



Strand | The Island of Ireland

Strand Unit: People and places	
Stage	Stages 3 (Third and Forth classes)
Subject	History
Learning Outcome	<i>Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences children should be able to investigate the lifestyles of people from a particular period(s) of time in Ireland's past exploring aspects such as food, clothing, communications, work, education, etc.</i>
Relevant Key Competencies	AL – Being an active learner AC – Being an active citizen CL – Being a communicator and using language
Topic: The Great Famine	The story of <i>The Celts</i> helps us understand what life was like in Ireland over two thousand years ago. By exploring how the Celts lived and worked (e.g., <i>what they ate, materials they used, clothing they wore, traditions and beliefs they held, etc.</i>) children can begin to imagine how people in ancient Ireland shaped their communities and identities.

Why is learning about this topic important?	What will this look like in the classroom?
<p>Through learning about the Celts, children learn about early Irish society, exploring how people's daily lives, beliefs and communities were shaped by their environment and culture.</p> <p>This topic links closely to themes of Culture and Heritage and Identity and Belonging, helping children appreciate how the past influences Irish identity today.</p> <p>Through learning about the Celts, children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● understand how people met their basic needs using natural materials and resources available at the time ● recognise how Celtic art, myths, legends and symbols remain part of Irish culture ● connect with Ireland's early history through creative, hands-on exploration ● engage in local fieldwork or project-based investigations (<i>e.g., exploring nearby ringforts, standing stones or local place names, etc.</i>) to link Celtic heritage to their own community and environment 	<p>Children have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● examine artefacts, tools and clothing (<i>through images, replicas or digital sources</i>) to infer how the Celts lived ● explore Celtic art and design patterns, discovering how these expressed identity and beliefs ● investigate aspects of Celtic daily life, such as farming, cooking and storytelling ● communicate their understanding through model-making, drawing, drama or digital media

Ideas for children working as historians

Concept	Ideas
Time and chronology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place the Celtic period on a simple class timeline between the Bronze Age and Early Christian Ireland. Locate where the Celts belong in Irish history, identifying that they arrived after people who used bronze tools and before the introduction of Christianity Sequence key developments such as the arrival of the Celts, the use of iron tools and the building of hillforts. Through images or cards, arrange major Celtic developments in order, discovering how new tools and settlements developed over time Create a visual timeline showing Celtic life alongside major European events, connecting local and wider history by matching Irish Celtic developments with events happening elsewhere (e.g., <i>the Roman Empire in Europe</i>)
Cause and effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore why the Celts came to Ireland and how their arrival changed life here. Discuss possible reasons for migration such as searching for land, trade or resources Investigate how new tools and farming methods improved life and community living. Using pictures or replicas of iron tools, consider how better ploughs or weapons might have helped grow more food, build stronger homes and protect communities Reflect on how Celtic beliefs influenced art, burial customs and festivals still celebrated today (e.g., <i>Samhain</i>). Explore how the Celts' spiritual ideas shaped their art and traditions, linking these to modern customs like Hallowe'en
Change and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare Celtic life with our lives today (food, clothing, homes, community roles). Contrast Celtic roundhouses and diets with their own homes and meals, noticing what has changed (<i>materials, technology, etc.</i>) and what has stayed similar (<i>family life, working together, etc.</i>) Identify traditions and symbols that continue (e.g., <i>Celtic knotwork, storytelling</i>). By examining Celtic designs and legends, recognise how creative ideas from the past remain part of modern Irish identity through jewellery, tattoos, literature and festivals Examine how elements of Celtic language and design are still visible in modern Ireland. Explore Celtic place names (e.g., <i>Dún, Rath, Bally, etc.</i>), and use examples from Irish art and craft to show how the Celts have shaped our language and landscape
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine what daily life might have been like for a Celtic child or craftsman. Through role play or diary writing, explore how people worked, learned and played, developing curiosity and understanding for how others lived long ago Use drama to express feelings and challenges faced by Celtic people. For example, children might act out a scene preparing for a festival, hunting for food, or protecting their home Reflect on how imagining the lives of others helps us understand history. Discuss why it's important to think about people's feelings and choices in the past, realising that history is made up of human stories, not just facts and dates

