



LOTTERY FUNDED

EXPLORING IRISH CULTURE LEARNING RESOURCE PACK

Heritage Workshops Series 2016



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Foreword:

Céad míle fáilte- a hundred thousand welcomes. Our "Exploring Irish Culture Guide" is a learning resource pack designed to support an increased awareness of Irish culture across all groups. Since 1700, it is estimated that around 10 million people have left Ireland to immigrate to other countries. Yet distinct aspects of Irish culture found in the country's music, language and literature of place have stood the test of time. This learning resource pack will allow you to explore some of these enduring aspects of Irish culture and with it, Irish heritage and sociocultural identity.

This resource pack is designed to be used flexibly according to your needs. We have provided elements to form the basis of workshop sessions (Appendix A) so that you can also select different elements to construct your own bespoke session .A suggested evaluation sheet is provided in Appendix B. In addition, in partnership with you, we can help you develop a workshop exactly suited to your needs. We can also loan your organisation equipment, such as Irish musical instruments and Irish artefacts (Appendix C). Appendix D contains extracts from two of our oral history interviewees, Mary and Don. These extracts may be used when discussing how Irish immigrants negotiate their sociocultural identity.

In partnership with the Emerald Centre, we hope that our workshop programme will enable participants to support the principles of citizenship

through experiential learning, critical thought, discussion and reflection. Enhanced cultural understanding brings with it empathy, understanding and mutual respect. The cultural exchanges which then then ensue allow for cultural capacity building across a wide range of groups.

Whether you are a workshop facilitator or one of our workshop participants, we very much hope you enjoy working with us on this unique initiative to support community capacity building through an exploration of Irish heritage.

**Dr Angela Maye-Banbury Principal Lecturer Sheffield Hallam University
June 2016.**

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Key Learning Outcomes

Workshop 1: LO1: To engage in discrete community capacity building designed to recognise the cultural heritage of Leicester's Irish community.

Workshop Themes

1. Introductions and welcome (fáilte riamh): key facts about Ireland.
The Irish diaspora - push and pull factors.
2. Overview of key aspects of Irish culture: dominant narratives of language, music, literature and food.
 - Language: Learn some Irish (Gaeilge); dia dhiabh , cad é mar atá tú?
 - Music: traditional and modern. Have a go on a penny whistle, bodhrán.
 - Literature: your reflections on Seamus Heaney's reading of "Digging."
3. History of Irish immigration: push and pull factors (famine; industrial revolution; population centres in England); chronology.
4. Group exercise (three per group): (i) What new information have you learnt about Irish culture? (ii) Name one particular aspect of Irish culture you would like to explore further in the future.
4. Negotiating sociocultural identity in England following immigration from Ireland: oral history extracts from people who came to England during 1950 and 1960s.

SECTION 1: KEY FACTS ABOUT IRELAND

1. Key Facts About Ireland: "The Emerald Isle"; "The Land of Saints and Scholars."

1.1 Geographical overview



Capital of the Republic: Dublin
Capital of the North: Belfast



32 counties in total;
26 in the south and 6 in the north.

1.2 The Irish Flag - Symbolism and Meaning



Source: Google Images

The Irish flag is known as the 'tricolour.' Green symbolises Gaelic Ireland (Emerald Isle), orange the legacy of William of Orange. The white between the two signifies peace and reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant communities (not importance of Battle of the Boyne in 1690 in realising Protestant ascendancy). Note continued political conflict: Easter rising; troubles in Northern Ireland in 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Table 1: Ireland 2016 at a Glance

Government	Northern Ireland (six counties) governed by British government. The parliamentary head of the Republic is the Taoiseach (prime minister).
European Union	The Republic of Ireland was one of the founding members of the European Union - joined in 1973
Currency	Euro (since 2002). Prior to this, Ireland had its own currency, the <i>punt</i> (pound)
Population	4.6 million
Faith groups	Predominately Catholic (85 per cent); Church of Ireland and other Christian 3 per cent; other 12 per cent.
Economy	Shift in last 30 years from agriculture to modern knowledge based economy; IT; banking; investment; service industries; tourism and leisure. NB Highly educated workforce - invested in schools. Trinity College is Ireland's Cambridge/Oxford.

