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Auszug aus:

Aspects of Irish life

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Aspects of Irish life – Through Irish eyes

by Liam Cleary



Irland war im Laufe der Jahre immer ein beliebtes Thema im Bereich der cultural studies. Landeskunde im Englischunterricht der Oberstufe, die erarbeiteten Vorleserengagen auf der gehalten Insel der vergangenen Jahre sind Grund genug, sich eingehend mit Irland zu befassen. Sowohl die Republik Irland als auch Nordirland haben ihre eigenen Geschichten zu erzählen, aber sie haben auch viel gemeinsam. Das Material zu „Aspects of Irish life“ bietet den Lernenden mit vielfältigen Textarten (z. B. Kurzgeschichte, Gedicht, Essay) eine ausgezeichnete Möglichkeit, sich tiefergehend mit Irland zu befassen.

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Irland war im Laufe der Jahre immer ein beliebtes Thema im Bereich der *cultural studies* (Landeskunde) im Englischunterricht der Oberstufe. Die erstaunlichen Veränderungen auf der geteilten Insel der vergangenen Jahre sind Grund genug, sich eingehend mit Irland zu befassen. Sowohl die Republik Irland als auch Nordirland haben ihre eigenen Geschichten zu erzählen, aber sie haben auch viel gemeinsam. Das Material zu „*Aspects of Irish life*“ bietet den Lernenden mit vielfältigen Textsorten (z. B. Kurzgeschichte, Gedicht, Essay) eine ausgezeichnete Möglichkeit, sich tiefergehend mit Irland zu befassen.

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Competences and skills:

This unit sets out to give students at senior level an opportunity to improve their **knowledge of Ireland, its people and history**. A variety of articles, short stories, poems and audio files have been prepared to help them do this. While working on the material, students will enhance their **reading, writing and listening skills** as they work with the texts. With the worksheets provided, they can also develop their **analysing and writing skills** and have the chance to interact with partners; thus, using their **communicative as well as their social competences**. There are also research tasks and creative writing exercises which offer students the opportunity to perform in front of their classmates.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A Analysis

CT Creative task

LC Listening comprehension

PR Presentation

RC Reading comprehension

W Writing

C Comment

L Working with the language

P Working with a photo

R Research

T Working with a text

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: An introduction to Ireland	M1	P
2: James Joyce: <i>Eveline</i>	M2–M4	A, CT, L, PR, R, RC, T
3: John Montague: <i>The Country Fiddler</i>	M5–M6	A, L, P, PR, R, RC, T, W
4: Fintan O'Toole: <i>We Don't Know Ourselves</i>	M7–M8	A, CT, L, PR, R, RC, T
5: Sports in Ireland	M9–M11	A, L, PR, R, T
6: Podcast: Mary Lou McDonald and Sinn Féin	M12	LC, P, R
Exam: Susan McKay: <i>On the far side of borders, a new Ireland is taking shape</i>		A, C, L, RC, T

Aspects of Irish life – Through Irish eyes

Facts

Ireland has always been a country creative people feel drawn to and one that writers have long found both irresistible and inspiring. This applies both to Irish and international artists. Foreign authors, such as Heinrich Böll, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Michel Houellebecq, to name but a few, have found Ireland to be a place ideally cut-out for exercising their craft. Writing in 1989, the well-known Irish poet Eavan Boland described her native land as

“land of the Gulf Stream,
the small farm,
the scalded memory,
the songs
that bandage up the history,
the words
that make a rhythm of the crime
where time is time past.”

