

Mother and Baby homes*

This document is intended as a support for teachers who wish to design Junior Cycle English unit(s) of learning on the topic of Mother and Baby homes and/or Ireland's historic institutions.

Rationale

A focus on the topic of Mother and Baby homes aligns with the rationale for Junior Cycle English which recognises the important contribution that students with 'knowledge and command of language' can make 'to political, social and cultural life and as thoughtful and active citizens' (NCCA, [Junior Cycle English curriculum specification](#), page 4).

Statements of Learning (SOL)

Learning and teaching about the topic of Mother and Baby homes can contribute to the achievement of the seven Statements of Learning mentioned in the Junior Cycle English specification (page 6), but is most explicitly evident in:

- **SOL 3:** The student creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts
- **SOL 6:** The student appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives

Key Skills

Treatment of the topic of Mother and Baby homes can, depending on the pedagogies employed, contribute to junior cycle key skill elements, and particularly those mentioned in the Junior Cycle English specification (page 8).

Learning Outcomes

Junior Cycle English teachers are encouraged to identify the activities in the NCCA's Junior Cycle History and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Mother and Baby homes materials, which can be used or adapted to support student engagement with Junior Cycle English learning outcomes. These activities can form the basis of Junior Cycle English unit(s) of learning on Mother and Baby homes or other historic institutions.

Texts

The range of texts (oral, written, visual, multimodal) encouraged in the Junior Cycle English specification (page 10) contributes greatly to the possibilities to embed treatment of the Mother and Baby homes. Teachers can use spoken or written texts set in Mother and Baby home contexts, oral testimonies by survivors, or texts which address social justice and/or human rights issues related to the Mother and Baby homes and other historic institutions. The flexibility of text choice means teachers can be influenced by their students' specific interests in selecting texts.

A list of texts related to the Mother and Baby homes and other historic institutions is provided on pages 3–5 below. These texts are intended as a support for you, the teacher, in developing your own unit(s) of learning. Please thoroughly check any texts you plan to use in class and use your professional judgement to ensure that they are age/stage appropriate and suitable for your specific cohort of students.

*Some survivors prefer the term 'institution(s)' but the word 'home(s)' is commonly used in the media, official publications and public discourse. The use of the lower case 'home(s)' in the NCCA curriculum materials was agreed with survivors.

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs)

The topic of Mother and Baby homes may lend itself to the completion of Classroom-Based Assessments in Junior Cycle English. For example, for an individual or group Oral Language CBA in second year, teachers could support students to choose, explore, communicate and reflect upon their learning in relation to:

- gender attitudes and norms in twentieth century Ireland
- a specific Mother and Baby home or other institution type (e.g., County home, Magdalene Laundry, industrial school)
- the intergenerational nature of institutionalisation, where successive generations of girls and women were confined in different types of institutions
- the institutional experience of survivor(s) for whom one or more of the following is relevant: disability, poverty/working class, mixed-race, membership of the Mincéirí/Traveller community, religion (other than the religious ethos of the institution in question)
- the human rights implications of the family separation system in twentieth century Ireland
- the parallels between Ireland's historic institutions and associated institutions and practices today (e.g., direct provision, homelessness, international volunteering).

For their Collection of Student's Texts, students can be encouraged to engage with texts that have a social justice and/or human rights focus, and to create a collection of their own texts, which might include, for example:

- an opinion piece about the political, religious/moral, legal, social and/or economic context in twentieth century Ireland which supported the establishment and maintenance of Mother and Baby homes and/or other historic institutions
- a shadow report or an alternative set of recommendations to those outlined in the [Final Report on the Commission of Investigation into the Mother and Baby Homes](#)
- a critique or review of a text on Mother and Baby homes
- a poem, drama, song lyrics or film script about the Mother and Baby homes and/or other historic institutions
- a digital text (e.g., a timeline using text and images, a podcast, or a short film) about or with survivors.

Students should choose their two best texts to reflect upon and submit these for their third year written Assessment Task.

See also:

[Junior Cycle English curriculum specification](#)

[Junior Cycle English: Guidelines for the Classroom Based Assessment and the Assessment Task](#)

Mother and Baby homes: Possible texts for Junior Cycle English

The texts listed below are intended for teachers. Please thoroughly check any texts you plan to use in class and use your professional judgement to ensure that they are age/stage appropriate and suitable for your specific cohort of students.

Books (fiction)

Sebastian Barry. 2009. *The Secret Scripture*. Penguin.

Dermot Bolger. 1995. *A Second Life*. Penguin.

Claire Keegan. 2022. *Small Things Like These*. Faber and Faber.

Mary Lavin. 2012. "Sarah" – Tales from Bective Bridge. Faber and Faber.

Bernard McLaverty. 1997. *Lamb*. Dutton.

Una Troy. 1955. *We Are Seven*. Dutton.

