



Mother and Baby homes

Junior Cycle History
Unit 2

SLIDE 1



Mother and Baby homes

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Unit 2

Unit 2: Outline

Slide	Activity No	Activity Name	Description
3	1	Revisiting our Brave Space	Devising a question for a classmate about the Brave Space Agreement (individual work)
4	2	Picturing a home	Picturing the Tuam Mother and Baby home based on historical descriptions (individual work)
5	3	Timeline of a home*	Human timeline of the Tuam home (individual work, small group work)
6	4	Connections to home*	Identifying people/groups that lived in or were connected to the Tuam home (small group work)
7	5	Responsibility	Responsibility for Mother and Baby homes (whole class discussion)
8	6	Mapping the homes	Locating Mother and Baby homes (teacher input and demonstration, pair work) NB: Internet access required here
10	7	Pause	Reflection (individual work)

* See 'JC History Unit 2_Activities 3 & 4_Timeline cards.pdf' } Teacher preparation required

Teacher notes

Unit 2 activities engage students in learning linked to the outcomes listed below.

Students should be able to:

- **Learning Outcome 1.1:** develop a sense of historical empathy by viewing people, issues and events encountered in their study of the past in their historical context
- **Learning Outcome 1.3:** appreciate their cultural inheritance through recognising historically significant places and buildings and discussing why historical personalities, events and issues are commemorated
- **Learning Outcome 1.7:** develop historical judgements based on evidence about personalities, issues and events in the past, showing awareness of historical significance
- **Learning Outcome 1.10:** demonstrate chronological awareness by creating and maintaining timelines to locate personalities, issues and events in their appropriate historical eras
- **Learning Outcome 2.9:** explain how the experience of women in Irish society changed during the twentieth century

In this unit, we will unpack the history of the Mother and Baby home in Tuam, Co. Galway, learning about the people and groups connected with this specific institution.

Activity 1: Revisiting our Brave Space

- Read our Brave Space Agreement
- Focus on one part of the Agreement
- Come up with one question for a friend asking whether they are living up to this part of the Agreement
- Write your question on a piece of paper
- Swap your question with a friend to be answered at the end of this unit

Teacher notes

NB: Your Brave Space Agreement (Unit 1, Activity 2) should be displayed in a prominent place in your classroom.

Support students to engage in the activity as per the steps on the slide.

Depending on your class and the nature of your Brave Space Agreement, when you get to the 3rd bullet on the slide, you might want to share one of the of the following possible questions as a prompt:

- Are you honest in your opinions and viewpoints, and if not, why not?
- Do you participate to the best of your ability and if not, why not?
- Do you value different perspectives and try to understand where these come from? If not, why not?
- Do you 'own' how what you say and how you behave/act impacts on others? If not, why not?
- Do you include others, making sure they have a chance to speak? If not, why not?

Ask students to keep their question safe until the end of this unit.

Activity 2: Picturing a home

The mother and baby home was a strange place. It was a huge building, much bigger than anything else in Tuam, apart from the cathedral.' There were 'glass shards embedded in the top' of the 'high stone wall' surrounding the home.

Catherine Corless, local historian and activist



A model of the Mother and Baby home, Tuam, Co. Galway.
Photograph courtesy of Catherine Corless

Teacher notes (slide includes animation – please ensure you are in presenter mode)

Take out your copy or a piece of paper and pencils/markers.

Tuam Mother and Baby home was demolished in 1971, so we must rely on the few surviving old photographs and the memories and descriptions of those who lived in or visited the home to know what it looked like.

We're going to read 3 descriptions of the Tuam Mother and Baby home buildings and surroundings.

Take note because you are going to draw a picture of the Tuam home based on these descriptions.

Click 3 times to show 3 different descriptions of the Tuam home. Give sufficient time between each for students to work on their drawing.

Encourage students to take the descriptions on board, but not to worry about producing fantastically artistic drawings.

Click to show a photograph of a model of the Mother and Baby home in Tuam.

