

Timeline of events in Irish History

Worksheet 4

Below is a summary of the key events that have affected the relationship between Britain and Ireland.

12th century	English settlement in Ireland.	Small settlements of non-Irish people form in Ireland, many of whom are loyal to the English King.
16th century	The Reformation of the Church happens in England.	The Reformation sees the official religion change in England from Catholicism to Protestantism. Many Catholics rebel. Ireland is hard to control because it is further away from London, and many Catholics use it as a base to rebel and plot.
17th century	British are settled in Ireland	The English government looks to re-settle English, Welsh and particularly Scottish protestants in Ireland on farms called plantations . Giving them land will reward their loyalty and ensure Ireland becomes more protestant and, so, more loyal and easier to control.
18th century	Penal Laws are introduced in Ireland	Laws are introduced that punish and limit Catholic rights in Ireland. Catholics can no longer carry arms, access education or have equal rights to own property or worship.
1801	The Act of Union is created	Ireland officially becomes part of the United Kingdom, meaning it is governed by London and its parliament is shut down.
1840s	The Irish Potato Famine	The Irish relied heavily on the potato crop to feed its population. Disease of the crop meant millions starved to death. The British government sends some aid but continues to export grain out of the country meaning people have even less to eat.
1850s-1900	Irish Nationalism begins to form	Groups form to campaign for Ireland's traditions and fight for its right to independence, posing a threat to British rule.
1905	Sinn Fein (meaning 'Ours Alone' in Irish) is formed	This nationalist political group becomes a focus point for Irish Nationalism and strengthens the fight for independence from Britain.
1916	The Easter Uprising takes place	Britain is distracted by WWI and Irish Nationalists rebel, trying to overthrow British rule in Ireland. The British brutally punish the rebels.
1921	Government of Ireland Act is formed – officially splitting Ireland into two	The British government try to address the growing problem in Ireland by dividing Ireland – the south, which is majority Catholic is given independence (by the 1930s) and the North, which is majority Protestant, is kept as part of the UK. Most of Ireland votes against this move, but the Protestants in Northern Ireland vote for it.



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1920-1950s	Increasing division between Catholic and Protestant communities	There is relative calm in Ireland as the North is kept as part of the UK but the Protestant communities grow wealthier and more secure than the Catholic communities. This is because Protestant schools are better resourced and Protestants run most of the factories and local authorities. Protestants get better housing and employment opportunities and Catholics are discriminated against.
1960s	Tensions increase leading to violence	Republicanism (the campaign for Northern Ireland to become part of independent Republic of Ireland) gains strength among Catholic communities. Unionists (people who want to remain part of the UK) organise into groups in response to fight to stay as part of the UK.
1972	Bloody Sunday	During a Republican street demonstration in the Catholic community of Derry, the British Army reacts violently, killing 14 Republican protestors. Many people turn against the British and Republicanism grows in strength. The British government proposes giving greater representation to Catholic communities, but Unionists refuse and violence breaks out.
1973	Provisional IRA forms	Some Republicans become more extreme and form the Provisional Irish Republican Army , who use terrorist tactics against the Unionists, the British Army and government to fight for their independence. Violence from both sides increases.
1980s and 1990s	Peace Process	Negotiations towards a making a deal continue. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement provided direct rule of Northern Ireland was placed in the hands of a locally elected government giving Catholics fair representation but keeping Northern Ireland in the UK
2010s	Brexit raises tensions	The UK's exit from Europe sparked tensions again as Southern Ireland remains part of the EU. As part of the UK, Northern Ireland is no longer part of the EU. This raises the problem of creating a hard border between the South and North of Ireland, which highlights a divided Ireland. The issue of whether Northern Ireland should remain 'British' or become 'Irish' once more raises its head.

KEYWORDS

Reformation – the change in official religion from Catholicism to Protestantism that happened in many places in Europe, including England under Henry VII	Plantation – an area of land in Ireland that was taken from the Irish by the English government and settled by communities of English, Welsh and Scots.
Penal Laws – laws introduced to reinforce Protestant control and punished anyone who did not obey	Act of Union – a law passed by Parliament uniting Ireland and Britain to form the UK
Nationalism – identity with a nation and the support for its interests and political independence. Irish Nationalism fought for freedom from Britain.	Republicanism – the belief that Ireland should rule itself (home rule) and be independent of Britain.
Unionists – people in Northern Ireland who fight to remain as part of the UK.	Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) – an extremist group who split from the IRA in 1969 to follow more extreme terrorist tactics in their fight for independence from Britain.



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Hard Border – A secure border between countries that requires passports to cross and customs taxes to be paid.

Sinn Fein – an Irish Nationalist political party that united Irish nationalists when it formed in 1905. It means 'Ours Alone' in Gaelic.