Books (non-fiction)

Catherine Corless. 2021. *Belonging*. Hachette Books Ireland.

Paddy Doyle. 2002. *The God Squad*. Transworld Publishers.

Deirdre Finnerty. 2022. *Bessborough: Three Women. Three Decades. Three Stories of Courage*. Hachette Books Ireland.

June Goulding. 1998. *The Light in the Window*. Poolbeg Press.

Rosaleen McDonagh. 2021. *Unsettled*. Skein Press.

Caelainn O'Hagan. 2020. *Republic of Shame: How Ireland punished 'fallen women' and their children*. Penguin.

Alison O'Reilly. 2018. *My name is Bridget: The untold story of Bridget Dolan and the Tuam Mother and Baby Home*. Gill Books.

Catriona Palmer. 2016. *An Affair With My Mother*. Penguin Ireland.

Paul Jude Redmond. 2018. *The Adoption Machine: The Dark History of Ireland's Mother and Baby Homes and the Inside Story of How Tuam 800 Became a Global Scandal*. Merrion Press.

J.P. Rodgers. 2005. *For the Love of My Mother*. Mac Ruarí Art.

Derek Scally. 2022. *The Best Catholics in the World: The Irish, the Church and the End of a Special Relationship*. Penguin.

Martin Sixsmith. 2013. *Philomena*. London: Pan.

Halliday Sutherland. 1958. *Irish Journey*. The Devin-Adair Company.

Drama

Patricia Burke Brogan. 1994. *Eclipsed*.

Patricia Burke Brogan. 2003. *Stained Glass at Samhain*. Salmon Publishing Ltd.

Noelle Brown. 2013. *Postscript*.

Graham McLaren and Neil Murray. Dir. 2021. [Home: Part One – Abbey Theatre](#) (includes a teacher's resource and slides. Produced in a collaboration between the Abbey Theatre and Larkin Community College).

Máiréad Ní Ghráda. 2003. *An Trial*. An Gum.

Film/documentary

[Clann Short Film: Philomena Lee and Jane Libberton](#). 11.47 mins.

[Clann Short Film: Mari Steed](#). 9.23 mins.

Margo Harkin. Dir/Prod. 2023. *Stolen*. Besom Productions.

Steve Humphries. Dir. 1998. 'Sex in a cold climate'. 49.20 mins. Available on Youtube.

Stephen Frears. Dir. 2013. *Philomena*. Te Weinstein Company, Yucaipa Films.

Louis Lentin. Dir. 1996. [Dear Daughter](#). 54.51 mins.

Peter Mullan. Dir. 2022. *The Magdalene Sisters*.

RTE. 2019. [Ireland's institutions explained](#). 8.43 mins.

RTE. 2017. [Broadcast with the names of the 796 children certified to have died at the Tuam Mother and Baby home, 1925–1960](#). 5.33 mins.

Tanya Stephen. Dir. 2022. 'The Missing Children'. 1 hour 28 mins. Available on the RTE Player.

Podcasts/Radio

Aoife Kelleher, Sarah Blake & Liam O'Brien. Producers. 2019. [The Case of Majella Moynihan](#). DocOn1 podcast. 42 mins.

Journal.ie [Redacted lives](#). 6-part documentary – episodes are approx. 40 mins each.

Rosemary Adaser [Second generation mixed-race children](#). 1.24 mins. Looking back to look forward: Irish in Britain oral history project.

University of Galway (3 episodes), 'Other: Stories from the Tuam Mother and Baby Home', narrated by Cillian Murphy:

- [Throw away the bruised – University of Galway | Podcast on Spotify](#) 25 mins.
- [They'll even come after your soul – University of Galway | Podcast on Spotify](#) 24.31 mins.
- [I love every bone of you – University of Galway | Podcast on Spotify](#) 16 mins.

Poetry

Kimberly Campanello. 2019. [MOTHERBABYHOME](#)

Sarah Clancy, "Cherishing for beginners". Available on YouTube.

Elaine Feeney, [The Harvest](#)

Annemarie Ní Churreáin. 2017. *Bloodroot*. Doire Press.

Connie Roberts. 2016. *Little Witness*. Arlen House.

Frances Ellen Watkins. 1993. [The Slave Mother](#)

The Poetry Programme. 2021. [Poems about the Mother and Baby Homes](#). 29 mins.

Song

Joni Mitchel [The Magdalene Laundries](#)

Breeda Murphy. 2018. [You took away my name](#)

Connie Robberts. 2019. [Sunday's Well: A Reimagining of the Irish Ballad Weile Weile Waile](#)

Survivor testimonies

[Clann Project Witness Statements – Clann: Ireland's Unmarried Mothers and their Children: Gathering the Data](#)

Justice for the Magdalenes. [Interviews with former Madgalene women and girls](#)

Tuam Oral History Project, University of Galway. [Survivor stories](#)

Waterford Memories Project. [Magdalene survivors](#)

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