

Student Workbook 1

Teachers Notes



Primary & Post Primary Learning Resource

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AWARD



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The Heritage Education Trust independently assesses museums and heritage sites across Britain and Ireland and has recognised the National Museum of Ireland - Country Life for the high quality of its learning programmes.

National Museum of Ireland - Country Life Opening Hours:

10am to 5pm Tuesday to Saturday

2pm to 5pm Sundays

Closed Mondays, Good Friday & Christmas Day

To arrange a visit contact the Bookings Office:

Tel: 094 90 31751

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museum

National Museum of Ireland

Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Country Life



Introduction

These teacher's notes give additional background information and answers to Student Workbook 1.

Recommended best use:

- Use Workbook 1 on your school visit
- As revision in class, download the workbook and teachers notes from www.museum.ie and project it onto your whiteboard
- Use the teachers notes to go through the questions with the class



Aran Islands exhibition: Materials

Nylon - nylon is a polymer - a plastic with super long, heavy molecules built up of short endlessly repeating sections of atoms.

Cotton - cotton is a soft fibrous substance which surrounds the seeds of the cotton plant and is made into textile fibre and thread for sewing.

Rubber - rubber is harvested mainly in the form of the latex from the Para rubber tree or others. The latex is a sticky milky substance drawn off by making incisions into the bark and collecting the fluid in a process called tapping.

Wool - wool is the textile fibre obtained from sheep and certain other animals including cashmere from goats, mohair from goats and angora from rabbits.

Linen - is a textile made from the fibres of the flax plant. Linen is valued for its exceptional coolness and freshness in hot weather.

Fish Scales - fish are flexible creatures but they are protected by hard scales. Researchers have found that the protective scales of the Arapaima gigas that lives in the Amazon River in Brazil protects it from the piranha fish. Scientists are now attempting to mimic it to create new types of body armour.

Leather - Leather is a durable and flexible material created by tanning animal hide and skin. Leather is used in the manufacture of clothes, shoes and luggage.

Silk - Silk is a natural protein fibre some forms of which can be woven into textiles. The best known silk is obtained from the cocoons of the larvae of the Mulberry Silkworm. Silk is used for clothing such as skirts, ties, blouses and formal dresses. It's also suitable for many furnishing applications.

Felt - is a textile that is produced by matting, condensing and pressing fibres together. It can be soft or hard and can vary in terms of fibre content, colour, size, thickness and density.

Fur - Fur is used to refer to the hair of animals usually mammals particularly those with extensive body hair coverage that is generally soft and thick. It is used in the making of some clothes.

Lace - Lace is a delicate fabric made of yarn or thread in an open web-like pattern made by machine or by hand. Originally linen, silk, gold or silver threads were used. Now lace is often made with cotton thread.

Velvet - Velvet is a type of woven tufted fabric in which cut threads are evenly distributed with a short dense pile. Velvet can be made from either synthetic or natural fibres.

Seal Skin - Seal skin comes from the skin of a seal which is hunted. Seal skins have been used for millennia to make waterproof jackets and boots and seal fur to make fur coats.

Polyester - Polyester is a synthetic fibre derived from coal, air, water and petroleum. It is used in the making of clothes.

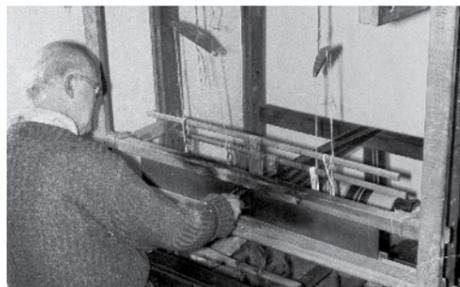
Processes

Knitting - Knitting creates multiple loops of yarn called stitches in a line or tube. Knitting has multiple active stitches on the needle at one time.

Weaving - Weaving is a method of textile production in which two distinct sets of yarns or threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric or cloth. Cloth is usually woven on a loom a device that holds the threads in place.

Sewing - Sewing is the craft of fastening or attaching objects using stitches made with needle and thread. Sewing is one of the oldest of the textile arts beginning in the Paleolithic era. Before the invention of spinning yarn or weaving fabric archaeologists believe Stone Age people across Europe and Asia sewed fur and skin clothing. They used bone, antler or ivory needles and thread made from animal body parts such as sinew, catgut and veins.

Spinning - Spinning is the art of twisting fibre into a continuous thread by using a spinning wheel or drop spindle.



