### LESSON DESCRIPTION

Responding to an attempt by the British government to devolve power to Northern Ireland – which involved a power sharing executive and Council of Ireland, the Ulster Workers Council began a strike which brought Northern Ireland to a standstill for 14 days in 1974. The lesson looks at the methods used during the strike and the reasons for its success.

### LESSON INTENTIONS

1. Understand why the UWC decided to call a strike and describe the methods used
2. Explain the factors which led to the strike being a success and causing the collapse
3. Demonstrate objectives 1 & 2 through digital media

### LESSON OUTCOMES

- At the end of the lesson students should be able to understand and explain why the 1974 UWC strike took place and how it brought about the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive and Sunningdale Agreement.
- Employ ICT skills to express an understanding of the topic.

### HANDOUTS AND GUIDES

- Lesson 4 Key Information
- M2L4 Tasksheet
- Audio Editing Storyboard
- Comic Creation Storyboard
- Digital Imaging Design Sheet

### DIGITAL

- Suggested Additional Resources

### SOFTWARE

- Comic Creation Software e.g. Comic Life
- Audio Editing Software e.g. Audacity
- Image Editing Software e.g. GIMP

### HARDWARE

- Whiteboard
- PCs / Laptops
- Headphones / Microphones
### ACTIVITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viewing the video will give students an overview of how the UWC strike came about and the effect it had on Northern Ireland. It will also introduce the events outlined in the Key Information.</td>
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### Starter – Play Suggested Additional Resources 1 for the students to give them an overview of Sunningdale and the UWC strike

### Using the Key Information, teachers will have a choice of activities to engage students.

Teachers may choose to split the class into groups and ask students to use the discussion points to discuss issues from the topic. Students will then share their discussions with the rest of the class.

Alternatively, teachers may want to use the Introductory / Progression Questions as group discussion questions or to test individual knowledge.

The active learning activity will allow students to learn and discuss some key issues from the topic by working in a group and performing research.

*If possible, allow students to research the topic on the internet – suggested additional resources / search engine.*

### Plenary - Finish the lesson by viewing some images from the cartoon archive from Suggested Additional Resources 2. Discuss how newspapers use comic strips to convey situations and events. Is this an effectual way of communicating a situation/event? Highlight to students how these cartoon strips are a reflection of that particular artist or newspapers perspective or interpretation.

To finish the lesson, students will get a chance to look at how history can be depicted in a different medium and think critically about how events can be portrayed by the media.
The Ulster Workers Council was a loyalist organisation formed in early 1974. Its membership was made up of loyalist workers, initially from industries in Belfast. Opposing any form of power sharing in Northern Ireland or any kind of cross-border cooperation with Ireland, the UWC became a key player in the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement. Introduced in 1973, the Sunningdale Agreement was an attempt to establish a power sharing assembly and executive in Northern Ireland and a cross-border Council of Ireland. The UWC soon became the most prominent form of loyalist opposition to the agreement with full backing from the United Ulster Unionist Council and the Ulster Army Council.

With growing numbers, the UWC released a statement demanding new elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly. They stated that if their demands were not met then they would carry out a campaign of civil disobedience until the executive was dissolved. The UWC soon came to the attention of new Secretary of State Merlyn Rees but a meeting between them on 8th April proved unsuccessful. The UWC responded by threatening a general strike – in which loyalist supporting workers in Northern Ireland would be asked to participate. Following a large meeting on the 13th May a general strike was agreed, with the goal of bringing Northern Ireland to a standstill.

The Ulster Workers Council strike began on the 15th May 1974. To maximise disruption to Northern Ireland and to put pressure on the British government, the UWC employed a number of tactics, both violent and nonviolent.
WHAT TACTICS WERE EMPLOYED DURING THE STRIKE?

The objective of the strike was to disrupt Northern Ireland as much as possible. To do this a combination of methods were employed to achieve the UWC’s goals.

Encouraging (and sometimes intimidating) employees not to attend work, led to business closures, energy cuts and the non-delivery of goods and services (such as bread/milk and postal delivery). Road blocks also contributed to petrol shortages and non-delivery of goods and services.

1.) DISCUSSION

Read Perspectives 2. Imagine you are a young nationalist, living in Northern Ireland in 1974. How would this quote make you feel?
With the help of loyalist paramilitaries (mostly the Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Volunteer Force) the UWC were able to enforce the strike by populating the road blocks and carrying out intimidation. The use of paramilitary violence throughout the strike resulted in the deaths of 39 civilians. The worst paramilitary attack during the strike was the car bomb attacks on Dublin and Monaghan on 17th May. Three car bombs in Dublin and one in Monaghan resulted in the deaths of 33 civilians (and one unborn child). The attack was claimed by the UVF and it was the largest loss of life in any single day during the ‘Troubles’.

WHY DID THE STRIKE COME TO AN END AND WHY WAS IT SUCCESSFUL?