Concept	Ideas
Multi-perspectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how different groups of people might have experienced life in Celtic times (e.g., warriors, farmers, craftspeople or druids). Through role-play, children can imagine and express these varied viewpoints, realising that history is made up of many voices, not just one • Compare how different sources tell the story of the Celts in different ways • Recognise that people in the past, like today, saw the world in different ways depending on their roles, beliefs or experiences

Skill	Ideas
Historical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how people in Celtic times lived, worked and interacted with their surroundings, using stories, artefacts and images to build a picture of daily life • Recognise that people in the past had different beliefs, customs and challenges, and that their actions were shaped by the time in which they lived • Use imagination and questioning to think about what it might have been like to live in a Celtic village, developing empathy and curiosity about people's experiences
Chronological thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequence events and developments from the Celtic period in the correct order, understanding that history happens over time • Use a class or wall timeline to place the Celts between the Bronze Age and Early Christian Ireland, helping to visualise where they fit in Irish history • Identify connections between local Celtic sites (<i>such as ringforts or hillforts</i>) and other periods of history, showing how our landscape tells stories from different times
Using evidence and sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine sources (<i>e.g., artefacts, drawings or digital reconstructions, etc.</i>) to find out about Celtic life and society • Ask and answer questions about what objects or sites can tell us, for example, "What was this used for?" "Who might have made it?" • Recognise that we learn about the Celts from different types of evidence, and that each source tells part of the story
Questioning and Investigating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop curiosity by asking questions about how people in Celtic times lived, worked and celebrated • Research a specific aspect of Celtic life (<i>e.g., farming, festivals or clothing</i>) using books, museum resources and classroom materials
Interpreting and analysing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share findings in creative ways, such as posters, drama, model-making or digital storytelling, showing what life was like for the Celts • Use appropriate historical vocabulary (<i>e.g., artefact, settlement, warrior, craftsman, etc.</i>) when describing what has been learned • Explain how evidence can be interpreted in different ways – for example, two people might have different ideas about what an artefact was used for

Ideas for children's learning through the elements:

Inquiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask questions about how the Celts lived, worked, and organised their communities (e.g., "What would a Celtic home look like?", "How did they get their food?" or "Why were hillforts built on high ground?")• Investigate how Celtic people met their daily needs by examining artefacts, archaeological evidence (e.g., tools, pottery, jewellery, etc.)• Undertake projects on topics such as Celtic art, food, or homes
Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present findings through projects such as group posters, illustrated timelines, or short oral presentations about different aspects of Celtic life• Write a short diary entry, story, or letter from the perspective of a Celtic child, craftsperson, or warrior, describing a typical day in their settlement or preparing for a festival like Samhain• Use storytelling or digital tools to bring Celtic life to life (e.g., re-enacting a day in a Celtic village, a craft-making session, etc.)
Understanding and connecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain how the Celts' way of life helped shape early Irish identity and how traces of Celtic culture remain in language, art and place names today (e.g. Ogham stones)• Relate learning about the Celts to the local area by exploring nearby ringforts, place names, or museum collections• Compare the Celts with another ancient civilisation studied (e.g., the Romans or Vikings), identifying similarities and differences in homes, tools and traditions

Ideas for teaching:

Pedagogical approach	Ideas
Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide children with opportunities to engage in role-playing a day in a Celtic village, taking on roles such as farmers, craftspeople, warriors, or storytellers• Provide children with materials which enable them to build simple roundhouse models, act out scenes of trading goods or preparing for a festival• Facilitate imaginative play, during which children explore how people worked together, shared tasks and celebrated within their community
Place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage children to connect classroom learning with local heritage by exploring a nearby ringfort or hillfort or by taking a virtual tour of sites such as Navan Fort or the National Museum of Ireland• Prompt children to generate questions about what they might see (e.g., <i>“How did people live safely inside a fort?”</i>) before visiting a site in the local area. Afterwards, they sketch, photograph, or describe what they observed• Create a class ‘mini-museum’ of Celtic life with labels, drawings and images contributed by children
Dialogic pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use discussion and questioning to help children think critically and collaboratively about what life was like for the Celts• Pose open-ended questions such as <i>“What would it be like to live in a roundhouse?”</i> or <i>“What can artefacts tell us about Celtic people?”</i>• Encourage children to share ideas, listen to others and justify their thinking using evidence from pictures, artefacts or stories• Encourage children to identify tools used in the daily practices of the Celtic people and compare them with how we live our lives today (e.g., <i>What modern appliances/gadgets/machines have replaced tools used by the Celtic people for cooking, farming, etc.</i>)

