



ATLAS OF THE **IRISH**
REVOLUTION
Resources for Schools



College of
Arts, Celtic Studies
and Social Sciences

Unit 7:

*The Irish War of Independence,
1919-21*

TEACHERS HANDBOOK



Transition Year Unit: The Irish War of Independence

MODULE OUTLINE AND PROJECT GUIDELINES

As we celebrate centenaries of events during the Irish War of Independence, this Transition Year Unit, explores some of the key moments in that struggle in an accessible, relevant, and interesting way. Students are guided in the interrogation of primary and secondary source material relating to the three phases of the conflict in order to glean an insight into the personalities, events and atmosphere associated with those difficult years. Maps drawn from the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* add detail and colour to the complex historical period and allow students to visualise locations, events, patterns and trends as well as inspiring independent and collaborative student research.

This unit is divided into eight parts (see below), each of which aims to increase knowledge, present historical and procedural concepts and develop particular skill sets. The focal point of this teaching unit is the collaborative planning, execution and evaluation of a War of Independence exhibition in the school. This allows students to take an active part in event planning and coordination while also exploring the local and national history of the conflict in an interactive and relevant way. The local aspect in particular will engage the interest of the Transition Year students. The release of new archives relating to the War of Independence provides ample source material for student research. There is also wealth of relevant digital material available for students to access, providing opportunities for deeper student engagement with the period

For students who intend to continue the study of history at leaving Certificate level, the module offers a valuable foundation in more advanced project work, document handling, critical thinking and writing skills. This teaching unit is also strongly placed to help students develop the 'Key Skills for Senior Cycle' identified by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment as 'Information Processing', 'Communicating'; 'Being Personally Effective', 'Working with Others' and 'Critical and Creative Thinking'. The teaching unit relates directly to the *Transition Year Mission Statement Aims and Principles*. Elements such as 'social awareness, social competence, community involvement, remediation and other compensatory studies, interdisciplinary work' are relevant to the event management element of the unit.

AREAS OF STUDY:

Top-Up and Tasters: Bridging learning gaps and stimulating interest in Leaving Certificate Courses.

DURATION OF THE UNIT:

This outline is based on a typical Transition Year module/unit drawn from the Subject Sampling Layer of the Transition Year Curriculum: three, 40 minute classes per week for seven weeks:

Parts 2-5 of the eight-part teaching unit will require one or two classes for teacher presentation, source analysis and discussion, and written analysis.

One single class per week will be required for research, project preparation and, later, project presentation and personal assessment.

As access to computers and availability of guest speakers will inform the duration of the unit, teachers may adapt the content to their requirements, either expanding on or reducing the material as necessary.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- o To inspire an interest in history
- o To broaden understanding of the Irish War of Independence
- o To create a deeper understanding of the work of the historian
- o To give students hands-on experience of working with, and thinking critically about, primary and secondary source material
- o To guide students in the analysis of maps as historical sources
- o To plan and execute a school exhibition
- o To develop research and digital literacy skills
- o To facilitate group work and collaborative event planning
- o To develop presentation and communication skills

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit students should have:

- o A greater understanding of the work of the historian
- o A broader understanding of the three phases of the Irish War of Independence
- o Put into practice historical research skills
- o Gained experience in working with primary and secondary source material
- o Learned to identify bias and to question the reliability of a source
- o Worked effectively as part of a group
- o Engaged with digital learning tools
- o Depicted visually and in written format the results of their research
- o Confidently communicated the results of their research in a variety of media.
- o Engaged in peer and self assessment

MODULE OUTLINE

PART 1: *Introduction: (2 class periods)*

Outline the content of the History Module.
Explain the expectations and learning outcomes to the class
Present the guidelines and assessment criteria for the group project.

Introducing the Project

Step 1: The Teacher will explain the premise of the project is that in the lead up to the centenary of the outbreak of the Irish War of Independence, the school wishes to host an exhibition open to all students and/or the public.

