

About The Project

Thanks for our interest in this project. We know that we will receive many more entries than we can use, so I hope you will enjoy taking part, irrespective of whether or not your work is chosen for performance.

In this project we want to showcase the thoughts and feelings of people who left Ireland to live in the UK over the past 100 years. Why people left will be as varied as the people themselves, so we are hoping for entries which reflect this. We are also looking for pieces which show an understanding of what life was like for people at a particular time. We are hoping to show that peoples' reasons for leaving Ireland for England were different in the 1930s than they were in the 1970s..

As always, Green Curtain Theatre will be looking for strong, authentic characters that will engage audiences and encourage them to think, laugh, or be moved in ways that only theatre can deliver. We would love to receive pieces which take a fresh approach and avoid the classic stereotypes.

The final piece will be a series of interweaving 'talking heads' or 'monologues' performed by professional actors and filmed in a studio in Spring 2021. Our final piece will be made up of about ten monologues so we will be looking for pieces from ten different writers.

"Talking Heads" or "monologues" are written in the first person and are where a character, who is alone speaks directly to the camera. It provides a great format for allowing that character to reveal their innermost thoughts.

You can find some great examples of these on the web. Google 'Dear Ireland' to watch this project which was co-curated by the Abbey Theatre in Dublin with RTE. Alan Bennett's 'Talking Heads' can be watched for free on the BBC iPlayer or Your Tube.

Resources for Researching Irish History

If you are like me and went to school in England the chances you have probably never studied Irish history and may need to do some research to gain a better idea of what living in the Free State or the Irish Republic might have been like from 1921 onwards. Try asking family and friends as first person testimonies are always good place to start. There are some great resources online. Here are a few:

The Partitioning of Ireland

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zt7msrd/revision/8>

From Irish Free State to Éire

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z3qmfqw/revision/1>

Independent Ireland to 1959

[Ireland - Independent Ireland to 1959 | Britannica](#)

Developments since 1959

[Ireland - The Republic of Ireland | Britannica](#)

Possible Themes

We would advise you to choose a theme that you can explore as this often helps to 'bind' a monologue together. Below are a few suggestions- feel free to choose others.

Hope/ anticipation	Religion	Shame/ Anger
Scepticism	Loyalties	Preservation of culture/ Pride in Heritage
Relief	Displacement	Success/ Gratitude for what Ireland gave them
Disappointment	Loss/ Emigration	Unresolved issues

Below are a few thoughts on how some of these themes might be placed in an historical context. If they help you get started that is 'great'. If you have better ideas that is 'fantastic'.

1. **Hope/ Anticipation/ Scepticism**

Ireland approached the Treaty negotiations in 1921 when many of its population were weary of violence. Not only had families had men killed or injured fighting for the British in the First World War but all would have touched by the violence of the War of Independence. Many would hope that the negotiations would bring peace and stability to Ireland.

However, there would also have been those, wary and sceptical of how Ireland could win against its bigger colonial master. These people would have no doubt been angry with the compromises inherent in the Treaty.

2. **Relief/ Compromise**

Michael Collins, who was the chief negotiator for de Valera is reported to have said prophetically, when he signed the Treaty on 6th December 1921, that he also signed his 'own death warrant'. There was much in the Treaty that Collins didn't like but he saw it as a steppingstone to the independent Ireland that many had fought for and others dreamt of.

3. **Disappointment**

Nearly all freedom fighters who achieve power disappoint and De Valera was no exception. The country he created was very different to the one that people had hoped or fought for. This is hardly surprising as creating a new country from one impoverished by lack of industry, unequal land ownership and high levels of migration is not easy. There was terrific poverty and unemployment was endemic. It was hard to fulfil the promises of the proclamation of 1916.

"The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past."

4. **Displacement**

The drawing of the Border in Ireland created a sense of displacement not only physically but economically and emotionally as well. For example, the farmers of Donegal now in the Free State were physically cut off from their main market in Derry. Protestants became a minority in Catholic Ireland and, over the border Catholic Republicans still lived in a part of the United Kingdom. Not only were these Catholics cut off from the rest of Ireland but they were also treated unequally with their lack of Civil Rights becoming a contentious issue.

5. **Anger towards Religion/ Gratitude Towards Religion**

The birth of the republic saw the rise in the prominence of the Catholic Church. It should not be forgotten that the Irish State, founded in 1922, did not set up a Department of Health or a

Department of Social Welfare until 1947. The Catholic Church was granted an enormous amount of power as it filled in the gaps left by the new administration. It also ran most of the schools. Whilst the Church did an enormous amount to help, in subsequent years its legacy was found to be mixed.

