

Subject : Junior Cycle History
Teacher : Niall Lenehan

LESSON 16
**1916-1923: The fight for
Irish Independence**

Learning intentions

1. Appreciate the events and significance of the 1916 rising.
2. Understand the course of the War of Independence.
3. Understand the events and consequences of the Anglo-Irish treaty.

2.4 examine the rise and impact of nationalism and unionism in Ireland, including key events between 1911 and 1923.

Ireland and World War 1

- **National Volunteers:** 175,000 agreed with Redmond and felt that supporting Britain would benefit Home Rule. Many would fight in Irish regiments such as the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.
- **Irish Volunteers:** 11,000 refused to join and were led by Eoin MacNeill. They wanted to stay and make sure Home Rule happened.

The 1916 Rising

- The IRB planned a rising believing that '*England's difficulty was Irelands opportunity*'. They planned for the Rising to take place at Easter, 1916.
- **Eoin MacNeill** (leader of the Irish volunteers) opposed the rising. Just before Easter, the IRB military council showed a forged document called the '**Castle Document**' which stated that the British were planning on disarming the Irish volunteers.
- As a result, MacNeill ordered nationwide plans for the rising to go ahead On Easter Sunday.



Eoin MacNeill

Plans go wrong

- **Irish diplomat Roger Casement** smuggled arms for the rising from Germany. However, the ship carrying the arms, *The Aud* was captured. It was sunk by its captain and all the weapons were lost.
- Eoin MacNeill then found out the Castle Document was a **forgery**. He cancelled the rising as a result.
- The IRB military council decided to **go ahead with the rising anyway**, but it would be a on a much smaller scale than previously planned and confined to mainly Dublin.



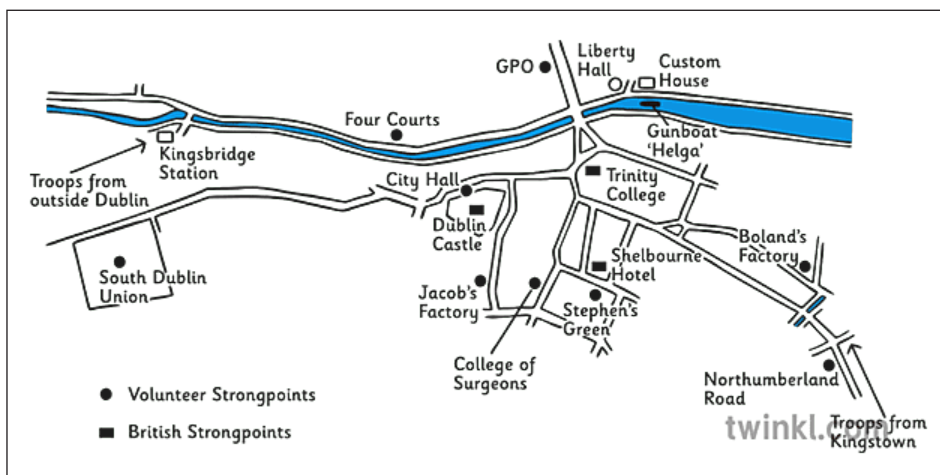
Eoin MacNeill

The Course of the Rising

- On Easter Monday, 1,500 Volunteers took positions in key buildings in the city centre. The GPO became the headquarters for the rising.
- **Padraic Pearse** read out the proclamation on the steps of the GPO.
- The British government were surprised by the rising, they brought in reinforcements from the **Curragh** and England.
- By Wednesday, the Volunteers were **outnumbered 20 to 1**. The British brought in a gunboat (**Helga**) and artillery to shell the GPO.



Fighting inside the GPO



Map of the Rising

The End of the Rising

- By the end of the week, the city was in ruins. The volunteers surrendered on Saturday.
- They were rounded up and held as prisoners. Between May 3rd and 3rd August, **16 leaders of the rising were executed**.
- Most of these executions were in **Kilmainham Gaol** in Dublin.



Execution of the rising leaders

Why was the rising a military failure?

