

THE ARTS / PDMU · P5–P7

Múrmhaisiúchán Bhéal Feirste — Belfast's Murals

Art, History & Identity — P5–P7

Understanding Belfast's murals

1

Political murals

Large-scale wall paintings in Belfast (and other NI towns) expressing community identity, commemorating historical events, or conveying political messages. Found on both sides — nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist areas.

2

Nationalist/republican murals

Found mainly in west Belfast (Falls Road area). Themes: Irish history (1916, Celtic mythology), Irish language, political prisoners, solidarity with other oppressed peoples globally. The Bobby Sands mural (Sinn Féin office) is the most photographed.

3

Unionist/loyalist murals

Found mainly in east and north Belfast. Themes: Battle of the Boyne (1690), King William of Orange, Ulster history, UDA/UVF paramilitary commemoration.

4

Peace murals

Since the Good Friday Agreement, many murals have been replaced with peace-themed images — often through community programmes. The Artist Collective Paint Works has worked with communities to create non-sectarian murals.

5

Murals as tourism

The murals of west Belfast (particularly the International Wall on the Falls Road) have become a significant tourist attraction — often seen on 'black taxi tours'. Murals have become part of Belfast's cultural identity globally.



6

Classroom use

Murals are an extraordinary primary source of political and cultural history. They are also genuine works of art — many are technically impressive. The question 'what is this trying to say, and to whom?' is a powerful media literacy question.