Ideas for integration:

Subject	Learning Outcome	Ideas
Language	Strand: <i>Writing</i> Create and write their own texts in a variety of genres, using appropriate structure and features	Children may write about a day in the life of a Celtic family, describing morning chores, cooking, or preparing for a festival. They use historical vocabulary (e.g. <i>roundhouse, hillfort, druid, tribe, etc.</i>) to make their writing authentic. Children may write diary entries, letters between Celtic families, a song, poem or short adventure stories featuring mythical elements inspired by Celtic legends.
Arts Education	Strand: <i>Exploring and creating</i> Experiment with and choose various tools and materials and apply techniques creatively in a range of 2D and 3D art	Children may design and make Celtic-style jewellery, shields or patterned tiles using Celtic interlace motifs and spirals. They study examples of Celtic art for inspiration and experiment with line, pattern, and symmetry. Materials such as clay, card, metallic paper, or string printing can be used.
STEM Education	Strand: <i>Materials</i> Plan, conduct, record and evaluate open-ended scientific inquiries into the effect of heating and cooling on common materials, including foods. Experiment with and explore how some changes to materials can be permanent or reversible and determine which materials are better conductors or insulators of heat	Children may investigate materials the Celts used (e.g., <i>wood, iron, clay, wool, etc.</i>) and compare them with modern materials used for similar purposes. They might test which materials are best for strength or insulation, discussing why the Celts chose natural resources available to them. Linking to engineering, children could design a model of a roundhouse using materials that reflect the materials used by Celtic people.

Ideas for assessment:

Assessment method	Ideas
Teacher observation	During a pair or group investigation of Celtic artefacts or images (e.g., <i>jewellery, weapons, pottery or hillforts</i>), the teacher observes how children engage with evidence, noting the types of questions they ask, how they describe what they see, and how they connect artefacts to aspects of Celtic life such as farming, trade, or belief.
Questioning	After exploring Celtic daily life, the teacher poses open-ended questions such as: <i>“What can artefacts tell us about the skills and values of the Celts?”</i> or <i>“How might life in a Celtic village be similar to or different from life today?”</i> Children’s responses reveal their ability to interpret evidence, identify change and continuity, and show empathy for people in the past.
Project-based learning	Children create a project that explores an aspect of Celtic life such as housing, festivals, or craftsmanship. In presenting their work, children explain what sources they used, how they organised their information, and what they learned about Celtic culture. Projects provide evidence of understanding, creativity, and the ability to communicate learning in a clear, structured way.

Progression

Progression in Social and Environmental Education involves the gradual development and extension of key concepts and the skills of working as a historian and geographer, enabling children to question, investigate and interpret the world around them - past and present - with increasing depth and confidence. Please note that more detailed, specific guidance on progression within Social and Environmental Education will follow in due course.

In the case of the concept of ‘*Change and continuity*’, children’s learning across the four stages could be described as follows:

‘*Change and continuity*’ involves examining and comparing similarities and differences between the past and present, exploring patterns and trends



The child:

identifies old and new from historical artefacts	recognises some simple differences and similarities between life now and life in the past	uses timelines to place developments, periods and cultural events in sequence, illustrating changes which have occurred over time	identifies changes across different time periods using chronological links and appropriate timelines
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In the case of the skill of 'Historical thinking', children's learning across the four stages could be described as follow:

'Historical thinking' involves understanding and organising events in the order they happened, recognising how time influences change and continuity in the past.



The child:

shows curiosity about the living things, places, objects and materials in their local surroundings	demonstrates an understanding of how people's lives and experiences vary according to time and place, recognising different social, cultural and religious backgrounds	investigates elements in the local environment, identifying patterns of continuity and change, analysing how these changes impact the community	explores the experiences of diverse groups of people, considering how different social, cultural and religious backgrounds impact their live
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Ideas for resources

- National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology: Celtic artefacts and virtual exhibits
- Heritage Council resources for schools
- Local heritage trails featuring Celtic sites or artefacts
- Illustrated books, children's encyclopaedias, or websites on Iron Age life
- Documentary clips (*short, age-appropriate extracts*)