The exhibition may include but is not limited to :

1. Informative display boards relating to one or many elements of the War of Independence
2. A historical re-enactment - live or filmed
3. A display of documents/artefact's/photographs
4. A reconstructed model relating to one aspect of the War of Independence
5. A map based on information collected from different sources
6. A piece of music, poetry or art that commemorates and event or person associated with the War of Independence

Step 2: The teacher designates base groups of four/five students

Base Group Meeting 1. In groups of not more than five, students should:

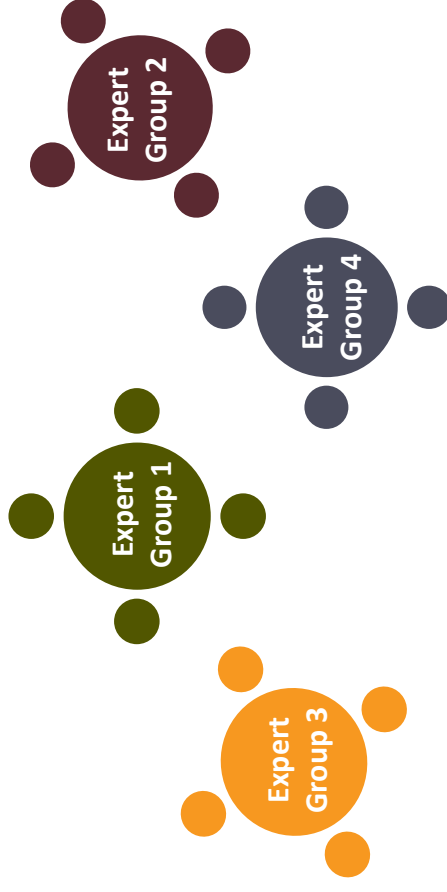
- Discuss any exhibitions that they may have visited and any elements that were particularly good.
- Discuss and take note of the elements they would like to see included in their whole school exhibition.
- Make a list of the tasks which might be required in planning and setting up the exhibition. (*e.g. securing exhibition space, designing exhibition space, materials, invitations, advertising, curating, interactive elements, audience participation/feedback, etc*)
- Appoint a presenter and feedback the group's ideas to the class
- After moderated feedback and discussion, the class decides on four/ five elements that will definitely feature in the exhibition
- The teacher assigns different planning task(s) (decided upon during the class discussion) to each of the four base groups.
- The group identifies their individual strengths and decides what group members will join the expert group for each of the exhibition elements/exhibits. (*e.g. Information boards, re-enactment, artists*)
- For homework, students individually conduct research in preparation for joining their expert groups.

1. Base Group Meeting: Planning an Exhibition

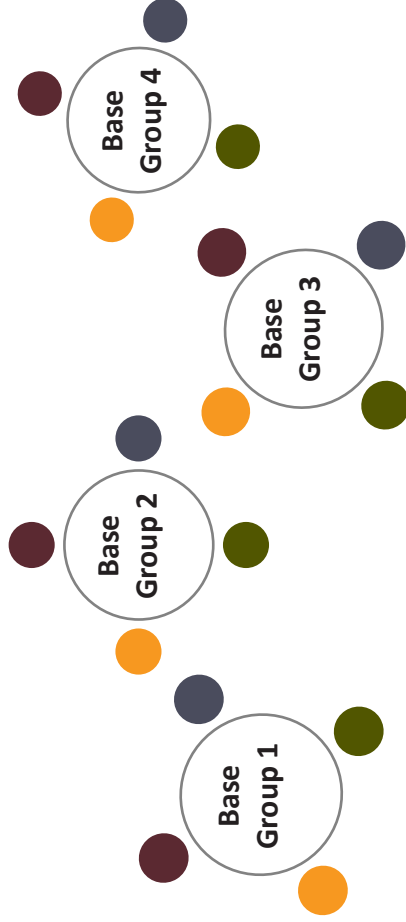


- Step 1:** Discuss any exhibitions that you may have visited and any elements that were particularly good.
- Step 2:** Discuss and take note of the elements you would like to see included in your whole school exhibition.
- Step 3:** Make a list of the tasks which might be required in planning and setting up the exhibition. (e.g. securing exhibition space, designing exhibition space, materials, invitations, advertising, curating, interactive elements, audience participation/feedback, etc)
- Step 4: Appoint a presenter and feedback your group's ideas to the class**
- Step 5:** The class decides on four/ five elements that will definitely feature in the exhibition
- Step 6:** The teacher assigns different planning task(s) to each of the four base groups.
- Step 7:** Decide what group members will join the expert group for each of the exhibition elements/ exhibits. (e.g. Information boards, reenactment, artists)

2. Expert Group Meeting: Designing an Exhibition



- Step 1:** Discuss ideas for your element of the exhibit
- Step 2:** Identify any details that you need to research
- Step 3:** Discuss materials that might be required or artefacts that need to be sourced/ reproduced
- Step 4:** Create a timetable listing the stages of the project up to the point of the exhibition
- Step 5:** Divide research, creative and/or writing tasks evenly among the group
- Step 6:** As a group, complete the Project Proposal Form



3. Base Group Meeting: Setting up an Exhibition

- Step 1:** Expert group representatives explain the concept of their exhibition element
- Step 2:** Discuss your group's planning task(s) in relation to each of the elements
- Step 3:** Create a timetable for completing your task(s)
- Step 4:** Create a to-do list for your group and divide tasks evenly among the group members

Step 3: *Depending on the extent to which revision of the War of Independence and guidance on research, writing and digital skills is required, the teacher may decide to complete some of the classes below before convening the Expert Group meetings.*

Expert Group Meeting.

