



## Strand | The Island of Ireland

Strand Unit: Identity and heritage	
Stage	3 (Third and fourth classes)
Subject	History
Learning Outcome	Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences children should be able to gather, record and share examples of national folklore, sports, arts and pastimes that reflect and celebrate Irish identity over time.
Relevant Key Competencies	CL – Being a communicator and using language AL – Being an active learner C – Being creative
Topic: <i>The History of the GAA</i>	The story of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) helps us understand part of Ireland's culture and identity. Since its foundation in 1884, the GAA has promoted traditional Irish games like Camogie, Gaelic Football, Handball, Hurling, Ladies Football and Rounders, and has brought communities together.

Why is learning about this topic important?	What will this look like in the classroom?
<p>Through their engagement with the topic of '<i>The history of the GAA</i>', children gain valuable insight into the social, political and cultural history of Ireland, developing a more nuanced understanding of how sport is deeply woven into the fabric of Irish life.</p> <p>By exploring key events—such as the founding of the Association in 1884 and its role in promoting Irish language and culture—children begin to understand how sport can reflect and shape societal values and movements for change. This links closely to the Global Learning Themes of democracy, equity, and social justice, as they see how the GAA gave people a voice, promoted cultural pride and worked to create fair opportunities for participation.</p> <p>Through learning about the history of the GAA, children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● understand how the GAA has contributed to community life across Ireland, supporting belonging and inclusion</li> <li>● appreciate a living tradition that honours its history, while continuing to grow and evolve</li> <li>● see how sport connects generations through shared events and memories, promoting identity and participation</li> <li>● recognise the GAA's influence beyond games, including its role in culture, identity, and social life, fostering respect for shared heritage</li> </ul>	<p>Children have opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● interpret and analyse a range of historical sources related to the founding and development of the GAA (e.g., <i>photographs, match programmes, audio and visual recordings, documentaries etc.</i>)</li> <li>● recognise that the GAA played a role in cultural revival and national identity, demonstrating awareness of motivations of its founders</li> <li>● appreciate how the GAA has evolved over time and why it remains a significant part of local and national life today</li> <li>● use their preferred method(s) of communication (<i>such as storytelling, drawing, drama, or digital media</i>) to express their understanding of key moments and figures in GAA history.</li> </ul>

## Ideas for children working as historians:

Concept	Ideas
<b>Time and chronology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Place the founding of the GAA within a timeline of Irish historical events and develop an understanding that historical events happen in a particular order (e.g., <i>by identifying key moments in the GAA's history such as its founding in 1884, the opening of Croke Park, or major rule changes, they begin to place events in sequence</i>)</li><li>• Use a chronological wall display to track the development of Gaelic games</li><li>• Create a personal or family timeline linked to GAA milestones</li></ul>
<b>Cause and effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore important moments in the history of the GAA and begin to understand that changes happen for different reasons, influenced by context/what was happening in Ireland at the time (e.g., <i>the start of Ladies football, changes to the rules of the games</i>)</li><li>• Reflect on the effects of emigration and diaspora on the spread of Gaelic games and research some GAA clubs and communities in other countries</li><li>• Children learn how decisions at the GAA Congress (e.g., <i>new rules like yellow cards or expanding ladies' games</i>) affected how Gaelic games were played and who could take part</li></ul>
<b>Change and continuity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compare old and modern GAA items (e.g., <i>sliotars, footballs, hurleys, helmets, jerseys</i>)</li><li>• Discuss how changes in infrastructure and developments have impacted the modern game(s) (e.g., <i>improved sporting facilities, developments in transport</i>)</li><li>• Examine traditions and rules (e.g., <i>match-day parades, match programmes</i>) that have remained and aspects that might have changed or evolved over time (e.g., <i>online match programmes, pre-match meals and nutrition</i>)</li></ul>

