

1.5 Rebellion

TOPIC: Pre-Famine History

SUBJECT/GRADE LEVEL: Social Studies, Grade Level 9.

TITLE: The Rebellion of 1798

AIM QUESTION: Why did the United Irishmen rebel against England in 1798?

NEW YORK STATE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS:

World History: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

TEACHER BACKGROUND:

The late eighteenth century was an era of tumultuous argument over the Natural Rights of Man. It was an era when revolutions broke out in the British colonies in America, in France, in the French colony of Haiti and in Ireland. In Ireland, one of the most prominent figures in this struggle was Wolfe Tone, an Irish Protestant who supported rights for Catholics and led the effort to achieve an independent republic for Ireland.

This round of opposition to English domination over Ireland began in 1778 with the formation of the Volunteers, a people's militia. Its original purpose was to defend Ireland against possible attack by France while British troops were fighting against American independence, but the group gradually became more politically involved. In 1782, a Volunteer Convention demanded that an independent Irish Parliament have authority over Ireland.

The Volunteers disbanded after some initial reforms were achieved, but a small group of radicals led by Wolfe Tone continued to agitate for change and formed a committee to support revolutionary action for Irish independence. This committee, known as the Belfast Society of United Irishmen, included both Protestants and Catholics. From 1791 to 1794 it demanded for liberty for all Irishmen and adopted the French revolutionary slogan, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." The English government feared that France would support rebellion in Ireland and banned the United Irishmen, forcing the group to become an illegal secret society. About the same time as this was happening, informal groups of Catholic "Defenders" were raiding wealthy homes in the Irish countryside looking for weapons and money.

By 1796, the Defenders and the United Irishmen had merged into one organization and leaders of the new group met with French officials to solicit support for a rebellion against English authority. In December, a French fleet arrived off of Cork,

1.5 Rebellion

but bad weather drove the fleet back out to sea. The few soldiers who were able to land were quickly captured. In response to this threat from France, the English arrested the leaders of the United Irishmen. Many were beaten and sent to prison and at least fifty people were executed

In May and June, 1798, a series of United Irish rebellions around the country were defeated. The groups leaders were executed for treason and many rank and file soldiers were exiled. In August, France sent a small force of approximately 1,000 men in three ships to support Irish rebellion. In September, it was defeated. Wolfe Tone was captured during the French attack and sentenced to death. He killed himself while in prison.

The United Irishmen were unrealistic in believing that they could lead a broad based revolutionary movement. Most Irish were more concerned with economic than political issues. However, the United Irishmen did succeed in introducing the ideas of nationhood and freedom into the national consciousness.

The song, “Unite and Be Free,” extends the hand of friendship across sectarian lines. It calls on Catholics and Protestants to work together to create an independent Ireland. It is a direct challenge to efforts by a colonial regime to keep its subjects divided.

REFLECTION: Teachers report that students enjoyed comparing “Unite and Be Free” to contemporary songs that discuss rebellion and revolution. In Westbury, New York, Konstantino Kovoros, played “Revolution” by John Lennon and the Beatles and “Get Up, Stand Up” by Bob Marley and the Wailers and students discussed whether revolutions brought positive or negative changes.

AIM: Aim: Why did the United Irishmen rebel against England in 1798?

ASSESSMENT:

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of cause and effect in history and the ability to support conclusions based on an evaluation of evidence through individual and group writing assignments and during group and class discussions.
- Students will demonstrate the importance of examining and respecting multiple perspectives on explaining historical events.
- Students will understand historical events based on an analysis of a primary source document.

DO NOW ACTIVITY: Read the song, *Unite and be Free*. Answer questions 1-3.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY: The United States celebrates the War for Independence against Great Britain but the Southern War for Independence is called a civil war and is condemned. The French Revolution is remembered as a struggle for equality, liberty and brotherhood but the Russian and Cuban Revolutions are dismissed because the revolutionaries were communists. In your opinion, when, if ever, is violent revolution justified?

TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY: What did the Irish demand in the song *Unite and Be Free*. If England refuses to respond, would the Irish be justified in having a violent revolution against England? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES:

- (Working individually or in groups), students should examine the chronology and answer the following questions.