1.3 The Irish Diaspora

Given the way census records are maintained, specifically the 'ethnicity' question, figures regarding the number of Irish who live abroad are elusive. It is estimated that around 1 million first generation Irish people live abroad. A further two million hold Irish passports (may be second generation). Just under 500,000 lived in Britain in 2001; 156,000 in the US in 2000; About 50,000 in Australia, with 21,000 from Northern Ireland; 22,800 in Canada. A further 60,000 lives in other parts of Europe.

Source: The Irish in Britain (2016)

1.4 Push Factors

The Irish Famine 1840s One of the most significant factors which caused emigration from Ireland was the Irish potato famine of 1846 - 1851. The people of Ireland had depended on the potato as an essential food. The famine was caused by a number of interrelated factors. The main reason cited is an increase in rent and proportion of crops demanded by English landlords who owned the tenured agricultural land farmed by Irish households. This resulted in a higher proportion of the potato crop being given to landlords 'in kind.' A widespread potato blight also hit the potato crop. Families, many of whom were already impoverished poor, were evicted. The impact of the famine was devastating. Some say Ireland has never recovered from it.

It is estimated that over a million people died during the famine. A further three million migrated, notably to England, the USA, Canada and Australia. But many people, already weak and ill following the famine, died on the ships. These ships were known as "coffin ships." Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister, later apologised for the British government's role in causing the famine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Inyjgmsz20>



Memories of emigration to England (often referred to by the Irish as "the mainland") are enduring theme in Irish collective consciousness. "Fear a Bhata" (The Boat Man), an Irish ballad about a missing fisherman and his wife's yearning for him to return. Different parts of Ireland adopted different knitting patterns for "Aran jumpers", sweaters knitted using a thick wool. Each distinctive pattern enabled family members and others to identify those who had died following drowning.

1.5 The “Troubles” in Northern Ireland

Thousands of people born in Northern Ireland fled the province to avoid “The Troubles.” English rule in Ireland has proved a source of controversy over many centuries. The origins of English rule in Ireland date back to the Norman invasion in the 12th century. Tensions escalated in the last century, resulting in the Northern Irish Troubles. The principal documented cause of The Troubles was a perceived constitutional difference in the way different groups thought Ireland should be governed. Unfair treatment of Catholics (the majority of Irish residents) was one of the catalysts of the conflict. The Nationalist community (predominantly Catholic represented by the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party) favoured a united Ireland comprising all 32 counties governed by a dedicated Irish parliament.

Terrorists groups formed in the last century claiming to represent the “cause” (Irish Republican Army and Ulster Defence Army). Some splinters groups also emerged. The Unionist community (comprising mainly Church of Ireland/Protestant supporters) argued for British rule. Sectarian violence escalated in the 1960s and 1970s. Terrorist attacks spread to England and indeed further afield. In 1988, a landmark cross party peace pact, known as the “Good Friday Agreement” was signed between all Northern Irish political parties. A call was made for terrorist arms to be decommissioned. Many measures are now in place to promote harmony in Northern Ireland. But outbreaks of violence, mainly instigated

by terrorist splinter groups, still persist from time to time. It is estimated that 50,000 people either died or were seriously injured because of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland (Source: BBC History, 2016). every family in the North has a story to tell about how the Troubles impacted on their lives, some profoundly whilst others lived on the margins of the Troubles.



1.6 Pull Factors: Industrial Revolution in England

The Industrial Revolution which began around 1840s (note the same era as Irish famine) resulted in the rapid development of many English urban areas. Cities such as Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Nottingham and Leicester began to flourish as a result of new mechanist technologies. Steel, textiles (cotton, lace and hosiery in particular), chemical, synthetic materials were manufactured using factory based methods. Coal mines opened to mine the minerals essential to fuel (literally) the vast industrial machinery essential for production.

