

## Mary Martin's diary for 1916

### Junior Cycle

The study of historic objects will contribute to student achievement of the Statements of Learning for Junior Cycle, in particular:

**Statement 3:** creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts.

**Statement 8:** values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change.

### Junior Certificate history

The study of historic objects is an essential component of the History Syllabus for Junior Certificate. Engagement with primary source material is vital to the achievement of course objectives, which include the acquisition of knowledge, concepts and skills relating to the study of history.

Students can acquire knowledge of the past in an organic way through the study of historic objects. Key concepts, including source, evidence, chronology, bias/objectivity, fact/opinion, propaganda can be taught using primary sources examples. Engagement with historic objects enables students to acquire the skills of the historian, including the ability to locate and select information in a source and to critically analyse and communicate that information.

The study of objects relating to the Easter Rising, 1916, has a direct link to the syllabus topic: *'Political developments in Ireland in the late 19th century and the 20th century'*.

### Lesson activities

**Starter activity:** Students could identify the advantages and disadvantages for historians of using diaries as primary source material. For instance, although diaries provide the historian with a first-hand witness account to an event, they can also be biased and inaccurate. Ask students to suggest ways in which the historian can overcome these disadvantages.

**Object study:** It will be necessary to provide students with some background information to this object. Inform students that the diary belonged to Mary Martin, a well-off Catholic woman from Monkstown, Co. Dublin. Mary's son, Charles, was reported missing and wounded in late 1915 while fighting with the British Army in Greece. Mary decided to use a diary for 1916 to write a letter to Charles each day, describing the events of that day. Her descriptions include an account of the events of the Easter Rising as she learned of them. The following questions could form the basis of a class discussion:

1. Why do you think Mary decided to keep this diary?
2. Why do you think this diary is useful to historians?
3. Based on what you know about Mary Martin, how do you think she would have reacted to the Easter Rising?

**Group work activity:** A class could be divided into eight small groups, where each group is assigned one date that describes the events of the Easter Rising, between Monday, 24th April 1916 and Sunday, 30th April 1916. A group could also be assigned the date Thursday, 4th May 1916 where Mary describes the damage caused by the rebellion in Dublin city centre. They should report back to the class with the following information:

1. What events does Mary describe in your section of the diary?
2. What do you think is Mary's attitude to the events she describes?
3. Are there any inaccuracies or errors in the information she provides?

**Follow-on activity:** Students could read the rest of the diary and use it to obtain information on the first World War in the first half of 1916, as reported on by Mary. They might do some research on the **British campaign at Salonika** during which Charles Martin died in action.