Facilitate a whole class discussion, based on the following prompts:

- Is your drawing anything like the model of the Tuam home?
- What, if anything, stands out for you about this model?
- In her description, Julia Carter compared the Tuam Mother and Baby home to the cathedral in Tuam. Does this model remind you of any buildings you are familiar with? In what way?

Sources

Julia Carter quoted in Burke, D. [A voice from the Tuam home: Part 1](#) in *Tuam Herald*, 12 January 2021.

Bon Secours sister – Extract from book written by Mother Eugene O'Sullivan to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Sisters of Bon Secours, quoted in Chapter 15: The Tuam children's home, [Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes](#). p.9.

Corless, C. 2021. *Belonging*, Hatchette Ireland, chapter 5.

Acknowledgement

The scale model of the Tuam home (pictured on the slide) was made by the historian Catherine Corless using historical records like old maps and documents relating to the post-Famine period when the building was workhouse. Catherine generously allowed that the photograph of her model be reproduced in these materials.

Activity 3: Timeline of a home

Part 1

- Read through your card and identify any words or phrases you don't understand. Ask a friend for help. If that doesn't work, ask me.

Part 2

- Create a timeline of the Tuam home, physically ordering yourselves from earliest to most recent year.

I will divide you into small groups

Part 3

- In your group, plan and make a presentation about the events/personalities on your combined timeline cards.

Group presentations will be in chronological order (from the earliest to most recent years)



Teacher notes

NB: You will need to access 'JC History Unit 2_Activities 3 & 4_Timeline cards.pdf' and prepare the timeline cards in advance of this activity. The same timeline cards are used in Activity 4.

This activity is divided into 3 parts.

Part 1:

Give one timeline card to each student.

Check that they understand the information on their card.

Part 2:

Invite students to line up in chronological order (year on timeline card) from earliest to most recent year.

While the students are standing in their human timeline, divide them into groups of 4-5, so that they are with others who have cards with adjacent years.

Part 3:

Invite students to work together in their groups to plan a presentation about the events/personalities on their combined timeline cards. Give them enough preparation time.

Facilitate the group with the earliest set of years to present first, and so on, up until the presentation based on the most recent years.

Possible homework task

Add to the timeline of the Mother and Baby home in Tuam. Make three or more timeline cards based on relevant personalities, issues and events in Ireland or beyond in the period 1924-61.

Depending on your class, you might want to prompt students to look at the [Timeline of the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes](#)

NB: Ask students to stay in their groups and hang onto their timeline cards for the next activity.

Sources

Activity inspired by Feeney, E. 'Tuam Oral History Project: Lesson planning for Transition Year' (unpublished resource).

Julia Carter in Burke, D. [A voice from the Tuam home: Part 1](#) in *Tuam Herald*, 12 January 2021.

Chapter 15: The Tuam children's home, [Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes](#), p.9.

Activity 4: Connections to home

Who?	How were they involved/connected?
Staff at Central Hospital, Galway city	Between 1925-35 (before the Tuam home got its' own maternity unit) children were born in Central Hospital in Galway city and then transferred to the Mother and Baby home in Tuam.
Grandparents of children in the home	A local doctor claimed that Galway County Council (local government authority) collected payments from some parents of mothers in the Tuam home (1957)
Workers from outside the home	For example, the people who installed the electric lighting in 1927 and those that demolished the building in 1971
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...

Teacher notes

Divide the class into small groups.

Initially the Tuam home building housed famine victims, and later soldiers and prisoners. From 1925 the home was occupied by women (expectant/mothers), babies and children, a small number of Bon Secours nuns, led by the Mother Superior, servants who worked in the building and on the 6 acres belonging to the home, together with a nurse and a caretaker. However, there were many others involved with or connected to the home.

In your group, look at your combined Timeline cards. Identify 3 or more categories of people or groups who were involved with or connected to the Tuam home. In each case, identify how they were involved or connected to the home. There's a couple of examples on the slide to help you get started.

Take feedback from each group, recording their responses into a table (like that on the slide).