Carbon Footprint

The clothes we wear today have a higher carbon footprint because of the amount of energy used in making the clothes. The clothes of the Aran Islanders were mostly hand made using little or no energy other than human energy. A carbon footprint is the measure of the environmental impact of an individual or organisations lifestyle or operation measured in units of carbon dioxide.

The Irish Folklife Collection

Folklife - *Folklife* deals with the popular traditional way of life, the objects made in the informal oral tradition and their associated skills. These objects and skills are part of an oral folk tradition.

Heritage - Heritage is broadly defined as being either natural or cultural. Cultural heritage is our history as represented by museum collections, traditions, historic buildings, canals and ancient monuments. Natural heritage refers to our countryside, namely farmland, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, coasts and wildlife.

Ethnology - Ethnology comes from the Greek word *ethnos* meaning nation. Ethnology is the branch of anthropology that compares and analyzes the characteristics of different peoples and the relationship between them. It looks at cultural, social and behavioural aspects of people's lives.

Man of Aran - *Man of Aran* is a 1934 fictional documentary film directed by Robert J Flaherty about life on the Aran Islands. It portrays people living in difficult conditions documenting their daily routines such as fishing, farming and hunting for sharks. *Man of Aran* was Flaherty's re-creation of culture on the edge of modern society even though much of the primitive life depicted had been left behind by the 1930's. It was an impressive production for its drama, for its spectacular cinematography of landscape and seascape and for its concise editing.

The Quiet Man - *The Quiet Man* is a 1952 American romantic comedy - drama film directed by John Ford. It starred John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara and many Irish actors. The film presents Ford's depiction of an idealised Irish society with no social divisions based on class or religion. The story is set in the fictitious community of Innisfree. Many scenes from the film were shot around the village of Cong in Co. Mayo. The connections with the film have led to the area becoming a tourist attraction.

Working as a Historian

The object in the image is a herring periscope which is a tubular optical instrument containing mirrors or prisms for seeing objects not in the direct line of sight. It is handcrafted from sheet metal and glass. Periscopes like this were held by hand to get a better view of their surroundings under water which helped locate shoals of fish.



Romanticism vs. Reality

Many images of Ireland sold as postcards in the earlier half of the 20th century portrayed Ireland as an idealistic and romantic place. The words used to describe these images include.

- Sentimentalised** - appealing to feeling rather than reason
- Nostalgic** - yearning for something past
- Dramatic** - full of drama and excitement
- Picturesque** - beautiful scenery
- Idealised** - portrayed as perfect
- Scenic** - beautiful to look at
- Timeless** - could be from any era
- Heroic** - brave and courageous



John Hinde

John Hinde was an English photographer whose idealistic and nostalgic style influenced the art of postcard photography and was widely known for his meticulously planned shoots. The images of the children gathering the turf and the children approaching the cottage with the turf highlight Hinde's ability to capture the vividness of the Irish countryside as well as the imagination of his audience. He came up with a method to blend Irish stereotypes such as cottages, donkeys and red headed children with the seemingly endless lush landscape with bright colours. His postcards of Ireland were immensely popular with Irish people and tourists. He always created an optimistic view in his images as with the images in the booklet.

Paul Henry



Paul Henry was an Irish artist noted for depicting the West of Ireland in a post-impressionist style. He was born in Belfast in 1876 and he died in 1958. He lived and worked on Achill Island from 1910 to 1919. His works, particularly the landscapes of Achill and Connemara came to typify a vision of Ireland that was prevalent in the early years of the Irish Free State. Paul Henry went to the Aran Islands to express a life that never found expression. Here he found "a people who make continual war on the hungry bareness of things". W.B. Yeats uttered his famous advice to J.M. Synge in the late 1890s when he said "Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves, express a life that has never found expression". Where Synge went in the 1890s, the artist Paul Henry followed ten years later choosing Achill as his base. For his 1911 exhibition 'The Northern Whig', he commented "You will look through this exhibition in vain for the 'sweetly pretty' Ireland of the popular illustrators, for the chocolate - box colleen or the cardrider with his budget of comic stories. In place of the glamour of false romance you get the veracity of the thing seen, sentimentalism gives way to stark sincerity".

