

Sheehy-Skeffington brick

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: teachers could ask students to think of an object they own, or an object that belongs to their family, which holds sentimental value for them. The object could be something they associate with a loved one or a special event in their lives. This starter activity will help students to understand why Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington would have valued this seemingly ordinary object so much.

Object study: A photograph of the object could be shown to students without any caption or background information. Students could work in small groups to write a description of the object and to give suggestions as to what the significance of the object might be.

Discussion questions: The following questions could form the basis of a class discussion based around the object.

1. Francis Sheehy-Skeffington was a well-known **pacifist**. What do you think this term means?
2. Why do you think the execution of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington caused such outrage among the general public? Try to think of at least two reasons why people were horrified by the execution.
3. After the executions of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and two other men had taken place at Portobello Barracks, the man who ordered the executions, Captain Bowen-Colthurst tried to hide evidence that the executions had taken place. This included removing the bullet-riddled bricks from the wall. What do you think this says about his state of mind of Captain Bowen-Colthurst at the time of the executions?

Follow-on activity: students could research the life of Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, in particular her association with the suffragette organisation, the Irish Women's Franchise League. Students could also find out further information on the Sheehy-Skeffington brick by reading the blog **'The Cricket Bat that died for Ireland'**.