Additional workers were needed to maintain levels of consumer demand. New housing, healthcare and other vital services were also

needed to cater for the new generation of workers. Irish people were proactively and systematically recruited to bridge the gap in labour. Although some common themes emerge, each person's account of their arrival and subsequent life in England is personal, insightful and unique to them. On arrival in Leicester, the majority of Irish people had very few personal possessions. Many of the men stayed in the euphemistically named "boarding houses" which, in reality, were little more than a hostel. Many Irish (and Scottish) men worked in the mines in Coalville and surrounding areas. Others found employment in Leicester worked in the textile and other manufacturing industries. The women tended to stay with relatives or live in tied accommodation. Many women trained as nurses, catering staff or domestic helps. For both men and women, work and housing was often precarious.

SECTION 2: LANGUAGE

2. Language

2.1 Nature of the Gaelic

Before the famine in the 1840s, most people spoke Irish (Gaeilge). Mainly English spoken although Irish still spoken in the Gaeltacht areas, particularly around the West coast including Donegal and Achill. The oral tradition, however, remains alive and well in the form of *seanchaí* (storytellers).

A selection of Irish proverbs



May the road rise up to meet you



It's often the person's mouth which broke his nose



The older the fiddle, the sweeter the tune



You'll never plough a field by turning it over in your mind.

2.2 Enduring importance of mythology and Celtic tales.

Cúchulainn (Hound Warrior) Banshi (Woman of the Marrows), Niamh (Queen of the Fairies).



2.3 Learn some Irish! In pairs, practise saying.

- Dia duit , cad é mar atá tú?
- Phonetically - Gee a gutch, ka jay mar a ta too?
- Hello, how are you?
- Tá mé go maith, go raibh maith agat, agus tú fein?
- Phonetically - ta may go moy, ugus too hane?
- I am well, thanks - how are you?

SECTION 3: IRISH LITERATURE

3 Irish Literature

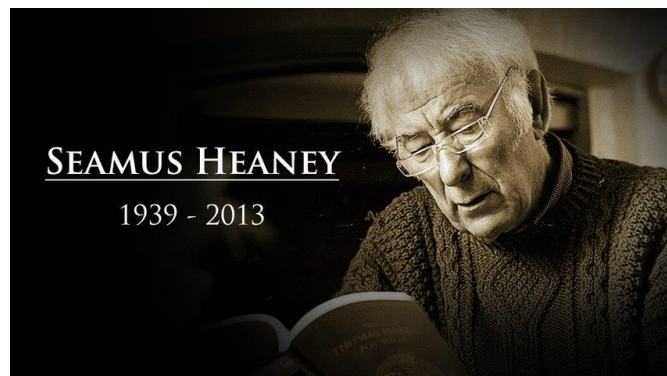
3.1 Famous Irish Writers.

Ireland is renowned for its writers. Some famous Irish writers include: James Joyce; C S Lewis; Bram Stoker; Oscar Wilde; Flann O' Brien; Brendan Behan, Samuel Beckett; Frank Mc Court; Roddy Doyle and many, many more!

3.2 Your reflections on "Digging" by Seamus Heaney.

Listen to the link below whilst following the text of the poem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPE6prfTjdM>



"DIGGING" BY SEAMUS HEANEY (1939 - 2013)

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.
Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down
Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.
The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.
By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.
My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.

Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests.

I'll dig with it.

Group exercise: What does the poem say to you? There are no right or wrong answers - poetry speaks to people in different ways!

SECTION 4: IRISH MUSIC

4. Irish Music

4.1 **Traditional Irish music** Although increasingly influenced by modern musical trends in rock and pop, Irish traditional music remains rooted in tradition. Often called "traditional music", Irish musicians often play formally and informally in 'sessions.' Sessions take place in people's homes; community centres; pubs and folk clubs.

Popular sessions musical instruments include: guitar; bodhran (hand held drum); tin (penny) whistle; accordion; violin (fiddle) and less commonly harp; cello and uilleann (elbow) pipes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeWc_85xYDM

5. Some concluding reflections

5.1 We hope this overview has given you some sense of the distinct aspects of Irish culture. Keep an eye out for references to Irish/Gaelic culture in the media and when you are out and about. You might be surprised where it pops up!

