**Rationale:** The value of using maps in Junior and Senior Cycle classrooms

The *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* Schools Outreach Programme provides teachers with a versatile collection of material covering a range of themes and topics from the revolutionary period, adaptable to the needs of Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Senior Cycle History students. The included lesson plans will guide Junior and Senior Cycle teachers in the practical use of this original material in the classroom in order to consolidate learning, reinforce key skills and ignite in their students a passion for exploring and learning about the past.

The colourful and engaging maps researched and created by the editors of the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* relay often-complex information in an accessible and easily digestible way, offering students of all levels and abilities access to the landscapes of the past. The documents, maps and images included in the Atlas Resource Packs for Schools, allows for a layered approach to learning the history of the Irish revolutionary period.
Relevance to Junior Certificate History:

One of the fundamental aims of the Junior Certificate History syllabus from first year is to foster in students an interest in the work of the historian and an enjoyment of the study of human activity in the past. The resources drawn from the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* address this broad aim. Examination and interrogation of the maps relating to modern Irish history will serve to bring history to life in an engaging manner while exemplifying the work of the historian in compiling data to record human activity in the past and to present patterns of cause and effect.

The Junior Cycle Syllabus ‘encourages a variety of approaches to the teaching of history, such as the use of different types of historical sources’.¹ Teachers are encouraged to facilitate student investigation into ‘how events and features in their local area compare with events and features in other areas’. Thus making ‘history more real for students’.²

The original maps and primary sources drawn from the Atlas of the Irish Revolution provide a rich variety of material with which to engage students. The representation of data at a local, provincial and national levels will allow students to identify the social, political and cultural consequences of the revolutionary period in their own local area, and prompt investigations of how that compares to other places in Ireland or at a national level. The reverse is also true. Furthermore, close reading of maps, examination of statistical data, comparative analysis and compiling reports based on the maps, will address many aspects of the *National Strategy To Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People, 2011-2020 (DES, 2011)*

Many teachers of Junior Certificate History find it beneficial to teach the skills of historical enquiry by enabling students to carry out some basic historical research at a level appropriate to their age and abilities. The maps included in the document pack may form the basis or model for student-led research into own local history that should culminate in the presentation of their findings in visual (cartographical) format, and possibly accompanied by illustrations, photographs, and

¹ *Junior Certificate History Syllabus*, Department of Education and Science, p. 2
² *Junior Certificate History, Guidelines for Teachers*, p. 3
text. This would offer an alternative, but no less valuable way for students to communicate their findings and ideally lead to fulfilment of another aim of Junior Cert History, namely the development of ‘an interest and enthusiasm for history’.

While resources drawn from the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* would be a valuable addition to any history class from first year onwards, two of the topics to be taught in third year lend themselves particularly to the use of maps as a means of teaching content and bringing the past to life.

- **Political Developments in Ireland in the Late 19th Century and the 20th Century**: This topic covers the main political events in Ireland 1900-1985.

- **Social Change in the Twentieth Century**: This topic examines changes in lifestyle in Ireland (local or national) from c1900 – under each of the following headings: The Role of Women; Work and Leisure; Urban and Rural life; Transport and Communications

Considering that *Political Developments in Ireland in the Late 19th Century and 20th Century* is a topic that students often find challenging, this collection of visual representations of the most relevant events will prove a valuable means of stimulating interest. Teachers can chose maps that reflect aspects of the Struggle for Independence, the Treaty and the Civil War.

In terms of the *Social Change in the Twentieth Century* topic, teachers can chose from myriad sources that visually depict Ireland in the 1900s. The social and cultural trends reflected in the maps will enable teachers to draw comparisons with modern Ireland. Students might compile modern equivalents to maps about urban and rural living, for example, which could enhance understanding of Social Change in the twentieth century. The topic also lends itself to the active involvement in what the syllabus calls ‘the job of the historian’ by compiling data and generating maps to study change in their own community.
Relevance to Junior Cycle:

The *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* Resources for Schools will offer teachers an opportunity to address many of the requirements of the eight Key Skills for Junior Cycle. Engaging in group work, individual analysis or project work based on the maps, documents and images will encourage the development of communication skills, creativity, information management and collaborative skills. Students will also be encouraged to use digital technology to engage in research and present their findings.