- The Irish volunteers were **outnumbered by the British**.
- The British army had **great firepower** (artillery and the Helga).
- The rising was only **confined to Dublin**.
- The Aud carrying the volunteer's weapons was captured.
- **Bad tactics** of the volunteers.
- The Irish volunteers **were not supported by the people**.

The results of the Rising

- **Deaths:** 500 deaths (British army, volunteers, 300 civilians, 2500 injured).
- **The Rise of Sinn Fein:** This was because Newspapers called it the 'Sinn Fein rising'
- **Destruction of Dublin:** Much of the city centre destroyed.
- **Martial Law:** British military controlled the city and arrested 2000 people.
- **Local Reaction:** Locals angered at volunteers for destruction.
- **Executions:** 15 rising leaders executed in Kilmainham Gaol – This changed people's opinions of the rising.

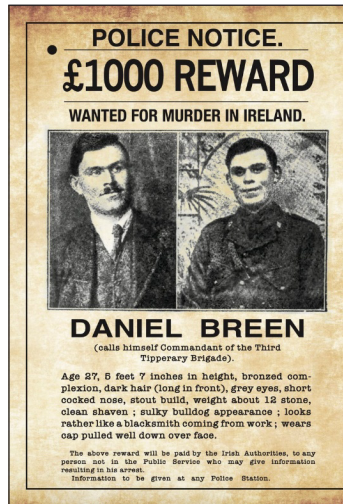


The executions

- The British made a huge mistake by executing the leaders of the rising and arresting many others who were innocent.
- This **changed public opinion** as Irish people became outraged by the rising.
- Irish people began to **support Sinn Féin** and they soon became the most popular political organization in Ireland.

The War of Independence, 1919-21

- On 21 January 1919, Sinn Fein held the first Dáil Éireann in the Mansion House in Dublin.
- On the same day, an RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) patrol was ambushed in Soloheadbeg in Co. Tipperary. They were led by IRA leaders Dan Breen and Seán Tracy.
- This was the first act of the war of Independence.



Dan Breen's 'wanted' poster

- The IRA used guerrilla warfare (hit and run) tactics against the British government forces. They targeted RIC barracks which had weapons and ammo.
- The IRA were organised into mobile local units **called flying columns**.
- **Michael Collins** ran an intelligence network of spies which gathered information on army and RIC movements.
- He also organized '**The Squad**' whose job it was to assassinate British detectives and informants.



Michael Collins



Flying Columns

The British response

- **British PM David Lloyd George** recruited ex-British soldiers to join the '**black and tan**' force. This name came from their uniform which was a mixture of an army and police uniform.
- A new RIC division '**The Auxiliaries**' were also set up and often carried out reprisals on local populations.
- Cork city was burned down by Auxiliaries in response to an IRA ambush on a party of Auxiliaries at Dillon's Cross earlier in the day.



The Black and Tans

The Foundation of Northern Ireland

The Government of Ireland Act, 1920

- This Act **partitioned Ireland** into two self-governing polities: the six north-eastern counties were to form "*Northern Ireland*", while the larger part of the country was to form "*Southern Ireland*".
- It established parliaments in the north and south. These parliaments would control internal matters, but external affairs would be controlled in Westminster.
- The partition was a controversial one and resulted in rioting between both Unionists and Nationalists.



The Government of Ireland Act which partitioned (divided Ireland)

Bloody Sunday

- On November 21st 1920, Auxiliary forces and black and tans approached Croke Park and fired shots into the crowd during a challenge match between **Dublin and Tipperary**.
- 4 Irish people lost their lives.
- This attack on Croke Park was in response to Michael Collins's group '**The Squad**' assassinating a group of British intelligence officers who were known as the 'Cairo Gang'.

Recap exercise 16.1

- Q1.** Explain two things that went wrong in the lead up to the 1916 rising.
- Q2.** Name three buildings occupied by Irish volunteers during the rising.
- Q3.** Explain two results of the rising.
- Q4.** What event started the War of Independence?
- Q5.** How did the British respond to the war of Independence?
- Q6.** What was the 'Government of Ireland Act'?
- Q7.** What happened on Bloody Sunday?

