The struggle for the Irish State:

By Scott Stribe

**NCSS Thematic Strands:**

-People, Places, and Environments

-Individual Groups and Institutions

**Grade Level:** 11

**Class Period Required:** 50 Minutes

**Purpose, Background and Context:**

Earlier in the unit we explored the reasons World War I took place. We learned how the rise of militarism, imperialism, the system of treaty alliances and nationalism all contributed to the War’s outbreak. With this lesson we return again to imperialism and nationalism, this time with a focus on British imperial domination of Ireland, how the Irish suffered under British rule, and the militant exertion of Irish nationalism during Ireland's efforts to free itself from centuries of British oppression. During Easter week 1916 Irish Republican initiated a military uprising that was forcibly put down by the British. However, the Easter Rising became a symbol of Irish resistance and would propel a movement that achieved full independence in 1922.

 In this lesson students will discuss how England colonized and mistreated the Irish. They will re-visit the concepts of imperialism and nationalism, focusing on Irish nationalism. Students will also consider the values-based question of whether or not Irish revolutionaries should have resorted to violence to free themselves from British control. Finally, students will discuss the different views of Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera and decide who they would support if alive in this era.

**Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes/Performance Expectations:**

1. Understand the factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict among peoples of the nation and world, including language, religion, and political beliefs (NCSS Standards, p35).
2. Understand the institutions (British Government, IRA, Sinn Fain, and Fianna Fail) in furthering change (NCSS Standards, p44).
3. Use case summaries on key individuals to identify their part in Irish independence
4. Understand the timeline of events in Irish history through lecture and classroom discussion.

**Materials:**

1. Transcript of 1921 agreement between UK and Ireland
2. Film: *Michael Collins* (1996)
3. PowerPoint slide pack

**Procedure:**

1. Introduction of topic/ Survey of current knowledge/ video clip

First, introduce the topic of the lesson to the students (the struggle for Irish independence). Start by asking the students what they know about Ireland’s past.

* + - * How many of you have ancestors who immigrated to the United States from Ireland
      * Ask if they know the history of the Irish flag

Next, show the YouTube clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxOTQIPDU2o&feature=fvsr>. Ask students what they noticed. Relate any concepts back to what they thought they already knew.

1. Film/Lecture: The Invasion of Ireland to Independence in 1921

Explain to students that today we will focus on events shown in the first minute of the YouTube video. These were the images that showed explosions and fighting associated with the Easter Rising in Dublin during Easter week of 1916. Although the British put down the Easter Rising it motivated the Irish to keep fighting until Independence from the British in 1922.

Explain how the feelings of being Irish, together with British oppression and World War I set the conditions for the Easter Rising of 1916, and how this set the stage for the treaty of 1921.

First, work through the PowerPoint that explains early Irish history. This will show students that Ireland has had a long history of being invaded. Also discussed, are key events like the rise of Nationalism and how this influenced Irish feelings towards self rule. Explain how this leads to the Easter Rising.

Next, show clips of the Easter Rising (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq7bcY9tuao>)

from the film *Michael Collins*. Allow the students to see up through the execution of key leaders. Discuss with the students about how this made them feel. Discuss whether the killings were justified.

Following the Easter Rising, present what happened to the push for the Irish state. Show that a brutal battle for freedom ensued with both sides (pro Republic supporters and UK) spilling their share of blood. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-L3zeCNzH8&feature=related>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOiQRkK1tyg&feature=related>). Discuss what reaction this invokes from the students. Question whether the violence was justified on either side. Then discuss how this cycle of violence continued until a cease fire in 1919

Next, show the treaty of 1921, and let the students have a few minutes to look it over. Discuss the following as a class: Irish state formation, relationship to UK, and the position of Ulster (6 Northern Counties). Make sure the students understand that will this gave most of Ireland freedom, it left room for conflict both externally (with UK) and internally (Collins with de Valera)

Finally, Show that the treaty didn’t mean the violence was over. Show a clip of the civil war that followed (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59lRzEXJIL8&feature=related, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59lRzEXJIL8&feature=related>). Speculate what could be the causes of continued violence with the creation of the freed state. Discuss who major players in controlling this conflict were.

1. Class discussion (Who was right: Ireland or England?

Wrap the entire lesson up with a discussion on whether or not England was correct to put down Irish Nationalism when they were using similar Nationalism as justification for WW1.

Ask Students if they think Ireland should have been granted full freedom, and if their actions were justified.

Finally, students will be polled about which side or cause they are most drawn towards. On paper, students will explain who they would have supported if they were alive and why. These are to be discussed in class if time, but this will be their ticket out the door.

**Assessment of Outcomes:**

Students will be able to explain the following concepts and their importance: Easter Rising 1916, Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Students will be also able to describe the rift between Michael Collins and de Valera (the IRA) and what was its wider significance. Finally, students will be polled about which side or cause they are most drawn towards. On paper, students will explain who they would have supported if they were alive and why. These are to be discussed in class if time, but will be due the next day.

**Extensions and Adaptations:**

1. Compare and Contrast Ireland’s dealings with the UK to other former colonies. Have students discover if the “Irish case” was unique or very similar to other areas formerly controlled.

**Resources:**

1. Tim Pat Coogan. *Michael Collins.* United States: Robert Rinehart Publishers 1992.
2. Charles Townshend. *Easter Rising.* London: Allen Lane, 2005
3. Dave Hannigan. *De Valera in America: The Rebel President and the Making of Irish Independence.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010
4. Anglo-Irish Treaty, 6 December 1921

<http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/anglo_irish/dfaexhib2.html>

1. The film *Michael Collins(1996)*