For further information on our heritage workshop programme, contact Kiran Kala at the Emerald Centre

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APPENDIX A: Workshop Elements

*** Denotes integral workshop element**

***Welcome and introductions 10 mins**

Your impressions of Irish culture 10 mins

*** Push/pull factors: sociocultural identity and economic progress 15 mins**

Learn some Irish! 15 mins

Play an Irish musical instrument 15 mins

Irish poetry reading 20 mins

Aspects of Irish culture you have enjoyed most 5 mins

*** What aspect of Irish culture would you like to know more about 5 mins**

*** Workshop evaluation 10 mins**

APPENDIX B: Suggested workshop evaluation sheet

1. To what extent did the workshop contribute to your understanding of Irish culture?				
A great deal	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Comments
2. To what extent did you find the session engaging?				
Really engaging	Quite engaging	A little engaging	Not at all engaging	Comments
3. What did you think of the facilitator?				
Excellent	Very good	Quite good	Poor	Comments
4. Name three things you liked about the workshop				
5. Name three things which could be improved.				

All responses are confidential. Thanks very much :) Go raibh míle maith agat

Angela (Aingéal Ní Mhaighe) a.maye-banbury@shu.ac.uk

APPENDIX C: List of Irish musical instruments and other artefacts which can be borrowed on request to support workshop

- Penny whistles x 6 in various keys

- 1 bodhran (hand held drum) and beater

- Acoustic guitars x 2

- 1 cello (concert pitch tuned)

- 1 violin (concert pitch tuned)

- 1 harmonica

- 1 original Aran hand knit jumper

- Irish foods including bread and potato based dishes also available on special request.

APPENDIX D: Oral history extracts of two Irish immigrants - Eithne* and Donal's* Stories * Denotes where pseudonyms have been used.

Eithne's Story

Angela: And how old were you when you moved across?

Eithne: I went in 1954. I was not quite seventeen. I was just gone sixteen. In Tullamore, they just put this little badge on your coat. Put you on the train. You went to Dublin. Then you had to get off and get to the boat. Crewe was it? We had to change and then get the train to Ampleforth and somebody met us there – seven miles outside. That's how I started off – at six pound a month.

Angela: And was that the first time you'd lived away from home?

Eithne: I'd never been outside...there was girls from Waterford, all over the place that had come and were all there.

Angela: And were they all Irish girls?

Eithne: They were all girls – Irish girls. And we couldn't speak to these boys or we were on the next boat home.

Angela: So did you live in a dormitory?

Eithne: The boys lived here and they slept here and cooking and everything was done in this part. And we had to go across the courtyard to our dormitories – yeah. And then on a Friday night, we'd have a dance. Of course, the people who lived in York use to come in. Doing the Gay Gordons, all these old dances. Yeah. That's the

only entertainment we had. But you can go into York and buy a coat for a pound., buy a pair of shoes for ten shillings. You know.

Angela: So how did you get into York?

Eithne: There was a little bus use to go every so often.

Angela: And what part of York was the monastery in?

Eithne: It was outside York. Seven mile outside York. Heading for Scarborough. Not Scarborough. Heading that way. Towards Scarborough.

Eithne: Oh yeah, it's still there. But there's girls and boys. It's mixed.

Angela: And when you were there, you had a job there...

Eithne: Oh yeah. That was our job. Seven o'clock in the morning until about six o'clock at night – until we'd done everything.

Angela: Describe to me your average day.

