

Programme for the Abbey Theatre, Easter 1916

Lesson activities

Starter activity: Students could think about the popularity of the theatre in Dublin in 1916. Why were there so many theatres in the city at that time? Students may have learned about the Abbey Theatre from their studies of the social and political history of Ireland in the 20th century. Teachers could engage with students' prior learning about the significance of the Abbey Theatre as a national theatre founded in 1904 by W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory.

Object study (suitable for ordinary level): Students could examine the advertisements in the programme and think about what the goods and services advertised tell us about what it was like to live in Dublin in 1916.

- What does the advertisement for Champion Cycles on page 2 tell us about transport in Dublin in 1916?
- It is mentioned that the theatre is 'disinfected throughout with Jeyes Fluid'. What does this tell us about hygiene issues at that time?
- There are advertisements for novels, plays and poetry in the programme. What does this tell us about the type of people who attended plays at the Abbey?
- How many of the types of businesses advertising in the programme still exist today?

Object study (suitable for higher level): Students could study the main page of the programme (where the performances are listed) and the following questions could form the basis of small group discussion.

- Read Yeats' description of how he came to write the play *Kathleen Ni Houlihan*. According to Yeats, the character Kathleen Ni Houlihan 'was Ireland herself'. What do you think Yeats means by this? What type of Ireland does Kathleen Ni Houlihan represent do you think?
- How would a play like *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* fit in with the ethos of a national theatre like the Abbey?
- The play is set in Killala in 1798. Based on your study of revolution in Ireland in the 18th century, why do you think this setting is significant?
- Seán Connolly, who was due to play the role of Peter Gillane in the play, spent Easter Monday leading a group of rebels in an attack on Dublin Castle. He died in action. Are you surprised that Connolly and other actors and staff members at the Abbey Theatre took part in the Easter Rising? Why/why not?

Follow-on activity: Students could carry out further research on the involvement of the Abbey Theatre in the Easter Rising 1916. They could read the entry for Seán Connolly in the [Dictionary of Irish Biography](#), accessible free of charge through the Schools' Broadband Network. Further information is available on the website of the [Abbey Theatre](#).