

HUMANITIES — WELSH HISTORY · YEAR 5–6

Anghydffurfiaeth Cymru — Welsh Nonconformism

Chapel Culture — Years 5–6

Welsh Nonconformism

1

Nonconformism

Protestant Christianity outside the Church of England — Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, Quaker. By the 19th century, the majority of Welsh-speaking Wales was Nonconformist.

2

The Methodist Revival (18th century)

A religious awakening began in Wales — Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland were early leaders. Thousands converted. The revival transformed Welsh society — reducing drunkenness, establishing chapels, encouraging literacy.

3

The chapel

The Nonconformist place of worship — typically plain, austere, emphasising the sermon and congregational singing. The chapel was the social centre of Welsh-speaking communities: weddings, funerals, concerts, political meetings.

4

Welsh language and Nonconformism

Nonconformist preaching was in Welsh — unlike the Church of England, which was associated with the English-speaking gentry. This cemented the link between Welsh language, Nonconformism, and Welsh identity.

5

Temperance movement

The movement to reduce or ban alcohol — very strong in Nonconformist Wales. Welsh Sunday closing laws (1881 Act) closed pubs on Sundays in most of Wales — finally repealed by local referenda in the late 20th century.



6

Chapels today

Most Welsh chapels have closed or been converted — to houses, arts venues, restaurants. The decline mirrors the decline of Welsh-language Nonconformism. But the culture they created — choral singing, education, radical politics — remains.