Skill	Ideas
<b>Historical thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore how the GAA has played an important role in Irish history, and to understand that organisations can shape how people live and feel over time</li> <li>• Think about how people’s lives were different in the past (<i>such as players not wearing helmets, how people travelled to matches, people listening to commentary on radio with no access to television</i>) developing empathy and perspective</li> <li>• Recognise that historical sources can tell us different things about the same event or organisation (e.g., <i>compare an old photograph of a GAA match with a modern photo and discuss what has changed and what has stayed the same, noticing how evidence helps us to build a picture of the past</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Chronological thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare different time periods in the history of the GAA to identify characteristics of eras (e.g., <i>explore what Gaelic games looked like in different decades and recognise features of different time periods</i>)</li> <li>• Begin to situate GAA history within a broader historical context, developing the idea that events happen alongside one another in history rather than in isolation (e.g., <i>matching activity with GAA milestones and key national/world events</i>)</li> <li>• Identify and explore patterns and cycles over the history of the GAA, understanding that events can repeat or follow trends (e.g., <i>track the successes of a county team over time, looking at how often they won All-Ireland finals and if there were long gaps or periods of dominance</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Using evidence and sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore historical photos, match programmes, tickets or old GAA posters to gather clues about how people played, watched or listened to Gaelic games in the past (e.g., <i>spot differences in clothing, stadium size and crowds attending</i>)</li> <li>• Listen to or read short oral histories or interview a family member about their memories of playing or watching / listening to GAA games long ago</li> <li>• Observe and handle replicas or real artefacts (<i>such as an old-style hurley or football, medals and trophies, etc.</i>) and discuss what these objects tell us about the past, encouraging curiosity and observation skills</li> </ul>
<b>Questioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate their own historical questions, such as: “<i>When did our local GAA club start?</i>”, “<i>What were the first GAA matches like?</i>”, or “<i>How has Croke Park changed over time?</i>”</li> <li>• Carry out a small class inquiry (<i>such as researching a local GAA club or famous player, using books, websites, or community knowledge</i>) and gather facts from different sources to answer their questions</li> <li>• Develop follow-up questions during their research and inquiry, based on interesting facts or surprises they discover about the GAA’s past</li> </ul>

## Ideas for children’s learning through the elements:

<b>Inquiring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pose their own historical questions, such as “Why was the GAA started?”, “Who were the founders?”, or “How has it changed over time?”</li><li>• Explore a variety of historical sources, including old photographs, recordings such as old radio broadcasts, artefacts (e.g. <i>early jerseys, hurleys</i>) and newspaper articles from different decades</li><li>• Conduct simple investigations into their local GAA club’s history, for example, by interviewing a club member, coach or relative about how things were when they were younger</li></ul>
<b>Communicating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create timelines (<i>matching an image with a date</i>) or visual displays that show the development of the GAA (<i>in their community, their county, nationally and clubs across the world</i>)</li><li>• Engage in “mini congress,” where they explore real rule changes, propose their own for a familiar game, and debate and vote on them, mirroring democratic decision-making</li><li>• Create and present a short “news report” or podcast-style segment, reporting on a major event from GAA history</li></ul>
<b>Understanding and connecting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflect on the role of the GAA in their community, discussing how it brings people together today (<i>matches, Scór, Cúl Camps</i>) and how it may have done so in the past (<i>local matches, GAA ‘dances’ and social gatherings</i>)</li><li>• Compare life in the past with their own lives today, using examples such as how players trained, what fans wore to matches, or how games were broadcast</li><li>• Explore how the GAA links to broader themes such as cultural heritage, language (e.g., <i>Irish used in club names, singing Amhrán na bhFiann before matches, the meanings and symbolism behind club and county crests</i>)</li></ul>

## Ideas for teaching:

Pedagogical approach	Ideas
<b>Play and playful pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate role play whereby children are asked to act as games developers or inventors designing their own game, decide on simple rules, and then explaining or demonstrating their game to the class or to a stranger who has never seen the games being played before</li> <li>Provide opportunities for children to handle and examine a range of artefacts (or images or objects such as old GAA jerseys, hurleys, or match tickets) independently or in small groups, making observations, asking questions and inferring what the object(s) tells us about life in the past</li> <li>Assign children roles as newspaper reporters or journalists covering major GAA matches or events (real or imagined), where they interview “players” and “fans” (their classmates), perform mini “news broadcasts”</li> </ul>
<b>Place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise a class walk to the local GAA club (if accessible) to observe and investigate historical features such as plaques, old photographs or invite a club representative into the school to explore the history of the club. <i>(Beforehand, the teacher could help children prepare questions in groups about the club’s history, founding members, old matches, and community role, supporting children to connect national history to local experience and fosters inquiry skills)</i></li> <li>Create a classroom display or mini museum of local GAA history, using photos, memorabilia, and stories contributed by families. The teacher guides children in organising and labelling the display with information about dates, people, and events</li> <li>Use historical maps or photos of the school and local area, showing where early GAA matches were played or how club grounds have changed over time</li> </ul>
<b>Dialogic pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate a class discussion about how the GAA has changed over time, using simple prompts such as: “What do you think it was like to play a match 100 years ago?” and “Why do you think the GAA was important to Irish people in the past?” Encourage children to share ideas, listen to others, and use some historical words (e.g., “long ago,” “tradition,” “community”) as they talk</li> <li>Use think-pair-share activities, where children first think individually about a question (e.g., “What would it be like to attend a match in the past?”), then discuss with a partner, and finally share with the class <i>(for example, think and talk about transport to and from the match, clothing that would be worn, what food would be served – if any? What would the scoreboard be like?)</i>. The teacher guides discussion, encouraging listening and idea-building, supporting active participation, peer learning, and reflection</li> <li>Prepare a circle-time style sharing session, where children bring in stories or objects related to their own family’s GAA connection (e.g., a medal, jersey, or memory). The teacher facilitates respectful listening and asks guiding questions to draw out historical meaning, building children’s communication skills, confidence and personal connection to history. The Teacher could ask children to consider how the games and organisation could grow going forward, such as <i>actively reaching out to diverse groups in the community to encourage integration</i></li> </ul>