Facilitate a whole class discussion based on the following prompt questions:

- *Is there any way of categorising those in our 'who' column?*

[Possible answers: by whether they were individual people or belonged to a group or organisation; under the headings of church, state (government) and society; by those who made money from their connection/ involvement with the home and those who did not].

- *What, if anything, can you conclude from this activity?*

Depending on your students, you might like to revisit this table periodically throughout the remaining Units/ Activities, adding to the list of those connected to/involved with the Mother and Baby home in Tuam.

Additional information:

Depending on your students, you might want to share the following information:

The home building in Tuam was owned by Galway County Council (local government authority), which was responsible for maintenance and improvements. Key decisions relating to the building were made by the Galway Board of Health, which included members of Galway County Council and The County Homes and Home Assistance Committee (CHHAC), a sub-committee of the Board of Health. The Board of Health and the CHHAC sometimes held meetings in the Tuam home.

The Bon Secours nuns did not receive a salary, but they were paid a weekly fee by the Galway and Mayo local authorities for each woman and child in Tuam. This money was for food and other provisions. Galway County Council paid for external repairs to the building, rates, water, rent and insurance as well as the salaries of the chaplain, the medical officer, and the maternity nurse.

Sources

Julia Carter in Burke, D. [A voice from the Tuam home: Part 1](#) in *Tuam Herald*, 12 January 2021.

Chapter 15: The Tuam children's home, [Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes](#). pp. 4, 9.

Activity 5: Responsibility

...It is easy, but not very accurate, to dismiss what happened in child care in the past as belonging to a past that has nothing to do with us; to demonise individual nuns and clerics or whole religious orders and blame 'the Church' for what happened; to distance ourselves from it and exonerate ourselves. **What happened was the collective responsibility of society.**

Sister Stanislaus Kennedy, social worker, activist and writer

Church and State colluded to write the constitution, the contract by which every citizen in society is bound. Therefore **responsibility ... lies with the Church and State regime, and not the Irish people.** ... We, as a society, were coercively controlled by Church and State to behave in ways that were contrary to our nature.

Laura Murphy, daughter of a Mother and Baby home survivor

Teacher notes

Ask for a volunteer(s) to read the two quotes on the slide.

Depending on your students, you might need to explain the quotes.

The word 'responsibility' can be used in different ways. It can mean that someone or something is to blame, or it can mean that someone or something is answerable or accountable for something in their power or under their control. Which meaning do you think Sr Stanislaus Kennedy and Laura Murphy had in mind in their quotes on the slide?

Based on what you now know about Mother and Baby homes, do you agree that '[w]hat happened was the collective responsibility of society' or that 'responsibility ... lies with the Church and State regime'? What evidence do you have for your judgement?

Depending on your students, you might want to quote Catherine Connolly, T.D. for West Galway, who in her Dáil statement (21 January 2021), in response to the Commission conclusion about societal responsibility for Mother and Baby homes, said: 'I am not responsible. My family is not responsible. The people I know are not responsible. Those least responsible were those put into the homes. ...It was done by a society composed of the powerful against the powerless' [Catherine Connolly TD Statement: Report on the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes](#)

Do you think it is important to see the actions of people in the past in the context of the time in which they lived? Why? Why not?

Sources

Kennedy, S. 'Child Care in Ireland,' quoted in Smith, J. 'The hidden Ireland: Out of sight, out of mind... out of history?' (unpublished presentation from 'Outcast Ireland' Boston College Course).

Murphy, L. [An Open Letter to An Taoiseach from the daughter of a Mother and Baby Home survivor](#). 1 February 2021.