A call for Peace

- By 1921, both sides wanted peace
- The IRA were **running low on weapons and manpower**.
- The British were being **criticized internationally** for the actions of the black and tans and auxiliaries.
- There was also costing Britain a great deal of money and manpower.
- Eamon De Valera agreed a **ceasefire** with PM Lloyd George in July 1921.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921

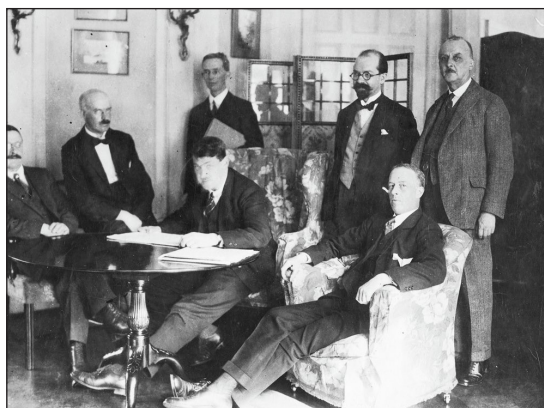
- Following the truce, negotiations in London began between Sinn Féin and the British government.
- The Sinn Féin delegation consisted of:

Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins, Robert Barton, Eamon Duggan and George Gavin Duffy.

- The British delegation consisted of:

Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Austin Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead.

- De Valera did not join the delegation which proved to be controversial as he was the head of state in Ireland.

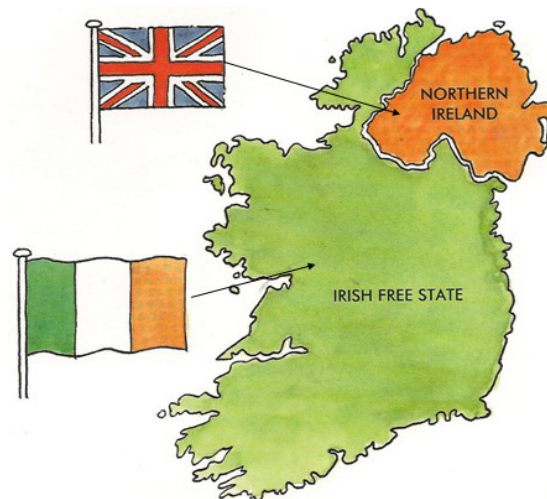


The Irish delegation

- Sinn Féin wanted to achieve a **full republic** (complete independence from Britain and to have no partition between the north and south of Ireland).
- The British wanted to **keep Ireland in the British empire**.
- Both delegations negotiated From October to December 1921. They finally signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty on Dec 6th.

The Terms of the Treaty

1. Ireland would be known as the Irish Free State.
2. Ireland would remain a **dominion of the British Commonwealth**.
3. Members of the Dáil would swear a **oath of allegiance** to the King of England.
4. Britain would have **access of the three 'Treaty ports'** – Berehaven, Cobh and Lough Swilly.
5. A **Boundary Commission** would be established to decide on the border which partitioned north and south of Ireland.
6. A Governor –General would represent the King of England in Ireland.



The Dáil debates the Treaty

Pro-Treaty Arguments

- Few pro treaty TDs liked the Treaty, but they supported it as they believed it was the best they could achieve.
- Arthur Griffith believed the treaty gave much more independence than home rule. E.g. Ireland had a flag, its own army and could impose tariff's.
- Collins said it gave Ireland the **freedom to achieve freedom**.
- The IRA could not carry on their war with Britain any longer.