## Ideas for integration:

Subject	Learning Outcome	Ideas
Language	<p>Strand: <i>Reading</i></p> <p>Compare and select comprehension strategies flexibly and interchangeably and use background knowledge to engage with text in a variety of genres independently or collaboratively</p>	<p>Children may read letters, newspaper articles, or simplified primary sources related to the history of the GAA</p>
Mathematics	<p>Strand: <i>Data and Chance</i></p> <p>Pose questions of interest and collect, display and critically analyse data in a range of ways for a range of purposes and communicate the findings</p>	<p>Children may collect scoring data from a sample of recent GAA matches. They record the number of goals and points (including 2-point scores) scored by different counties or players and create bar charts, tally charts or line graphs to show total scores by county, number of shots taken and number of these that were scored, top scoring players and lowest/highest winning margins</p>
Music	<p>Strand: <i>Listening and responding</i></p> <p>Listen to, follow, interpret, respond, reflect on and analyse a variety of songs, musical pieces and excerpts in a range of active, sensory and embodied ways</p>	<p>Children may listen to various versions of Amhrán na bhFiann as it is played before GAA matches (e.g., a <i>soloist</i>, an <i>instrumental version</i>, a <i>singer accompanied by a band</i>). Children engage in discussion about the meaning of the lyrics, the history of the anthem and why it is used at GAA games. They are encouraged to respond emotionally or imaginatively, asking questions such as “<i>How does this music make you feel before a big match?</i>” and “<i>What images come to mind when you hear it?</i>”</p>

## Ideas for assessment:

Assessment method	Ideas
<b>Teacher observation</b>	Observe children during a group timeline-building task or role play of a historical GAA event, assessing children's chronological understanding, collaboration and use of historical vocabulary.
<b>Self-assessment</b>	Children may complete a reflection sheet after a GAA-themed project or presentation (e.g., " <i>What I learned</i> ", " <i>What I found interesting</i> "), providing the teacher with an insight into individual understanding, engagement and areas needing clarification.
<b>Portfolios</b>	Children may prepare a written fact file, visual timeline or illustrated poster showing key events in GAA history, demonstrating their ability to recall, organise and providing evidence of their understanding of chronology, cause and effect, and change and continuity.

## Progression

Progression in Social and Environmental Education involves the gradual development and extension of the 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.

For example, in the case of the historical 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:

encounters stories about the past which illustrate change over time

retells stories they have heard about the past and identifies key events in these stories

recounts stories they have heard about the past and / or their own experiences, describing the significance of certain people and events in bringing about change

recounts and reflects on stories about the past, engaging with two or more versions of an event

In the case of the common skill of 'Using evidence and sources' children's learning across the four stages could be described as follows:

'Using evidence and sources' relates to the ability to select, evaluate and apply reliable information to support ideas or arguments.



### The child:

explores simple evidence and sources with guidance, showing curiosity

uses simple evidence and sources to gather information about people, places and events

selects evidence and sources to inform research and investigations

selects and uses relevant evidence and sources to explore social and environmental topics and issues in depth

### Ideas for resources

Old and recent Match Day programmes

Video footage of matches

Match reports / newspaper article

Objects such as hurleys, footballs, sliotars, medals etc.

Photographs (e.g., of local teams past and present)

The local GAA club

History of The GAA dedicated [website](#) (*The foundation of the GAA*)

Croke Park [website](#) (*Home of the GAA and Ireland's Gaelic Games - Croke Park*)