

# Teaching the Plantations

*Norma O’Keeffe points out that the Plantations can be useful in developing students writing skills and also preparing them for the different types of exam questions*

## Introduction

By the time you have reached The Plantations you will be half way through second year and indeed half way through the Junior Certificate History course. At this stage you should have an excellent idea of what teaching methodologies most appeal to your particular group of students. Therefore the aim of this article is to suggest to you ideas that can help you further in the teaching of the Plantations.

At this point in the Junior cycle greater emphasis should be placed on developing the students writing skills and also preparing them for the different types of exam questions. While teaching the plantations, invaluable experience can be gained by the students, from composing People in History answers and also practising the various Question 5’s that have come up in relation to this topic.

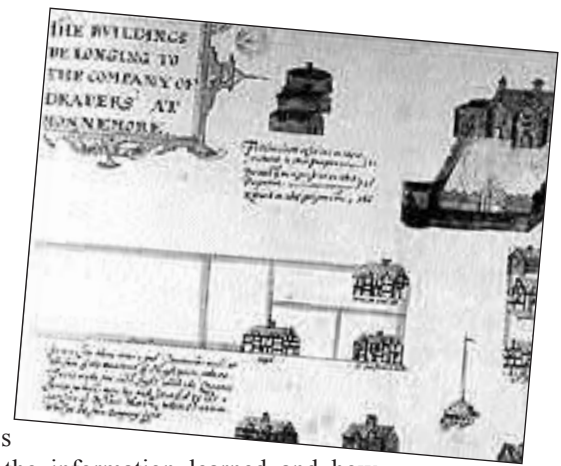
## Sources

*“In approaching the study contemporary accounts and illustrations, statistics and maps showing the geographical impact of the plantation on the landscape, towns, forests, etc. will be useful sources”.* Taken from the Department of Education’s guidelines for teachers, this sentence points the way to which you can best illustrate the different topics within the section by using “appropriate documentary sources”.

The above does not necessarily mean you trawling through the local library but can mean you being discerning in the use of material from different text books (Geography as well as History) and past exam papers, in the use of the internet as a resource to both you and your students or the use of school resources, e.g. borrowing maps or aerial photographs from the school geography department. If your local area shows evidence of the Plantations, a fieldwork exercise could be designed to incorporate local history into the general facets of the study, e.g. a study of the layout and history of a local plantation town. You will find that many textbooks have excellent extracts and illustrations from primary sources that can be used as part of a worksheet that will see your students learning actively.

## Lesson Plan

My lesson plan is based on the average school having 3 History lessons a week as well as the History teacher having to teach 4 other sections in second year. I would aim to teach the section in 15 lessons but would invariably use another 1 – 2 lessons in relation to writing skills and assessment. By taking the group on a fieldwork exercise I usually gain a mornings worth of lessons which greatly enhances the learning experience overall. This will not be included in my lesson plan but should you decide to embark on such an activity you will need a lesson for preparation and also a lesson after the fieldwork to help your



students

focus on the information learned and how this relates to their classwork. The lesson plan has also been based on the premise that the Ulster Plantation is studied by most schools but naturally you may choose a different plantation as a Special Study as local examples along with a fieldwork exercise may make the learning more meaningful for your students.

## Lessons 1 – 4; Introduction, Background and Causes

This will be the first time that the students will be studying relatively modern Irish History and “coming back” to Irish History from the Age of Exploration and the Reformation is often welcome. When teaching what Ireland was like before the plantations I find displaying a map of the country showing the boundaries between Gaelic lordships and the Norman (old English)

### Lesson Plan

Lesson 1 - Ireland before the Plantations.

Lesson 2 - Differences between the Gaelic and the Old English systems of Land Ownership.

Lesson 3 - Policy of Plantation as a means of social and political control.

Lesson 4 - Why the land changed hands.

Lesson 5 - How the land changed hands – The Plantation of Laois-Offaly.

Lesson 6 - How the land changed hands – The Munster Plantation – causes.

Lesson 7 - How the land changed hands – The Munster Plantation – consequences.

Lesson 8 - How the land changed hands – Special Study – The Ulster Plantation – causes.

Lesson 9 - How the land changed hands – Special Study – The Ulster Plantation – detail.

Lesson 10 - How the land changed hands – Special Study – The Ulster Plantation – consequences.