The strike ended on 28th May after Chief Executive of the NI Executive, Brian Faulkner and his pro-assembly unionist supporters resigned, causing the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive. Their resignation was a result of the British government’s refusal to negotiate with the UWC. On the 29th May, the UWC officially called the strike off and people across Northern Ireland returned to work.

By bringing about the collapse of the NI Executive and the Sunningdale Agreement, the UWC strike succeeded in its aim. The factors which led to the success of the UWC strike in 1974 were attributed to be:

- the widespread support of the Protestant community – in the years before the strike, a sense of anger and alienation had grown in the Protestant community due to the granting of reforms in response to Catholic grievances (as a result of the civil rights movement), an increase in republican violence and the introduction of ‘Direct Rule’
- the support of workers in key industries such as electric, gas and petrol distribution
- the slow and disorganised response of the British government and Northern Ireland Office – the authorities were slow to try and take over power stations and petrol stations and were reluctant to use force.

Due to the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive, responsibility for the running of Northern Ireland went back to the British Parliament at Westminster. ‘Direct Rule’ would remain in effect until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.
Examples of UWC actions during the strike

16th May (Day Two)
- In some Belfast factories, workers attempted to continue working - those attempting to continue working were attacked by loyalist paramilitaries who forced workers to leave the factory. A Protestant worker who remained was attacked.

15th May (Day One)
- The port of Larne was sealed off and the UDA and UFF ensured that no ships entered or left the harbour.
- Electricity supplies were disrupted when workers at the Ballymena power station went on strike.

20th May (Day Eight)
- The Upper Newtownards Road in East Belfast was lined by farmers in their tractors in a final show of support for the strike. The UDA and UFF convoy continued all the way to Stormont.

22nd May (Day Eight)
- In an attempt to disrupt public transport, a bomb was detonated on the Belfast-Sligo line at Shankill Road, Belfast, after the orders to stay open for no longer than four hours.

29th May (Day Six)
- Michael Mallon was shot dead in Belfast.

17th May (Day Three)
- 17/19 bomb attacks occurred in Dublin in 24 hours, killing 23 civilians and wounding 300. This was the highest number of casualties in any single day during the Troubles.
4. “The fifteen unprecedented, historic days in which a million British citizens, the Protestants of Northern Ireland, staged what amounted to a rebellion against the Crown and won... During those fifteen days, for the first time in over fifty years... a section of the realm became totally ungovernable. A self-elected provisional government of Protestant power workers, well-armed private armies and extreme politicians organized a strike which almost broke up the fabric of civilized life in Ulster. They deprived most of the population for much of the time of food, water, electricity, gas, transport, money and any form of livelihood.”

QUESTIONS

1. One of the factors attributed to the success of the UWC strike was the support it got from the unionist and loyalist communities. Describe the two organisations that helped the UWC organise and enforce the strike.

2. Briefly describe each of the methods that the UWC employed and give an example of how each method helped the strike achieve its goals.

3. How did the strike bring about the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive?

4. Explain the reasons why the UWC strike succeeded in its aim of bringing down the Sunningdale Agreement.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:
Construct a timeline of key events from 1973-74. Begin with the signing of the Sunningdale Agreement on 9th December 1973 and end with the collapse of the agreement on 28th May 1974. The timeline must contain at least 5 key events. (You may want to research this timeframe on the internet to help you complete your timeline!)

TASK 1
The UWC strike lasted for 14 days and had a devastating effect on Northern Ireland: homes were left without electricity and gas; cars without petrol; goods and services such as bread, milk and post were undelivered; major roadways were blocked; businesses and shops were closed.

If this happened today, how would you be affected?

In groups, make four lists under the headings: items that you could not use; activities you could not take part in; food you couldn’t eat and places you couldn’t go.

Think about the differences between 1974 and today (how people socialise, travel, communicate, shop, work, etc...). Would a strike on the same scale as 1974, be more disruptive or less disruptive in today’s society?
In groups students will be randomly assigned a protest method that was used during the strike (Non-attendance at work, road blocks and intimidation).

Each group will perform research into the UWC strike and note down occurrences when and where their assigned protest method was used. Students will use the ‘M2L4Tasksheet’ document to complete the task.

Each group will then share their findings with the rest of the class.

**SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

1. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/troubles_politics#p016l0gn](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/troubles_politics#p016l0gn) - Sunningdale and the UWC strike
2. [http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/search/cartoon_item/ulster%20workers%20council%20strike](http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/search/cartoon_item/ulster%20workers%20council%20strike) - University Of Kent, British Cartoon Archive – The Ulster Workers Council Strike
5. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/22449987](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/22449987) - Northern Ireland’s ‘Path to Peace’
USE THE MAP TO NOTE DOWN WHERE THE UWC UTILISED NON-ATTENDANCE/ ROAD BLOCKS / INTIMIDATION AND HOW THE PROTEST METHOD WAS USED.