The reality of life in the countryside

These images of Connemara and the Aran Islands are very vivid. The way of life was beautifully described by Máirtín Ó Direáin in his poem An tEarrach Thiar

*Fear ag caitheadh
Cliabh dhá dhroim
Is an fheamainn dhearg
Ag, lonrú
I dtaineamh gréine
Ar dhuirling bháin
Niamhrach an radharc
San Earrach thiar.*

*A man tossing down
A creel from his back
And the red seaweed
Gleams in the sun
On the white shingle
Glorious the sight
In the Western Spring.*



Life on the western seaboard was difficult. It was a constant battle with the elements. Collecting and transporting seaweed on ones back was extremely difficult work, but necessary as fertiliser to improve bad land.

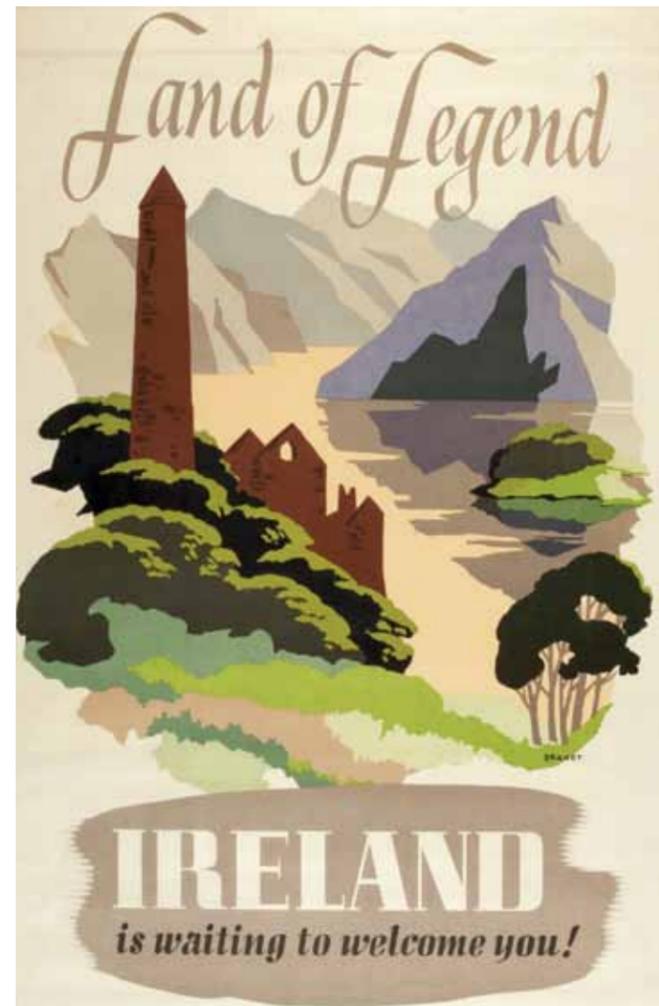
Is there is still a romanticised view of Ireland today?

These videos are worth checking out and can be used as the basis for a discussion

You Tube - Ireland Inspires.

You Tube - Ireland. Flying through the country.

You Tube - Beautiful music - Ireland.



Questions for discussion:

1. What do you think of Ireland when it comes into your mind?
2. What symbols were used to promote Ireland in the past and have these changed today?
3. What's the worst thing about Ireland?
4. What's the best thing about Ireland?
5. Why do you think over 8 million people visit Ireland every year?
6. What would you do to make Ireland a better place?

Timeless Objects

Picture 1 – These farm labourers are probably waiting to be hired for a day's work. They are each holding a spade known as a 'fack', which was common in the south-east of Ireland. The word fack derives from Irish feac (spade). The one-sided fack is an example of a more widespread spade-type known as a 'loy', deriving from Irish laí. The men in the painting may well be seasonal migrant workers from the south-west of Ireland, who were known as spailpíní 'spalpeens'

Picture 2 - The person in the picture is putting on pampooties. Pampooties are raw - hide shoes which were made and worn on the Aran Islands. They are formed from a single piece of un-tanned hide folded around the foot and stitched with twine or a leather strap. The raw hide is kept flexible by use and the constant damp conditions of Western Ireland. The shoes were not made to last as they are prone to rot and were usually kept for as little as a month. Ancient shoes found preserved from medieval times have a similar design.

Picture 3 - This picture shows a man line fishing from the high cliffs. He is wearing a traditional knitted sweater and pampooties. The basket is made from sally rods which were grown all over the country.



Continuity and Change

In rural Ireland, a traditional way of life existed for hundreds of years and lasted well into the 20th century. Over this time some of the objects used in Ireland changed very little. They worked well and were made of readily available materials; as a result there was little necessity to change their design.

