Government's decision to declare Martial Law and an *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* Map showing the location of arrests and the locations of trails and executions of named prisoners. The exercise will reinforce the increased involvement of the military in 1921 and the effects of military tactics on the IRA. An extract from the diary of a British soldier in Dublin and a letter from Maud Gonne written in the same period highlight the atmosphere in the city in the final phase of the conflict. Students are asked to interrogate the sources for evidence and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of diaries and letters as historical sources. Lastly, the lesson includes the examination of an account by Oscar Traynor about the motives for and the planning of Custom House operations, and a selection of newspaper responses to the event.

*Key Questions:* What were the characteristics of the final phase of the Irish War of Independence?

*Learning Outcomes :* At the conclusion of these lessons students should

- Better understand the reasons for the change in IRA tactics in the final stage of the conflict
- Have considered the strengths and weaknesses of diaries and personal letters as historical sources
- Have examined maps and documents and extracted evidence about the effects of martial law in Ireland.
- Have examined different perspectives on the same event.

## LESSON 11: THE FINAL PHASE OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

### *Overview/Starter:*

The teacher might begin by asking students to brainstorm the strengths and weaknesses of the IRA in comparison to the Crown Forces at the beginning of 1921.

### *Teacher Led Learning (input):*

The brainstorming exercise will lead to the provision of information about the change in IRA tactics after 1920 as a result of the increased British military presence and continuing arms shortages. GHQ's advice was to carry out a larger number of smaller operations requiring fewer weapons resulting in more ambushes such as those in Dromkeen, Clonfin, Clonmult, Mourne Abbey, Crossbarry and Tourmakeady.

On De Valera's return from the US in December, he argued for a return to the larger scale more conventional operations of the 1916 Rising in order to court international public opinion. This resulted in the burning of the Custom House by the IRA in May 1921 and the subsequent arrest of over 100 IRA men, seriously weakening the Dublin brigade.

### *Student Task :*

Having provided context, direct students to Documents D1-D6 in the Student Worksheet. Working individually or in pairs, the students read the documents and answer questions 1-8 that follow. When the questions have been completed host a class forum on the characteristics and key events of the final phase of the War of Independence.