These words hold true now as much as they did when they were composed, but one feels that if Boland were alive today, she would have to add a certain amount to accurately describe Irish society as it now is. In simple terms, many momentous events have since passed this description out. In 1989, the Good Friday peace agreement which would bring a much-needed end to violence in the country was still a decade away. The Republic of Ireland was poor and emigration rife. The wealth which the boom years of the Celtic Tiger (1995–2005) would bring was just beginning to filter down through society. The flow of immigrants into the country had not yet taken off. In fact, a vast array of changes, which would transform Ireland into a modern, wealthy, booming country, were only starting to take hold. Ireland in 2022 is a thriving, multi-cultural and exciting society which never ceases to surprise but also to shock. As Ireland tries to leave the horrors of the Covid-19 crisis behind it, this is a good time to examine once again a country that has long been famous for its physical beauty, sports, music, writing and history. The unit sets out to shine the spotlight on some of the most interesting aspects of that world.

Notes on the material

Ireland is presented through a variety of texts and other material which the teacher may use as a teaching scheme or alternatively select the most suitable ones and do them individually with students. The focus is on the themes of emigration, Irish traditional music, sport in Irish life, Mary Lou McDonald and Sinn Féin, as well as the issue of a united Ireland and the role of the border in Irish life. Secondary to these main themes there is also material on James Joyce, aspects of Brexit and Irish history in general.

As a general means of introducing the topic to the class, a collage of photographs taken in recent times in Ireland is provided (**Topic 1**). The accompanying questions are meant to allow the teacher to debate the aspects of Irish life found in the photos. These are particularly suited to brainstorming exercises designed to find out what students already know about Ireland.

Topic 2 consists of the short story *Eveline* by Ireland's most famous and controversial writer, James Joyce, a story rooted firmly in his own experience of emigration. There is a task on his life and several exercises designed to give students a good understanding of the story. The theme of emigration, which is central to any understanding of Irish history and culture, is a good start of the unit.

Topic 3 turns to the subject of traditional Irish music and employs the poem *The Country Fiddler* by Irish poet John Montague. In addition to the worksheet provided, there is also a section on photo analysis which ties in well with the poem. The photo was taken in a public house somewhere in Ireland on a day when traditional musicians came together to play. Additional exercises encourage students to find out more about the poet's life and traditional music.

Topic 4 presents an extract from the essayist Fintan O'Toole's acclaimed book *We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Modern Ireland*. The extract discloses in detail about growing up in Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s and focuses on youth rebellion Irish style as well as the strange mixture of national and international influences which he experienced as a young man.

Topic 5 centres around the role of the traditional sports like hurling and football in Irish life. Two poems are cited which allow a glimpse of the function and rewards that sport

offers for Irish people. The worksheet includes questions which encourage partner work and a comparison of the two poems. The language of sport is also focused on with an exercise on sports idioms.

Topic 6 is about listening comprehension. The political leader Mary Lou McDonald features in the audio file as she takes over as President of Sinn Féin, a political party growing in popularity both north and south of the border. A transcript of the programme is available at <https://raabe.click/MaryLouMcDonaldTranscript>.

The exam contains a text, worksheet and discussion of the political future of Ireland in a post-Brexit era. The possibility of a united Ireland lies at the heart of the exam and students are given ample opportunity to debate this issue. Both the Unionist and Nationalist perspectives are catered for in the text and worksheet.

A **timeline** on important events in Ireland can be downloaded in the online-archive or in the zip-folder.



Further sources of interest to the teacher

- ▶ *We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Modern Ireland* by Fintan O'Toole
- ▶ <https://www.rte.ie/>
Useful for live radio, some TV, and podcasts; also informative articles
- ▶ <https://www.tg4.ie>
Irish language broadcaster particularly good for traditional music
- ▶ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/>
Newspaper with a lot of free content
- ▶ <https://www.thejournal.ie/>
Irish newspaper
- ▶ <https://crokepark.ie/gaamuseum>
The GAA Museum is the national custodian of all the archives and artefacts of the Gaelic Athletic Association.
- ▶ <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/>
Vast resources covering all aspects of the Troubles
- ▶ <https://www.scoilnet.ie/>
Excellent links to many different useful teaching material
[last access: 21/11/2022]

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