- An appointed chairperson will oversee a group discussion about possibilities for a exhibition element making sure that every group member has an opportunity to speak
- At the conclusion of each presentation, the other members of the group may ask questions or make comments
- When all students have made the case for their chosen character, the group should vote on one historical personality
- The group should nominate a scribe, who will complete *the Project Proposal Form* on the next page for submission to the teacher. All group members should have an input into preparing the proposal and sign the commitment at the end of the document
- Once the proposal has been approved, the project may proceed

PART 2: Phase 1: January 1919-March 1920 (2-3 class periods)

Class 1: Survey the class to assess prior knowledge of the War of Independence. A brief questions and answers session will lead reveal how much teacher-lead learning is required about the formation of the first Dail, the RIC, the Soloheadbeg ambush and barracks attacks. It is worth pointing 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. For this reason, it was the job of the police rather than the British army to deal with the challenge to the authority of the British administration.

Working individually or in pairs, the students read maps and documents A-E relating to the closure of rural police barracks and answer questions 1-7. Students take on the role of RIC District Inspector in Cork in 1921 and 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.

Class 2: During this lesson students examine maps and documents relating to the role of Michael Collins as IRA Director of Intelligence during the War of Independence. Draw students' attention to the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* map of locations associated with Michael Collins during the War of Independence [Document H]. 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.

Working in pairs, students read Docs F-I relating to Collins and the GHQ Intelligence Department and answer questions 1-13 that follow.

Part two of the task involves taking on the role of one of Michael 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 which he visited locations in Dublin associated with the Squad. 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.

Working in groups of three, and using the information in the map (Doc H), students complete 'G' man's letter using the template provided. In the final sentence, students use the code provided by Liam Archer in his witness statement, to 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. The last step in the task is to collect 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: Phase 2: March-December 1920 (6-7 class periods)

At the outset of these classes, reintroduce the concepts of bias, propaganda and reliability when interrogating sources.

The Arrival of Black and Tans and RIC Auxiliaries

Class 1: Students will examine the reinforcement of the RIC with Black and Tans and Auxiliaries from March 1920. Documents J-L and the comprehension questions which follow offer students an opportunity to work with primary sources and maps relevant to the British Crown Forces. At the conclusion of the lesson student are provided with a choice of two tasks:

1. Imagine that you are fifteen-year old Reginald Graham, an British soldier interviewed about his memories of serving in Ireland during the War of Independence. [Document L] Write a letter to your brother in Devonport in England describing your experience in Ireland during your first year of service. Using evidence from Documents 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 from July 1920.
2. 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.

Class 2: *The Irish Republican Army and Flying Columns*

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.

After an explanatory introduction, students work in pairs to examine Docs M-S and answer questions 1-12. 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.

Having surveyed and 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.

For homework, and using the maps as a starting point, students examine the Bureau of Military History digitised witness statements to discover at least three facts about an IRA Unit or Flying column in their own locality.

Class 3: *Republican Women*

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. Working individually or in pairs, the students read Docs S-U 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. The class concludes with a student task

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

Class 4: *Ambushes and Reprisals*

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 the how the conflict was characterised by violence and counter- violence, ambush and reprisal.

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 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?

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>

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.

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.

Class 5: *Republican propaganda, Sept-Dec 1920*

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.

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.

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.

As a final task, students take on the role of a writer for the *Irish Bulletin* who is preparing the Christmas edition of the news-sheet. They must provide a short account of the activities of the Crown forces in Ireland between September and December 1920 for national and international readers. Using the documents and maps in the Student Project Book and the template provided, students write about two of the following events using the typical style of the *Irish Bulletin*.

- 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.

*Class 6: **Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1921***

During this lesson students will gain an insight into the events on 21 November 1920, Bloody Sunday. Working together, they will use the skills of the historian to critically compare different accounts of the same event. The anchor documents are two *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* maps compiled using data from the most up-to-date sources:

- 1: IRA attacks on British Intelligence Officers on 'Bloody Sunday', 21 November 1920
- 2: Map showing the events at Croke Park on 'Bloody Sunday', 21 November 1920

Students will carefully examine the information in the maps, comparing it with information in four primary sources.