The Times

Mailboxes - Following Irish Independence in 1922 existing British mailboxes were painted green. Many of these can still be seen around the country, retaining the monogram of the monarch who reigned at the time of the box's installation. The Department of Posts and Telegraphs continued installing similar pillar boxes and wall boxes, but with the initials S.E. (for Saorstát Éireann) a harp or the 'P and T' logo. Since 1984, An Post the current Irish postal administration uses an Post logo on its posting boxes. The first pillar boxes were erected in Britain in the 1850s. Prior to 1859 there was no standard colour, although the writing was often done in gold. Then green became standard until 1874. It was thought that the green would become unobtrusive. They were too unobtrusive because people kept walking in to them. Red became the colour in 1874 and it took ten years before all boxes were repainted.

Mantrap - A mantrap is a mechanical security device for catching poachers and trespassers. They have taken many forms, the most usual being like a large foothold trap. It usually consists of steel springs armed with teeth which grab the victims leg. Since the 1820s they have been illegal in Britain except as a defence against burglars between sunset and sunrise. Mantraps that use deadly forces are illegal in the United States. Mantraps were used by landowners to discourage poachers getting on their land illegally to hunt for game.

Milestones - A milestone is one of a series of numbered markers placed along a road or boundary at intervals of one mile or occasionally parts of a mile. Milestones are constructed to provide reference points along the road. Milestones were originally stone obelisks which were widely used by Roman Empire road builders. Some milestones have benchmarks or 'crowsfeet' on them which cartographers used to get the height above sea level. These are old Ordnance Survey indications of altitude/ elevation, the name derives from the angle iron which was fitted into the horizontal cut to give a 'bench' or support for a levelling staff.



Explore and Learn!

An Garda Síochána was founded in 1923. Five Land Acts were introduced between 1870 and 1909 by the British government in relation to Ireland. This led to a gradual distribution of land from large landlords to individual farmers in Ireland. 2RN was the first radio broadcasting station in the Irish Free State. It began broadcasting on 1st January 1926 and continued until 1933. It was succeeded by Radio Athlone later Radio Éireann. The station was run by the Irish Post Office under the Dept. of Posts and Telegraphs.

A is (1924-1949)
B is (1879-82) The G.A.A. was founded in 1884.
C is (1901-23)

Location, Location, Location

After the establishment of the Irish Free State a number of place-names were changed. The place-names that were changed had been given to Irish places during the Elizabethan plantations. Other places were named at different times.

Correct answers

Kings County Co. Offaly
Maryborough Port Laoise
Queenstown Cobh
Kingwilliamstown Ballydesmond, Co. Cork

Queens County Co. Laois
Philipstown Daingean
Kingstown Dun Laoghaire

19th Century Map

Maps have evolved from being rough sketches to the accurate scientific instruments they are today. Maps became increasingly precise in the 18th and 19th centuries. As the European powers became stronger in the Americas, Africa and Asia maps were essential for managing the new empires. From (1825 – 1846) teams of surveyors led by officers of the Royal Engineers travelled all over Ireland creating a unique record of the landscape. When the survey was completed in 1946 it was a world first. Both the maps and surveying were executed to a high degree of engineering excellence. The concrete triangulation posts built on the summits of many Irish mountains can still be seen today.



The Natural Environment

Picture No 1 - This man is holding a lobster pot made of heather. Lobster pots were made of heather or more commonly, willow.

Picture No 2 - Chairs and stools are made of wood. Some chairs like the Tuam/Sligo chair had three legs instead of four. This gave better support on an uneven surface.

Picture No 3 - Baskets are made mostly from willow rods. The basketmakers in the image are the Shanahan brothers of Carrick-on-Suir, County Waterford. They were the last of the old-style commercial basketmakers.

These materials were chosen to make these objects because they were available locally.



101 Uses of Straw

The roof of house A & B are thatched from straw (rye/oaten/wheaten) and C most likely field rushes. All of these materials were available in the local environment. People used materials that grew in their local area.

People could grow or find these materials which made them affordable and sustainable.

There was no thatch on the gable ends of the house as strong winds might blow it off.



Straw, Hay and Rushes exhibition

A - The chair (1848) is made from straw using the technique known as 'coiled straw technique'. Briars are collected, the thorns taken off, split and cut into strips. Lengths of straw were collected and the strips of briar are wrapped around it.

B - Similarly, the basket is made from straw and briar bark.

C - This horse collar is made from river rushes, most were made from straw.



Thank you for using the Teachers notes and Workbook 1.

Please share with your colleagues.

If you have any feedback you can email us at
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