- 1- Which Irish organizations are challenging British authority?
- 2- How does the British government respond to these organizations?
- 3- What international events are taking place during this time period?

- Key Questions for Discussion:

- 1- Do you think Irish men and women were justified in challenging British rule at a time when the British were at war? Explain
- 2- In your opinion, did actions by these Irish men and women constitute treason? Explain.
- 3- If you had been an Irish man or woman in this time period, would you have supported the rebellion? Explain.
- 4- In your opinion, how would the result of this defeated rebellion affect the future relationship between England and Ireland?

1.5 Rebellion

- The Irish poet John Kells Ingram later wrote a poem called "The Memory of the Dead." In the poem, he wrote:

"Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight? Who blushes at the name?

When cowards mock the patriot's fate, Who hangs his head in shame?

He's all a knave or half a slave Who slights his country thus,

But a true man, like you man, Will fill your glass with us!"

Why does Ingram believe a "true man" should celebrate the memory of the rebels of 1798? Do you agree? Why?

SUMMARY QUESTION: In your opinion, why did the rebellion of 1798 become an important symbol in Irish history?

HOMEWORK: Using *Unite and Be Free* as a model, write a poem or song celebrating a revolution or social movement that you believe should be given recognition.

APPLICATION: Are there people in the history of the United States who made a similar stand as the United Irishmen and were defeated? Should these people be viewed as traitors or heroes? Why?

ACTIVITY SHEET: The Irish Rebellion of 1798

A) Unite and Be Free

Read the words to the song, *Unite and be Free*. It is from Belfast, Ireland, 1795.
Hibernian is another term for the Irish.
Answer questions 1-3.

Ye lovers of Union, of ev'ry degree,
No matter what Trade or Religion ye be,
The right-hand of friendship to you I'll extend
And hope for your pardon if I should offend.

For the Rights of Man let us always be,
And Unite in the cause that will make us Free,
Till oppression and tyranny's banish'd the land,
We'll fight for our country with heart and hand.

"Divide then and conquer" - the maxim of knaves,
Who have practis'd it long on a nation of slaves -
But the bright Star of Reason will soon let them see
That Hibernians were made to Unite and be Free.

Questions

- 1- According to the song, "No matter what Trade or Religion ye be, The right-hand of friendship to you I'll extend." Who is invited to join in the struggle for a free Ireland? Why is this offer significant?
- 2- Why is the slogan "Unite and be Free" a revolutionary idea?
- 3- In your study of history, what similar documents have you studied? Explain.

B) The Rebellion of 1798, a Chronology

1778	The Volunteers, a people's militia, was formed. Its original purpose was to defend Ireland against possible attack by France while British troops were fighting against American independence.
1782	Volunteer Convention demands that an independent Irish Parliament have authority over Ireland. A small group of radical Volunteers forms a committee to support revolutionary action for Irish independence. The committee included both Protestants and Catholics.
1791-94	The Belfast Society of United Irishmen demands liberty for all Irishmen. They adopt the French Revolutionary slogan, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." About the same time, informal groups of Catholic "Defenders" raid wealthy homes in the countryside looking for weapons and money.
1793-94	England and France go to war. The French are interested in supporting an Irish rebellion. The United Irishmen are banned by the government. They become an illegal secret society.
1796	The Defenders and the United Irishmen merge into one organization. Leaders of the group meet with the French government. In December, a French fleet arrives at County Cork, but bad weather drives off the fleet. The few soldiers who land are quickly captured.
1797-98	The British government arrests leaders of the United Irishmen. Many are beaten and sent to prison. At least fifty people are executed. British troops terrorize civilians in the Irish countryside.
1798	Rebellions break out in May and June. Attacks against British forces are not well coordinated. The rebels are defeated and the leaders of the United Irishmen are executed for treason. In August, France sends a small invading force. It is quickly.

Questions

- 1- Which Irish organizations are challenging British authority?
- 2- How does the British government respond to these organizations?
- 3- In your opinion, which international events during this time period influenced events in Ireland?