6. **Loyalties**

The attitudes towards the British post-independence differed from person to person throughout the century. Some would always view England as the 'old enemy' whilst others would retain Pro British attitudes. Seated between these two groups would be the majority who held a more nuanced view. People who, although delighted that Ireland had achieved her independence, were also grateful that her neighbour across the Irish Sea could provide work when Ireland failed to. Political circumstances led to divided loyalties from time to time. For example, at the outbreak of the Second World War. Ireland remained neutral but many Irish people volunteered to join the British Army, economic hardship drew some but for others it was a matter of conscience.

7. **Loss**

Loss and sadness were a feature of Irish life from the 1950s as emigration took hold. For most of this period a significant proportion of each generation born in Ireland would, in time leave for other countries, and only in the 1970s and 1990s did substantial immigration reverse this well-established historical pattern.

8. **Anger/Shame**

There were times when some Irish people might have looked across the water and felt ashamed or angry at what had happened back in Ireland. For example at the more negative aspects of the Celtic Tiger and the publication of the Ryan report on clerical abuse.

9. **Success/ Gratitude for what Ireland gave them**

It shouldn't be forgotten that many people attribute the success of their lives away from Ireland to something which Ireland 'gave' them.

10. **Preservation of Culture/ Pride in Their Heritage/ Solidarity Within The Irish Community.**

For many who came to live in mainland UK, the passing on and preservation of Irish culture through music, language, literature and sport was an important part of their lives. Many people were also proud of what Ireland had given them and what it meant to be Irish.

11. **Unresolved Issues**

Should we mention the border? An issue in 1921 which continues to the present time.

Going Forward: Getting your ideas together.

- Decide on a theme which interests you.
- Remember that one of the gifts of a 'talking head' is that although the characters are speaking aloud, they are in a strange sense speaking to themselves. They can say anything because no one will hear what they say.
- Think about how you can explore that theme from an original angle and create a character who can explore this for you.
- What is their age and occupation? Do they have a religion or philosophy which is important to them? When did they live in Ireland? With whom do they live? Are they important to someone? When and why did they leave Ireland? How have fared in England? What do they do in their spare time? etc
- The next thing to be clear about is why they have decided to speak now? What is the trigger point? Has something pushed them to the edge? Or have they come across something that prompts their thoughts? This could be a physical object or something else? A song. An occasion.
- Make a short list of the things that they want to say. Reorder the list to ensure that you know what is most important to them so that you can cover this properly.
- Once you understand your character and know what they want to say - decide what has made them speak out now.
- Decide how you will frame the monologue's content – where you will begin and where you will end.

Some tips for writing your monologue

1. Have an interesting beginning. We should be able to find out who your character by the thoughts and feelings they have without them having to introduce themselves. Jump straight into what they have to say.

EXAMPLES

“Imagine. That level of bravery and Uncle Tommy couldn’t even talk about it. If he’d joined the Irish Army instead of the British, we wouldn’t have had to wait until he was dead to show these medals off. Ach, I suppose that times were different then.”

“It has been three weeks since Roisin left for university. Every time I look at her empty room, I can’t help thinking what it was like for mammy to say goodbye to five of her six children when they left Ireland. For sure, I’ll see Roisin in a few weeks, but poor mammy had to wait years or more.”

2. Remember that your writing is to be performed so make sure that it can be spoken easily. People don’t speak in perfect English so write the way that your character would speak.
3. Use similes and metaphors to add colour to your writing.

Metaphors

- a. ***‘I didn’t tell anyone but the minute I set foot on that ferry boat a wave of terror washed over me.’*** Although the reader knows that the terror isn’t really a wave, they probably understand how frightening it can be when you are swamped by a wave whilst swimming.

Similes

- b. ***“He ran down that road as if he’d wings on his feet”.*** Again, although the reader knows that the person doesn’t actually have wings on his feet, we know that wings help things to move faster. ***“He was as much used as an unsharpened pencil”***, doesn’t really require any explanation.
4. Try to leave at least a week or ten days in between finishing your monologue and sending it in to us. That way you can leave the piece to ‘breathe’ for a week before looking at it again to see if you want to make any changes. That way you can ensure that your characters has made a connection between their life and experiences of living in the UK with their Irish heritage. That point of connection needs to show how it has triggered the particular thoughts and feelings described.
 5. Remember, your piece needs to be between 250 and 500 words. Resist the temptation to add to your piece. Shorter pieces can be more effective so, if you have said what you have wanted to say in 250 words- that’s fine. The judges are looking for quality not quantity.
 6. Finally remember to read your piece out aloud before you submit it.