Lesson 12 - How the land changed hands – The Crowellian Plantation – causes.

Lesson 13 - How the land changed hands – The Crowellian Plantation – consequences.

Lesson 14 - Main consequences of the change in land ownership immediate and long term. Religion and Politics.

Lesson 15 - Main consequences of the change in land ownership immediate and long term. Culture.

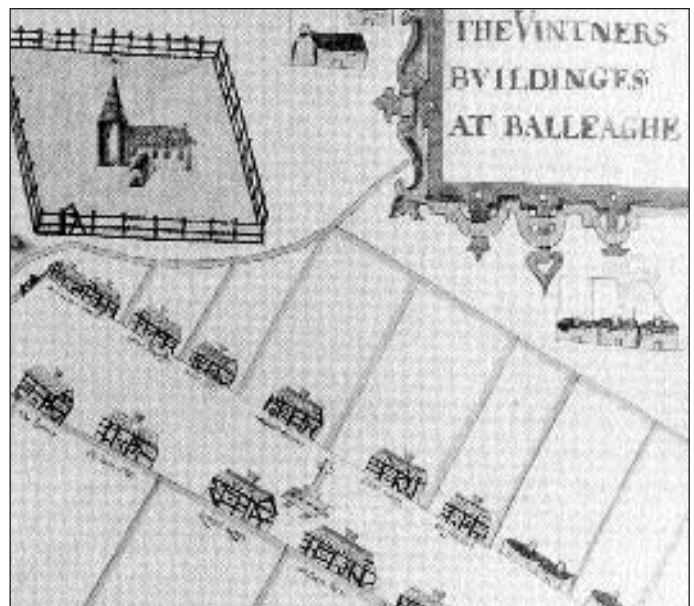
lordships a useful way of stimulating interest, the location of the different surnames always creates interest as your bound to have some old Irish or Norman names in the class. (See *From Renaissance to Reformation* for an excellent example of this map). I will inform the class as to what The Pale was and then continue to question them as to how Ireland then was different from today. This leads naturally to what happened after 1500 that lead to the different types of changes brought about by the Plantations. Here it is useful to outline in tabular form the basic differences between the Gaelic and Old English systems of land ownership. Use of primary sources both text and illustrations should be used here to convey some of the cultural differences that existed. A simple picture showing difference in dress can help you build a mental image of what the different groups looked like. (See pg. 162 of *The Past Today* or Higher level exam paper 2001). All this information will not be new, as the Gaelic way of life is easily comparable to the Celtic way of life already studied in first year.

What were the Plantations? At this stage I try to engage the students Geography teacher in the process. As part of the Geography syllabus the students have to study a planned or organised migration and by ensuring that you and their Geography teacher are covering the relevant sections at the same time you will find that your students learning is enhanced in both subjects. You can not begin to define what a plantation was until you have explained about the Fitzgearlds of Kildare and their relationship with the English crown and how this changed with Henry VIII. This is where your story telling skills come in to play and as they have already heard of Henry VIII and have usually heard of Silken Thomas it is not difficult to create interest. This leads on to the policy of Surrender and Regrant and why the King used this to gain political and social control. I choose to use the class text here as I find it explains these ideas particularly well. By varying your methodologies you keep the subject interesting and keep all students involved.

### **Lessons 5 – 13; How the land changed hands – The Plantations: 3 Non-Special Study Plantations and the Special Study**

It is worth noting at this point that should you be teaching an Ordinary Level class that the syllabus requires you to teach a Special Study of One plantation in Ireland. Most of us teach mixed ability groupings where you will teach the whole section to a class and will then place particular emphasis on the Special Study for the Ordinary Level students. I find it useful to do this by the teaching of writing skills for the People in History Questions, this is for both levels but Higher Level students would be assigned extra work by practising Question 5's as they appear on the past exam papers. Obviously if you have a class that is exclusively Ordinary Level you will be able to adapt your lesson plan accordingly.

