



Lesson Plan 4

# Cultural Identity and Unionism

What is the Significance of the Apprentice Boys of Derry to Unionist Identity? By Michael Doran



Above left: a Derry parade; main, the burning an effigy of Robert Lundy and, inset, Ulster Unionist leader Edward Carson

**The Apprentice Boys**  
The Apprentice Boys of Derry are one of the most important expressions of Protestant and Unionist identity within Northern Ireland. They describe themselves as a Christian, historical and cultural organisation. The Apprentice Boys were established to commemorate one of the key historical events in Irish history, the Protestant defence of Derry in 1688-1689. The celebration of this late 17th century event has shaped and continues to shape the Unionist sense of identity. For the Apprentice Boys, the events of 1688-1689 resonate to the present day. They serve as a reminder of past efforts to defend religious liberty and the Protestant identity of Ulster.

**Historical Background**  
In 1688-1689, the city of Derry found itself in the frontline of a power struggle. At stake was control of the government of England, Scotland and Ireland. On one side was the Catholic ruler, James II. On the other side was his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange. Protestants feared that victory for James would lead to a Catholic tyranny and the destruction of Protestant liberties. The issue would be settled

in Ireland. In contrast with Britain, the majority of people in Ireland were Catholic. This was not the case in Ulster. In that province, the Protestant population had rapidly grown during the 17th century because of the Ulster Plantation. Thousands of Protestant settlers had settled across much of Ulster. They had established new communities but had an uneasy relationship with the Catholic population. For Protestants, fears of Catholics were shaped by the events of 1641. In that year, a Catholic rebellion led to the deaths of thousands of Protestants. In 1688, Ulster Protestants feared a repetition of 1641.

**Shutting of the Gates**  
The original event from which the Apprentice Boys are based on occurred in Derry in December 1688. As the risk of religious conflict spread, Derry was recognised as a vital strategic link for the control of Ireland. In early December 1688, a Catholic military force advanced on the town. The Protestant people in Derry were terrified they would be massacred. To stop the town falling to Catholic forces, thirteen apprentice boys decided to take matters into their hands.

thirteen apprentice boys came to represent ordinary Protestant people. Their action is commemorated every year on the first Saturday in December.

**The Burning of Lundy's Effigy**  
For many of those who participate in the Apprentice Boys commemoration every December, a highpoint is the burning of the effigy of Robert Lundy. He was Governor of Derry in early 1689. In April 1689, as the Derry came under siege, Lundy seemed to believe that the continued defence of Derry was pointless. He made decisions that led many of the town's defenders to suspect that he was actively working to support the enemy. Lundy proposed that the town be surrendered. When this became known, Lundy escaped over the town walls. The defence of Derry was reorganised in preparation for a long siege. For Unionists, the name of Lundy has come to symbolise betrayal and treachery. In modern times, Unionist leaders who were accused of compromising too much on Unionist principles have been accused of being a 'Lundy', e.g., Terence O' Neill, Brian Faulkner, etc.

**The Relief of Derry**  
The main commemoration that the Apprentice Boys organise is the celebration of the Relief of Derry. This occurs as a parade through the city on the second Saturday in August. In 1689, Derry had become the main centre of Protestant resistance in Ulster. Thousands of Protestant refugees flocked to the city for protection. For 105 days, the city was besieged. At one point, James II arrived outside the city. He was met with shouts of 'No Surrender' from the defenders. The besieged Protestants endured starvation and disease but remained defiant. Up to four thousand people died. When ships carrying food supplies reached Derry, the besieging Catholic army withdrew. The defence of Derry became an inspiration for generations of Unionists. 'No Surrender' became the rallying cry for Unionists when confronted with political challenges.

**The Cultural Significance of the Apprentice Boys**  
The Apprentice Boys of Derry club were formally established in 1814. They expanded and now include eight parent Londonderry clubs. They have up to 10,000 members around the world. They are committed to 'maintaining the spirit of courage and liberty displayed by the Defenders of Londonderry in 1688-1689'. At the centre of this commitment is the determination to remember the daring action of the original thirteen apprentice boys, the treachery of Lundy and the resilience of the besieged people during the Siege of Derry. The annual parades are important in uniting Unionists by bringing different social classes together. The parades continue to be important in raising the morale of the Unionist community and keeping a sense of identity. The past provides their inspiration for the present and future.

