

James Connolly's hat, as worn in the GPO during the 1916 Rising.

Senior Cycle Lesson

This hat is an ordinary hat.

Its significance or importance arises from its association with James Connolly during the 1916 Rising

It is linked to an important story related to the 1916 Rising.

James Connolly was a signatory of the 1916 Proclamation, and one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising. He commanded the garrison that occupied the General Post Office.

As Commandant, he wore this very distinctive hat, marking him out as a leader of the group.

Armies have always sought to wear distinctive dress (or uniform) to mark them out as a special group. Armies attach importance to a distinctive military uniform in a conflict situation,

The condition of the hat helps us to understand that there is a random aspect (or simply luck) that helps some individuals to survive battle situations.

Look closely at the object.

Identify three features, relating to colour and condition.

The hole on the rim was made by a bullet, showing how lucky Connolly was not to have been killed immediately.

The hat was said to have fallen from head when Connolly was being carried on a stretcher to a hospital in Dublin Castle. He had a wound on his head that corresponded to the hole in the hat. The hat was picked up by one of the civilian Red Cross team that was stationed in Dublin Castle.

Questions and Activities

1. When was it worn?
2. Where was it worn?
3. Why do you think that it was worn by Connolly in the General Post Office?
4. Why are uniforms important in battle or conflict situations?
5. What do they tell us about the organisation or the discipline or organisation of the individuals who fight side-by-side in a conflict.
6. Why did the rebels wear (basic) uniforms during the 1916 Rising?
7. Can you suggest how this object can be used to understand to explain any of the important features of the 1916 Rising?
8. When was the Red Cross set up?
9. Would any members of the British army have been carrying the stretcher?
10. Why would the person who picked up the hat not have given it back to Connolly, or to one of the British soldiers?
11. Is there any doubt that this was Connolly's hat?
12. (a) Do some research on James Connolly from the time of the surrender in the GPO until his execution. Read his biography in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. This website is available online and free of charge in most schools through the Schools Broadband Network. It is also available in public libraries.

(b) How did the events during this period influence public opinion among nationalists in Ireland and abroad?

And finally ...

How is this object associated with the Easter Rising 1916 and in what way does it make a unique contribution to our understanding of the event?

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