Arthur Griffith

Anti-Treaty Arguments

- De Valera wanted to **scrap the treaty and renew negotiations**, he wanted external association, not dominion status.
- Having a British king as head of state would let **Britain interfere with Ireland**.
- Taking an oath to a British king would **break the oath to the Republic**.
- **De Valera was against the Treaty**



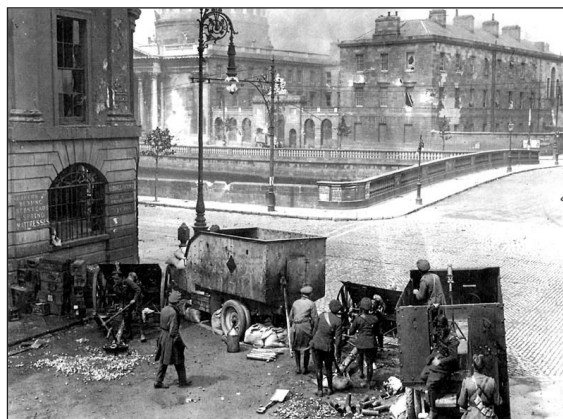
Eamon De Valera

- On January 7th, 1922, the Dail votes **in favour of the Treaty** by 64 votes to 57.
- As a result, De Valera **resigned as president of the Irish free state** and Arthur Griffith was elected to the head of the Dail in his place.

The Irish Civil War

The Treaty caused a split in the IRA.

- **The Pro-Treaty (Free state army)**
- **The Anti-Treaty IRA**
- In April 1922, Anti-Treaty troops occupied the **Four Courts in Dublin**. This was a direct challenge to the Pro-Treaty government.
- The Free State army began to **shell the Anti-Treaty side** in the Four Courts and eventually, the 200 occupants surrendered.



Battle of the Four Courts

- Republicans retreated south of an imaginary line from Limerick to Waterford, which became known as the **Munster Republic**.
- Both Limerick and Waterford were easily captured by the Free State Army and Anti-Treaty forces were forced to withdraw to the countryside and revert to **guerrilla warfare**.
- Collins showed great initiative as commander of the Free State Army – landing men by sea to surround towns and cities in Munster.

The death of Collins and Griffith

- Two of the most important leaders of the Free State government died within a short time of each other.
- **Arthur Griffith** died of a brain haemorrhage on 12 August 1922.
- **Michael Collins** was killed in an ambush at Béal na mBláth, Co. Cork on 22 August 1922.
- W.T. Cosgrave and Kevin O'Higgins became the new leaders of the Free State government.



Eamon De Valera

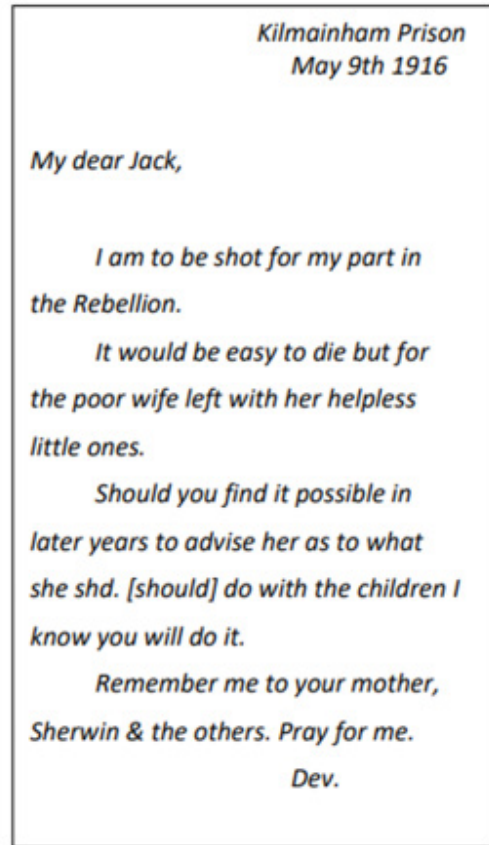
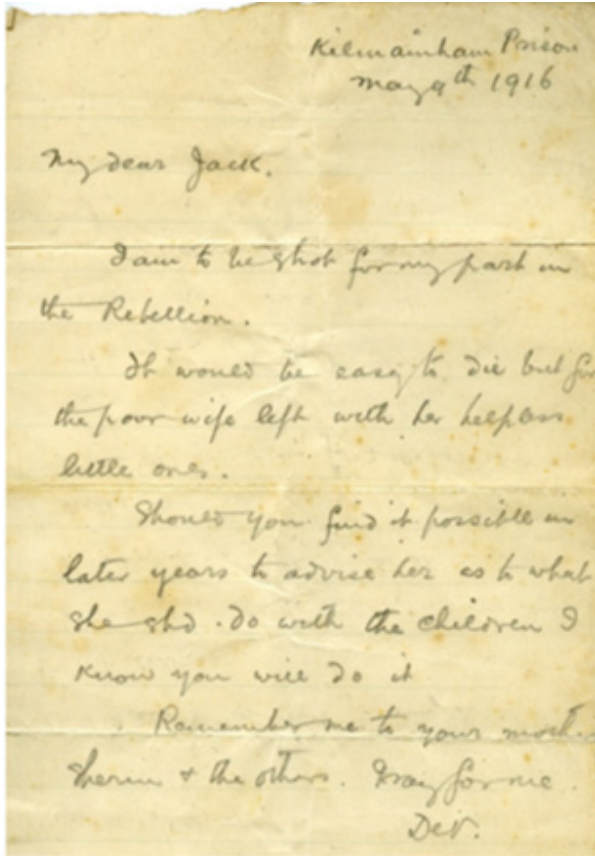
The end of the Civil War

