

Pearse negotiations note

Senior Cycle Lessons

This draft order, to enter into negotiations with the British, was drawn up by Pearse on 29 April 1916 after five days of fighting in Dublin. It was written

Historical documents often survive due to luck.

This document was found in the ruins of Number 16 Moore Street after the cessation of fighting in the area.

Original handwritten sources often present difficulties for historians.

Your first task as a historian is to read and write out the text of Pearse's note.

The writing out of the text of a document is a skill that is constantly practised by historians; they always try to make an accurate transcription, but sometimes it is difficult to determine the meaning of a word.

A transcription of the document can be found [here](#).

In this case, the document was written on a piece of cardboard that was used to mount a picture before it was framed.

As such this is a durable surface, and ensured that the message had a better chance of survival.

Pearse appears to have written the order with a large pencil, possibly with a hint of blue in the lead.

This is a very important original document, as it signals the end of the rebel military activity in Dublin and elsewhere.

Questions and activities

1. (a) Who wrote this document?
 (b) What rank did he hold in the Irish Volunteers?
2. Where and when was the document produced?
3. Who were the intended recipients of the order?
4. What was the relationship between Pearse and the recipients of the order?
5. From your reading of the document, can you identify each of the following:
 - (a) Pearse's praise for the men and women who took part in the rising
 - (b) A political point that he makes in relation to negotiations for Ireland's independence
 - (c) The impact of the rising on the civilian population of Dublin
 - (d) Pearse's conviction that his soldiers had fought for long enough
 - (e) He does not include any reference to the activities of the British army in Dublin.
 Can you suggest a reason why he did not include such a reference?
6. Pearse does not order his commandants to surrender. How does he suggest to them that the fighting had come to an end?
7. Pearse was well known as a successful writer. Can you identify any persuasive features of the document that show he was a very experienced writer?

8. Rebels had been active in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. News of the surrender note had to be given to its leaders. Do some research in the witness statements on the website of the Bureau of [Military History](#) to establish how news of the surrender order was relayed to the rebel leadership there.

9. Research Pearse's role in Easter Week, using the entry for Pearse 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.

10. Pearse's order was carried to the various rebel outposts by Nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell. Research her role in this episode of the Easter rising. See also a brief note on her life, as well as a photograph of her grave in [Glasnevin](#) cemetery. When you have examined her role in the Easter rising, are there any conclusions that you can draw about the role of women during the Easter rising, and after?

Activity

Enniscorthy was the last Irish Volunteer outpost to surrender.

Due to problems over communication from Dublin, the Irish Volunteers were unwilling to surrender without confirmation from their superiors in Dublin.

Sean Etchingham and Seamus Doyle were brought up to Dublin by a British military escort. They met with Pearse in his cell at Arbour Hill prison.

The witness statement given to the Bureau of Military History by Doyle describes the meeting, and the moment when Etchingham brought up the surrender matter with him:

Etchingham said to him. "Why did you surrender"? Pearse answered "Because they were shooting women and children in the streets. I saw them myself". I asked him did he know we were out. He said he did not. I then asked him to put the order for surrender in writing for me. Pearse asked for a pen and paper which the soldier got immediately. He then wrote the order to surrender and signed it and gave it to the soldier to show to the officers outside. The soldier did so and brought it back to us in the cell. While the soldier was out of the cell. Pearse whispered to us "Hide the arms, they will be wanted later".

1. What reason did Pearse give for surrendering that he also gave in the draft note concerning negotiations?