

THE WORLD AROUND US — HISTORY / PDMU · P5–P7

Na Trioblóidí — The Troubles

An Age-Appropriate Guide — P5–P7

Understanding the Troubles

1 The Troubles (c.1968–1998)

A period of conflict in Northern Ireland between communities that held different views on whether NI should remain part of the UK (unionists) or join a united Ireland (nationalists). Over 3,500 people were killed. The conflict involved paramilitaries on both sides and the British Army.

2 Paramilitaries

Armed groups operating outside the state: the IRA and INLA on the republican/nationalist side; the UDA and UVF on the loyalist/unionist side. All were responsible for deaths.

3 Civil rights movement (1960s)

Inspired by the American civil rights movement, Catholic/nationalist communities in NI campaigned for equal voting rights, equal housing access, and an end to discrimination. Marches were attacked and led to conflict.

4 Bloody Sunday (30 Jan 1972)

British paratroopers shot 26 unarmed civil rights marchers in Derry — 14 died. A Saville Inquiry (2010) concluded they were killed unlawfully. A major escalation of the Troubles.

5 Enniskillen bombing (1987)

An IRA bomb at a Remembrance Sunday ceremony in Enniskillen killed 11 civilians. Gordon Wilson's forgiveness speech — his daughter Marie died in his arms — became one of the most significant moments of the Troubles.



6

Ceasefires and peace

IRA ceasefire: August 1994. Combined Loyalist Military Command ceasefire: October 1994. The Good Friday Agreement (1998) provided the political framework for lasting peace.

Teaching the Troubles sensitively

A note for teachers

- Many children in NI classrooms have family members who were directly affected by the Troubles — through bereavement, injury, imprisonment, or displacement. This is not history for them.
- **APPROACH:** factual and balanced. Acknowledge that people on all sides suffered. Do not assign blame in ways that identify with one community.
- **LANGUAGE:** 'people were killed' rather than 'terrorists killed'. 'Republicans' and 'loyalists' rather than terms that carry loaded local meaning.
- **CHILDREN'S OWN STORIES:** never require children to share their family's experience of the Troubles. Some may want to; this should be entirely voluntary.
- **THE POSITIVE ENDING:** the peace process is a genuine success story. Focus on people like Gordon Wilson, the Women's Coalition, John Hume, and David Trimble who worked for peace.
- **RESOURCES:** the Conflict Archive on the INternet (CAIN) at Ulster University is the most comprehensive academic resource on the Troubles.