- Irish Independent coverage the day after the events of Bloody Sunday
- An account, written in 1972 by Captain R.D. Jeune, an Intelligence officer in Dublin
- Bureau of Military History Witness Statement submitted by Thomas Ryan
- Extract from the official Report on 'The Shooting at Croke Park' by Major E.L. Mills

As a starter exercise, show students the clips relating to Bloody Sunday from 1996 film *Michael Collins*

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=RDJKPARXPvoz&index=2>

In groups of four students carefully examine the maps before holding a discussion about any inconsistencies between the maps and the clips shown at the outset of the lesson.

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.

Remaining in the same groups students should examine four documents and, working together, complete the *Source Comparison Template* in the Student Worksheet.

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.

PART 5: Phase 3: March-December 1920 (1-2 class periods)

Begin by asking students to brainstorm the strengths and weakness of the IRA in comparison to the Crown Forces at the beginning of 1921. The brainstorming exercise will lead to the provision of information about the change in IRA tactics after 1920 as a result of martial law, 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. When de Valera returned 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.

Working individually or in pairs, the students examine an extract from Lloyd George's speech to the House of Commons in December 1920 and an *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* map showing the location of arrests, trails and executions of named prisoners in martial Law areas. 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. In the questions that follow, students are asked to interrogate the sources for evidence and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of diaries and letter 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 operation, and a selection of newspaper responses to the event.

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.

PART 6: *In Class Project Work: (2 class periods)*

Base Group Meeting 2

Ideally this meeting should take place at some any point between stages 3-5 above

- Expert group representatives explain the concept of their exhibition element
- Discuss your group's planning task(s) in relation to each of the elements
- Create a timetable for completing your task(s)
- Create a to-do list for your group and divide tasks evenly among the group members

All materials collected to be brought to class

Teacher facilitation of group preparation for the exhibition

PART 7: *Hosting the exhibition (1-2 class periods)*

The students advertise, construct, host and gather feedback on the exhibition

PART 8: *Review: (1 class period)*

Peer assessment and self-assessment

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

This unit offers the opportunity to put into practice a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies.

Atlas of the Irish Revolution Maps: The interrogation and analysis of the cartographic representation of the different aspects of the Irish War of Independence

Primary Source Material: materials from the National Library of Ireland, the Bureau of Military History and variety of contemporary newspapers and images provide a deep well of sources from which to glean an insight into the period.

Group Work: The students will participate in group and pair-work during many of the classes. In groups they will examine source material in the Student Document Packs and engage in debate and discussion and plan and execute their research project.

Negotiated Learning: The students will submit for approval a proposal for their own element of the exhibition. They will take responsibility for their own research and project work.

ICT: Much of the project work may be conducted using ICT.

Visiting Speakers: To have a historian visit the class would offer a further insight into the work of the historian and the processes of locating source material.

Field Trip: If time permits, a visit to a local exhibition during which students critically engage with content and design would be an excellent start to the unit.

ASSESSMENT:

Teachers will engage in both summative and formative assessment.

Throughout the module there will be ongoing assessment through oral questioning and discussion. Students are assessed on their participation and engagement in class. This is worth a percentage of their overall grade.

The main form of assessment is the project based on the *War of Independence Exhibition*. The projects will be completed in groups of four or five. Together students compile and submit a proposal for an element of the exhibition within the deadline set by the teacher. The students will also engage in peer assessment during the exhibition.

At the conclusion of the unit students should also complete the student self-assessment sheet on the final page of the project pack. This is also worth a percentage of the final grade.

LINKS TO OTHER SUBJECTS:

There are numerous possibilities for linking to other subjects in the Transition Year programme.

1. **Communications** would build up expertise in the advertising and hosting of the exhibition
2. **Geography** Curriculum could also look at the concept of historical geography and biographical mapping
3. **Art** would build on the concept of creating a piece of memorial art
4. **English:** The writing assignments in this unit complement English in that the students are tasked with composition as well as debate and creative writing. Obviously literacy skills are necessary for the writing up writing responses in a logical and well-structured manner.

EVALUATION:

Students' responses during class time will give immediate feedback to the teacher about their levels of enthusiasm and engagement. This should be a key factor in determining the success or otherwise of a section of the module. One of the central aims of the module is to enthuse the students about history generally and the history of the Famine in particular, and if they are not enjoying the class then it is not fulfilling the objective.