Leaving Certificate History - Lesson Plan	
<b>Leaving Certificate</b>	<b>Later Modern Field of Study – Irish History 1815-1993, Topic 5: Politics and society in Northern Ireland, 1949-1993: Culture and Religion</b> - Religious affiliation and cultural identity; ecumenism; cultural responses to the "Troubles".
<b>History Course</b>	Students will come across similar themes in <b>Later Modern Field of Study- Irish History 1815-1993, Topic 3: The pursuit of sovereignty and the impact of partition, 1912-1949: Culture and Religion</b> – State and culture, North and South: language, religion and education; promotion of cultural identity
<b>Links to Junior Certificate</b>	Students will have established a background knowledge of this topic from their study of the Junior Certificate History Course. The learning outcomes forms the basis for study at Leaving Certificate Level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strand One – The Nature of History – Learning Outcomes: 1.1 - 1.11</li> <li>Strand Two – The History of Ireland – Learning Outcomes: 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.10.</li> </ul>
<b>Initial Stimulus</b>	Before starting this topic, ask students to consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do past historical events shape our present identity?</li> <li>Are people trapped by how they interpret the past?</li> <li>How is cultural identity expressed in Northern Ireland today?</li> <li>What are the political views of Unionists?</li> </ul>

<b>Lesson Development</b>	Students can learn about the Apprentice Boys of Derry by considering the following? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of parades in Unionist culture.</li> <li>What historical events do the Apprentice Boys commemorate?</li> <li>What are the principal beliefs of the Apprentice Boys?</li> <li>What is the organisational structure of the Apprentice Boys.</li> <li>Examine primary and secondary sources relating to the Apprentice Boys.</li> <li>Examine the Nationalist community past and present viewpoint on the Apprentice Boys. Why were their parades controversial?</li> </ul>
<b>Effective Questioning</b>	As students begin to develop their knowledge of this topic, the teacher can stimulate learning through identifying important questions that the students can consider. This will help students develop their learning skills. Examples of questions include? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who were the original Apprentice Boys?</li> <li>What are the links between them and the Orange Order?</li> <li>Who cannot become a member of the Apprentice Boys?</li> <li>What exactly do Unionists mean by 'No Surrender'?</li> <li>Why did Nationalists view the Apprentice Boys as sectarian?</li> <li>What is the significance of calling the city Derry or Londonderry?</li> <li>How many members are in the Apprentice Boys?</li> <li>Who can join the Apprentice Boys?</li> <li>Who do the Apprentice Boys believe is a threat to liberty?</li> <li>What Unionist leaders have been accused of being a Lundy?</li> <li>Why were Apprentice Boys parades controversial?</li> </ul>
<b>Answering the Document Based Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students should become familiar with the structure of the Documents-Based Question.</li> <li>A range of documentary sources should be examined, e.g., newspaper accounts, photographs, cartoons, etc.</li> <li>Students should practise comprehension skills within a time limit.</li> <li>Students will consider different historical sources for comparison.</li> <li>Students will learn the usefulness and limitations of various primary and secondary sources.</li> <li>For contextualisation questions, students will be given guiding questions which they will construct an answer. Examples of these questions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was the significance of the activities of the Apprentice Boys of Derry in influencing the identity of Unionists?</li> <li>Why were the activities of the Apprentice Boys of Derry controversial?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Differentiation</b>	The teacher must be able to cater for a range of student abilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use whole-group questions to help students to open up class discussion, different viewpoints, etc.</li> <li>Allow a wait time to allow students to consider the question.</li> <li>Help weaker students with concepts, answer structure, etc.</li> <li>The class can be divided up to examine different sources of information. Each group can present their interpretation of sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	Students should understand the contribution of the Apprentice Boys to the development of the Unionist cultural identity. Students should understand the overlap between culture and politics within Northern Ireland. Students should understand why the activities of the Apprentice Boys would prove controversial in the Catholic majority city of Derry. Students learn to make use of primary and secondary sources as part of their learning process. Students build critical thinking skills. Develop learning through active discussion.
<b>Learning Key Concepts</b>	Students should make sure that they understand key concepts that relate to the course. These include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sectarianism</li> <li>Tolerance and Intolerance</li> <li>Cultural Identity</li> <li>Propaganda</li> <li>Civil Rights</li> <li>Bigotry</li> <li>Cultural Traditions</li> <li>Ecumenism</li> <li>Gerrymandering</li> </ul>

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