

## Plough and the Stars Flag

### 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:** ask students questions that get them thinking about why some organisations use flags, what is represented by the particular colours or symbols on a flag and how a flag helps to create unity in an organisation. Students could relate to their own examples of flags used to represent their school, their local team, their county or their country.

**Object study:** Teachers could explain relevant background information, in particular that the flag belonged to the Irish Citizen Army, a military organisation set up to protect the rights of workers in Dublin. It could also be explained to students that the constellation Ursa Major is often referred to as the 'starry plough' in Ireland and Britain. Students could work in groups and use this information to come up with ideas about the symbolic meaning of the plough and the stars on the flag.

**Discussion questions:** The following questions are linked to the students' study of Irish labour history for Junior Certificate history.

1. Why do you think James Connolly ordered this flag to be raised above the Imperial Hotel, which belonged to William Martin Murphy?
2. How do you think Connolly and the other rebels in the ICA would have felt when they saw the flag flying above the hotel?
3. The starry plough was one of many flags raised by the rebels over buildings in Dublin city during Easter Week. What purpose were the 1916 leaders trying to achieve by flying these flags?
4. The flag was raised above the hotel on Tuesday morning, under heavy gunfire directed towards the hotel. Are you surprised that the flag survived the Easter Rising?

**Follow-on activity:** Taking inspiration from the symbolism of the starry plough, students could design a flag to represent an organisation that they belong to. Students could use the flag as a starting point for further study of the Irish Citizen Army and rebel activity on Sackville Street during Easter Week.