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU BELIEVE WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT OR SIGNIFICANT PROTEST AND WHY.
DIGITAL TASKS

TASK DESCRIPTION

In pairs, students will create a series of A5 comic cards which explain what the Sunningdale Agreement was and how the Ulster Workers Council responded to it. Students will create a four page comic. The headings for each page will be: “What was the Sunningdale Agreement?”; “Why did the UWC strike?”; “How did the UWC carry out their strike?” and “How did the strike come to an end?” Students will research images and information from the internet which will be used in their comic. (Alternatively, images and information may be sourced by the teacher prior to the lesson)

PLAN

Images and information will be sourced from the internet and designed in the form of a storyboard.

- Students will be supplied with search terms by the teacher and source appropriate images and text from the internet – ask students to consider the reliability and objectivity of the information they find.
- Students will identify and select images/text to use and save them appropriately in a dedicated folder with a meaningful filename.
- Students will keep an account of the sites they have visited in a saved document.
- Students will use the images and information they have sourced and design their comic on a storyboard

DO

Before beginning, change the Page Setup to A5 and Landscape. Students will use images and caption boxes to describe each event. Each page will have 2 caption boxes (one with the question and one with the answer) and a maximum of three images. Students will complete their piece of work by exporting it in a suitable file format (e.g. JPEG).

- Encourage students to consider the size and style of fonts, the size and cropping of images, the colours used and the tools available to them within the software package.
- Remind students to save their work in a dedicated folder with an appropriate filename.

REVIEW

Give students the opportunity to view each other’s work. This may be done by displaying the best work on the whiteboard or students may circulate the room.

Taking other students’ feedback into account, ask students to justify their choices and decisions, including any difficulties they encountered in the creation of their comic. This may be completed in the form of a saved document.
DIGITAL TASKS

TASK DESCRIPTION

Students will work in groups of three to script, record and edit a radio show debate. The roles the students will play are: the radio presenter which asks the questions, a Northern Ireland politician who wants the strike to end and a worker who is taking part in the strike. The presenter will ask the following questions to the politician: “Why are you opposed to the strike?” and “How do you propose to satisfy the demands of the strikers?” The presenter will ask the following questions to the striker: “Why are you opposed to the Sunningdale Agreement?” and “Why do you think your strike has so much support?”

Research the answers to the questions by looking at news reports, videos, eye witness accounts, etc... The recording will be at least 1 minute long.

PLAN

Information will be sourced from the internet and used to help write a script.

• Students will be supplied with search terms by the teacher and source appropriate images, videos, and news articles from the internet – ask students to consider the reliability and objectivity of the information they find.

• Students will identify and select information to use and save it appropriately in a dedicated folder with a meaningful filename (this may be images or quotes that helped them to write their script).

• Students will keep an account of the sites they have visited in a saved document.

DO

Students will record their script and use the various editing tools to edit their recording (e.g. selection tool, time shift tool, trim, silence, etc...). When the recording has been edited, the pair will complete the audio file by exporting it in a suitable file format (WAV /MP3).

• Students may experiment with sound effects but students must consider whether these effects are necessary and appropriate.

• Remind students to save their work in a dedicated folder with an appropriate filename.

REVIEW

Give students the opportunity to listen to each other’s work. This may be done by playing back the best work or students may circulate the room.

Taking other students’ feedback into account, ask students to justify their choices and decisions, including any difficulties they encountered in the creation of their audio file. This may be completed in the form of a saved document.
DIGITAL TASKS

IMAGE EDITING TASK

TASK DESCRIPTION

Students will highlight a number of protests/incidents that took place during the strike. Students will source a blank map of Northern Ireland to manipulate for the task (this may also be supplied by the teacher). Students will edit the image by highlighting the location and using the text tool to add information.

PLAN

Images and information will be sourced from the internet and designed in the form of a sketch.

- Students will be supplied with search terms by the teacher and source appropriate images and text from the internet – ask students to consider the reliability and objectivity of the information they find. Advise students that it is best to try and source medium/large images.
- Students will identify and select images/text to use and save them appropriately in a dedicated folder with a meaningful filename.
- Students will keep an account of the sites they have visited in a saved document.

DO

Students will import their sourced image into the software and use the colour/filter tools to add an effect to the image. Some students may use these tools in conjunction with the selection tools to highlight areas of the image. Students will then insert the quote/information they sourced by using the text tool. Students will complete their piece of work by exporting it in a suitable file format (e.g. JPEG).

- Encourage students to consider the size and style of fonts, the colour/filter style and the tools available to them within the software package.
- Remind students to save their work in a dedicated folder with an appropriate filename.

REVIEW

Give students the opportunity to view each other’s work. This may be done by displaying the best work on the whiteboard or students may circulate the room.

Taking other students’ feedback into account, ask students to justify their choices and decisions, including any difficulties they encountered in the creation of their image. This may be completed in the form of a saved document.