When beginning this part of the Plantations it is useful to teach your class a glossary of terms, e.g. Bawn, Undertaker, Woodkern, etc. The meanings of these words would be noted in their notes copy thereby giving them a reference point from which they can begin writing paragraphs for the People in History Question. Maps are particularly helpful in illustrating the different Plantations; the best way of displaying them is on posters that can be used to decorate the room. I create a short activity here where I divide the class into four groups giving each a large blank map of Ireland, the task then is to mark in the area planted and plantation towns, name the English Monarch



of the time, give the approximate dates of the plantation and state whether it was a success or failure. They can use their books to find the information and the activity should take no more than 10 minutes. This sort of activity appeals to everyone but especially the weaker students. The students are learning in an active way and you have well illustrated posters that can be referred to through out the section!

Teaching the Plantations that are not your chosen special study by necessity takes less time. It is vital to teach these in a structured way where it is easy for the students to compare each plantation and they can also see clearly the progression of the policy over time. After teaching the content I ask the students to summarise under the following headings, causes, what happened and consequence. These summaries are written into their notes copies. This information can be reproduced in a tabular form and again can be put up on posters around the room. I find the more a student sees information, the more likely they are to retain it, and then reproduce it in an exam situation.

As I work in Munster I take my students on a Fieldwork exercise to the nearest plantation town of Bandon, this is prepared before we leave, the students are given worksheets and have to find out different pieces of information and mark in places/street names/churches on a map of the town. On return to the classroom, the information is collated and they as class prove that Bandon was in fact a Plantation town. I find the field work exercise useful for many reasons some of which I have outlined above, but the real value of such an exercise is if you as a teacher can help the students to compare their conclusions to the general concepts they need to learn as part of the whole section. This type of exercise can be applied to any plantation town in any area, but should you find it awkward to visit such a town, bringing in maps of the town and creating short class based exercises can be a valuable exercise for the students. This again is where the school Geography department may be of help by allowing you to borrow class sets of maps or aerial photographs.

### **Special Study – The Ulster Plantation**

At this stage the students are very familiar with the idea of a plantation and are ready for the detail of a special study. Here I use an internet site that has illustrated what a bawn is and tells of the different requirements of the different undertakers during the Plantation of Ulster, i.e. An undertaker who got 2,000 acres



*Cromwell's Siege of Drogheda*

promised to build a bawn and castle. Usually the group would be taken to the computer room where through a network I can control what the students see. The website also has revision questions; exercises based on documentary sources and illustrations from primary sources. This needs to be well planned to be successful but as this is a well-used medium by most students things should run smoothly. If in doubt try to involve their computer teacher. There are also sections on other aspects of the plantations that may prove useful to you. If access proves to be a problem, don't forget that web pages can be printed on to overhead projector sheets and the illustrations and documentary sources can still be used in class.

Over the course of these lessons on the Special Study I will assign paragraphs on the different aspects of either an undertaker or a native Irish person who lost land during the plantation. I feel that it is necessary at this stage to give a sample paragraph and show in a simplistic manner how the marking scheme for People in History questions work. This actually works for most students regardless of ability. It seems to place more importance on their work and I have even had usually unenthusiastic student's voluntarily re-writing paragraphs and indeed whole answers in the effort to get the best possible mark. With an especially weak group it might be necessary to give step by step instructions to help them build a coherent answer, e.g. Step 1: Name the Planter and the Plantation and say why he came to Ireland. The idea is that as you have been working on the content the students are learning through producing their

own work and applying the information to an exam style question. With Higher Level students, Question 5's can also be practised. Any of the methods used in the non-special study plantations can also be used effectively here. Remember the Geography teacher should also be teaching about the Ulster Plantation and you may find illustrations in their Geography book helpful.

### **Lessons 14 – 15. The Overall Consequences of the Plantations**

The class will already have studied the consequences of the 4 individual plantations and usually its just a matter of drawing all of these together and putting them under three headings, politics culture and religion both immediate and long term. You are getting your students to recall the information and I usually show an overhead sheet with the consequences summarised. I simply point out how they have already told me this information and I give a copy of the sheet for their notes copy (by not getting them to write this out it becomes a reward for working hard at this section.)

### **Conclusion**

These are just some of the ideas that have helped me teach the Plantations. Whatever way you choose to teach this section it is worth remembering that it is by keeping your teaching methods varied that will keep it interesting for both you and your students.

### **List of Resources**

#### **Books**

*From Renaissance to Reformation*

*The Past Today* Dermot Lucey

*Tudors and Stuarts: Reformation, conquest or colonisation?*

Gráinne Henry

#### **Website**

[www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie)

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