The new subject specifications will place a greater emphasis on the teaching and consolidation of Literacy and Numeracy as key skills across all aspects of the junior cycle curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to introduce opportunities for student engagement with an increasingly broad repertoire of spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of settings. The maps generated for the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* are examples of multi-modal texts as they combine visual, textual and spatial representations of an event or movement in the revolutionary period. Student engagement with the process of interpreting the maps and constructing their own maps also provides potential to enhance numeracy skills at every level.

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3 *The National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People (2011-2020), DES 2011*
Relevance to the Transition Year Programme

Considering the time limitations and the detailed curricular content in the Junior and Leaving Certificate courses, a Transition Year Module is perhaps the best way to introduce students to the potential of the maps as a springboard for student-led research. Teachers of Transition Year are encouraged to formulate teaching units, which reflect the mission, aims and objectives of the Transition Year Guidelines for Schools: ‘To promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils and prepare them for their role as autonomous participants, and responsible members of society.’\(^4\) There should be a focus on ‘education for maturity’ and ‘the promotion of general, technical and academic skills with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and self-directed learning’\(^5\).

A module based on the cartography of the Irish Revolution, which culminates in a student project, would accommodate these aims and provide an opportunity for teachers to foster research and critical thinking skills in an informal and non-exam focused environment.

The documents, photographs and original maps included in the Atlas of the Irish Revolution Document Packs could be used as the basis for Transition Year modules/subjects such as History, Geography, Mathematics, Art, Gender Studies, Local Studies, Cultural Studies, Mapping, Heritage and IT and Digital Humanities.

\(^4\) Transition Year Programmes, Guidelines for Schools, Department of Education and Science, p. 1
\(^5\) Ibid
Relevance to Leaving Certificate History:

The Leaving Certificate History Syllabus, which aims to build on the skills acquired at Junior Cycle, encourages the study of human experience in the past from a variety of perspectives. The treatment of the revolutionary period in the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* compliments the perspective-based curriculum for Leaving Certificate History, which examines historical content through the different lenses of ‘Politics and Administration’, ‘Society and Economy’ and ‘Culture and Religion’.

Working with the Evidence:

The Documents-Based Study and the Research Study comprise two facets of ‘Working with the Evidence’ in the Syllabus Framework. The *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* resources have obvious applications to both, but perhaps more particularly to the Research Study which ‘aims to develop in students a spirit of inquiry about the past and a range of skills that will facilitate the conduct of inquiry’. It allows students ‘to engage in a measure of self-directed learning that is grounded in the procedural values of the historian’.  

The *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* offers the history student a wealth of information and a large selection of primary and secondary source material. The Student Worksheets, however, also guide the students in honing the skills of the historian:

- Defining a focus of study
- Locating the sources
- Interrogating the sources
- Extracting evidence
- Collating data
- Using data to generate maps

This offers the senior history student a practical guide to research. It models critical thinking skills and enables students to analyse the pitfalls and possibilities of statistical data as a way of knowing, preserving experience and analysing patterns of cause and effect.

*Leaving Certificate History Syllabus*, Department of Education and Skills, p. 8
Additionally, Leaving Certificate students may encounter a map or a chart as one of the sources in the Documents-Based Study. They may be tested on their comprehension of the statistical data, or asked to comment on the value of map as a source for the historian. It is important that they have access to this type of source material in order to become familiar with its value and limitations as a historical source.

**Topics for Study:**

Each of the Topics for Study has specified date parameters. The Topics for which the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* contains the most relevant material are the most popular topics from the Later Modern Ireland section of the syllabus:

1. Movements for Social and Political Reform 1870-1914
2. The Pursuit of Sovereignty and the Impact of Partition 1914-1949

Each Topic has three associated *Case Studies*, each of which ‘involves an in-depth investigation of a particularly significant or representative aspect of an element of that topic’. The maps in the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* provide valuable supplementary material on most of the Case Studies in the Later Modern Irish History Topics for Study (LMI 2 and 3):

- The 1885-1886 Elections
- The GAA
- 1913 Strike and Lockout
- The Treaty Negotiations.

Most Leaving Cert students are comfortable with digital material, perhaps more so than with documentary sources. Teachers who aim to enhance the experience of interrogating a historical sources and presenting content through the use of the atlas-based digital resources will more effectively engage the students in the process of developing the skills of a historian.

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7 Ibid, p. 11