- By 1923, the guerrilla warfare tactics that **Anti-Treaty forces** were using were not as effective as they were against the British.
1. **The Free State army** knew the countryside.
 2. Most people by now **supported the Treaty**.
 - The civil war was a brutal one. **Liam Lynch** (leader of Anti-Treaty forces) was killed in April 1923. Frank Aiken replaced him.
 - Both Aiken and de Valera **called a ceasefire** in May 1923. The civil war was now over.

The Consequences of the Civil War

1. **Death and destruction:** Over 1000 people were killed and damage to property was around €38m.
2. **Bitterness:** The Civil War caused great bitterness which poisoned Irish politics for generations to come.
3. **Lost leaders:** The country lost some its best and ablest leaders, such as Collins and Griffith, when it needed them most.
4. **Political Parties:** The two largest political parties in Ireland grew out of the Pro- and Anti-Treaty sides – **Cumann na nGaedhael (later Fine Gael)** came from the Free State side and **Fianna Fáil from the Republican side**.

16.2 Exam Questions



Q1. Where was De Valera when he wrote this letter?

Q2. How was De Valera to be punished for his part in the Easter Rising?

Q3. What are two things De Valera asks Jack to do for him in this letter?

Q4. How did the British government try to defeat the IRA during the war of Independence?

16.3 Homework Correction

Q1. From your study of Junior Cycle History, give two reasons why Unionists opposed Home Rule and independence for Ireland?

Unionists opposed Home Rule in Ireland as they feared it would result in Ulster leaving the United Kingdom.

Unionists also feared that a fully independent Ireland would result in the Protestants in North Eastern Ireland being mistreated by a Catholic majority.

Q2. Explain two methods Unionists used to oppose Home Rule

The UVF (Ulster Volunteer force) was founded. They were a paramilitary organisation who were committed to using force to defend unionism.

The UVF smuggled arms during the Larne gun running in April 1913. 35,000 guns and 5 million rounds of ammunition were smuggled in. This meant that they were serious about using force to defend Unionism.

Q3. Give two reasons why Nationalists wanted Home Rule.

Nationalists wanted Home Rule in the hope that it would eventually lead to full independence.

They wanted a form of self-governance so they could deal with internal affairs themselves and not have them in the hands of Britain.

Q4. According to Source 2, what is Ulster's prayer?

'Don't let go'

Q5. Is this source from the Nationalist or Unionist side? Explain your answer.

I believe that this source is from Unionist side as they call Ulster the 'prosperity province' which tells us that they think highly of it.

There is also a man with a rope around Ulster pulling it towards England with the words 'Ulster's prayer Don't let go'. This tells us that the Unionists wanted Ulster to remain in the United Kingdom and not with the rest of Ireland.