Activity 6: Mapping the homes

- o Ard Mhuire - Dunboyne, Co Meath
- o Belmont (Flatlets) - Belmont Ave, Dublin 4
- o Bessboro House - Blackrock, Cork
- o Bethany home* - originally Blackhall Place, Dublin 7, later Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6
- o Denny House - originally 8 Lower Leeson St, Dublin 2, later Eglinton Rd, Dublin 4
- o Kilrush - Cooraclare Rd, Co Clare
- o Manor House - Castlepollard, Co Westmeath
- o Ms. Carr's (Flatlets) - 16 Northbrook Rd, Dublin 6
- o Regina Coeli Hostel - North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7
- o Sean Ross Abbey - Roscrea, Co Tipperary
- o St. Gerard's - originally 39, Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1
- o St. Patrick's - originally Pelletstown, Navan Road, Dublin 7, later Eglinton House, Eglinton Rd, Dublin 4
- o The Castle - Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal



Mother and Baby home, Tuam,
Co Galway

Teacher notes (internet access is required for this activity)

On the slide, you can see a list of some of the Mother and Baby homes that existed in Ireland from 1922–1998.

For a more comprehensive list of institutions see Chapter 2: Institutions, [Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes](#); McGettrick, C. et al. 2022. [List of Institutions, Agencies and Personnel Involved in Separating Unmarried Mothers from their Children](#). Dublin: Justice for Magdalenes Research and Adoption Rights Alliance.

**Bethany Home is the only home on the slide that was associated with the Church of Ireland. Bethany did 'take in' Catholic women and children, a fact which bothered Catholic clergy who feared that they did so to persuade girls/women to change their religion.*

On the map, you can see where the Tuam Mother and Baby home was located (red marker on the map on the slide).

Take another look at the addresses on the slide. Which Mother and Baby home location is closest to our school?

Using the address of the Mother and Baby home closest to your school, demonstrate how to search for a specific address or road using Google Maps.

NB: If a Mother and Baby home which existed in your locality is not on the slide, you might like to search for this institution instead.

Zoom out to show the location of the specific home on a map of Ireland (as per Tuam on the map of Ireland on the slide).

Divide the class into pairs.

Dr Sarah-Anne Buckley, a historian who is involved in collecting oral testimonies from survivors of Tuam Mother and Baby home, questioned why '[w]e prioritise some stories more than others. We focus on some institutions more than others.'

Imagine you have to caption the image of this map so that it can be included in a Junior Cycle History textbook.

Consider Dr Buckley's question as you work together to come up with a good caption for our map.

Sources

Buckley, S-A. [What the Tuam Oral History Project tells us about Ireland's past?](#) 30 July 2020.

Chapter 22: Bethany, [Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes](#)

A series of *Irish Examiner* articles on [Derek Leinster](#), a survivor and campaigner born in Bethany home.



If you are affected by any of the issues in this unit, and need support, come to me after class, talk to a trusted friend or adult and/or contact:

Adoption Rights Alliance: www.facebook.com/AdoptionRightsAllianceIreland/

Barnardos Origins, Post Adoption and Bereavement Services: www.barnardos.ie

Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
Phone: 116 123

Childline: www.childline.ie
Phone: 1800 66 66 66

Jigsaw: www.jigsaw.ie

Teacher notes

Some of you might find the content that we cover in these units upsetting. This is a natural and understandable reaction to what survivors call 'a dark chapter' in our national history.

If you are personally affected or distressed by any of the issues in these units, and need support, come to me after class, talk to a trusted friend or adult and/or contact one of the external support services listed on the slide.

Activity 7: Pause

BRAVE SPACE AGREEMENT QUESTION

The pause button is made up of a circle with two inside rectangles.

Take a piece of paper, turn it so that it is orientated in landscape (like this slide).

Copy the outline of the pause button, making it as large as possible on your page.

Imagine that the space inside the circle encompasses everything that you have learned in this unit. Write or draw your learning in this space.

Use the two rectangles in the centre of your pause button to write down the two most important things you will take away from the unit.



Teacher notes

NB: Prompt students to write a response to their Brave Space Agreement question (see Unit 2, Activity 1).

Both the Pause activity and the Brave Space Agreement responses should be done individually and do not need to be shared with classmates or teacher.

In the next unit we will engage with oral history – survivor testimonies – as a means of exploring the experiences of the women and children in the Mother and Baby home in Tuam.