Eithne: Well, we'd get up in the morning. We had to get down to where the kitchen was with the cook and everything. Get everything ready. So there was these big hot plates at every dormitory. You know, different boys, different ages. So I was sort of, fourteen, fifteen, you know the boys who were there where I was. And of course there was about twenty or thirty. Then we had to get all of the plates ready. Then the cook was doing the breakfast. And then when they were ready, we'd bring these things out and put them on a hot plate. And the monk use to just serve the boys. You see, there were so many boys. The older boys – they had names then. Head boys or whatever. And they gave out the dinner to the younger ones, or the breakfast. And then I had to go in with the priest. I think the toast landed on the table more times

(laughs). I use to be like that. The only thing I could hold to was the pot of coffee
(laughs). But the – what do you call it – the toast was gone – it was on the table
before I could do anything (laughs). I could never get used to it. Every time I went in,
I was petrified! And he'd look up and me – and my face must have been.... And of
course, all these young lad looking at you and you're only sixteen or seventeen. You
know what I mean? You're absolutely petrified. You'd never been away from home in
your life or anything.

DONAL'S STORY

Angela: And what brought you over to England?

Donal: Well, I got a job in a shoe factory at home. And I was working in there. If business was bad, you were knocked off two days, three days... You got enough to live on and that was it. They were all going away then. They were all heading for Manchester, for London, for Liverpool. And when I came over first, I went to Bristol. And I was working down there for about six months. That myxomatosis, that had come out then. So you couldn't get much to eat at that time. The landlady we were only gave a piece of bread – no butter – and a piece of cheese. And that was your lunch when you were going out to work. Very little. You'd pay her your dig money in advance, you know. And that was it.

Angela: When you came to England, what did you make of it? What were you expecting? Did your expectations match what you experience?

Donal: Oh, no, no, no, not at all. It was work all the time when I was up in Bristol. Then we left Bristol, me and me mate, and we went to Fulham – up in London. And that was a nice earner. It was easier in up in Bristol. You just got in, you done your work, you were trying to get a bit of collateral together. And you were sending home some money as well. And when you were in London, you had trouble getting digs. They use to have signs up “No blacks, no Irish need apply”. And you went into the pubs – one or two of the pubs – and they wouldn't serve you. They looked at you

and say “We’re not serving you, you’re nothing but trouble”. And you had that in a lot of places.

Angela: So this would have been when you were in your twenties?

Donal: Early twenties, 22 or 23. And the digs up there weren’t much better.

Margaret: Did you have your own room?

Donal: I was sharing it with Sean Maguire*. We shared the one room between us. And that was me and him. He left there after a while – he went somewhere else. I worked in a cordial place where they did minerals. I was with a truck driver and he’d take me all around London. His loads of lemonade and pop and all that. I had plenty of pop to drink, things like that. But there was a lack of food up there.

Angela: And what did you make of England, Don?

Donal: No, there was nothing to eat. There was still no chocolate. It was hard to get food. You just couldn’t get enough. There was no good meat. You were still eating horsemeat then. The meat wasn’t same as it was at home. So you stayed there for about six months and you had to go back. It was great when you got back home. You’d saved a few bob.

Margaret: And you had your potatoes...

Donal You had your potatoes, cabbage and veg. And you had your bacon.

Angela: So all the meats. All the things you really enjoyed food wise you couldn't get here, you were able to get when you went back...

Donal: They didn't have a clue. They didn't know what you were talking about half the time.

Angela: So you were in Bristol first and you lived in your digs. And then you moved to Fulham. So did you have a sense of the local area? Did you look around?

Donal: No. It was just the digs. Nothing there that kept us there. The only thing was when you finished work, you went to the "Garry Own" (sp). The dance hall.

Donal: About a year.

Angela: And then what happened?

Don: I went back home. And then I came back. And then I came to Leicester. I came here because I had a bit of experience making shoes. And Leicester was about the best place to come to then. I got a job down in Highcross Street. Highcross it was just called. Down there in the town. I was a heel attacher. It was just machine work. You put the heels on the shoes and you put the soles on. And put them in the press. cobbler was a different trade altogether to a factory where you're actually making the shoes to the uppers and the leathers.

APPENDIX E: Further Resources

<http://www.irishinleicester.org.uk/>

<http://lynda-callaghan.blogspot.co.uk/>

<http://www.irishinbritain.org/get-involved/our-members/leicester-irish-society>