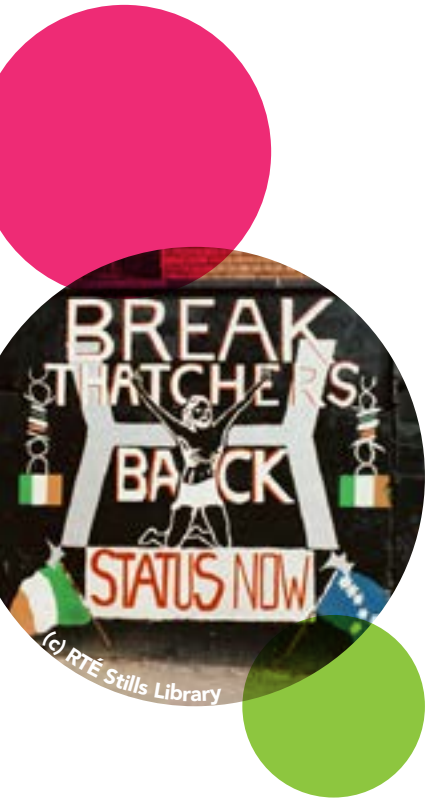


LESSON
5.



LESSON DESCRIPTION

This lesson gives a brief background to the hunger strikes and explains why prisoners were protesting. It describes how the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes began and came to an end, the role played by Bobby Sands and the aftermath of the strikes.

LESSON INTENTIONS

1. Describe the reasons why prisoners chose to begin hunger striking
2. Summarise the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes and their aftermath
3. Demonstrate intentions 1 & 2 through digital media

LESSON OUTCOMES

- Explain why the hunger strikes began and what the demands of the strikers were.
- Summarise the aftermath of the hunger strikes.
- Employ ICT skills to express an understanding of the topic.

HANDOUTS AND GUIDES

- Lesson 5 Key Information
- M2L5 Statements
- Video Editing Storyboard
- Digital Imaging Design Sheet

DIGITAL

- Suggested Additional Resources

SOFTWARE

- Video Editing Software e.g. Movie Maker
- Image Editing Software e.g. GIMP

HARDWARE

- Whiteboard
- PCs / Laptops

MODULE 2. THE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN IRELAND
5: THE HUNGER STRIKES



ACTIVITY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
<p>Starter – Show students Suggested Additional Resource 1. The video will serve as a background and introduction to the Hunger Strikes.</p>	<p>This should be: The video will help students understand what was meant by the term "political status" and also act as an introduction to the topic.</p>
<p>Using the Key Information, teachers will have a choice of activities to engage students.</p> <p>Teachers may choose to split the class into groups and ask students to use the discussion points to discuss some aspects of the Key Information. Students will then share their discussions with the rest of the class.</p> <p>Alternatively, teachers may want to use the Questions/Extension Activities as group discussion questions or to test individual knowledge.</p> <p>The Alternate Task requires the students to interact and discuss the topic through clustering. Students will cluster into groups depending on what statement they have been given. As a class, students will then discuss whether or not they have clustered correctly.</p> <p><i>*If possible, allow students to research the topic on the internet – suggested additional resources / search engine.</i></p>	<p>The Key Information is designed to cover the information within the topic and meet the learning intentions.</p> <p>The discussion questions on the Key Information are designed to meet the learning intentions through interaction and Q&A.</p> <p>The questions on the Key Information are designed to meet the learning intentions through the students understanding of the information.</p> <p>The various activities should allow the students to learn while they interact. The activities will also serve to reinforce knowledge and encourage discussion.</p>
<p>Plenary – Read Perspectives 3 and 4 to the class. Ask students thoughts on the quotes. How would the different sides of the community in Northern Ireland have welcomed these quotes?</p>	<p>Reading the quotes and discussing their meaning will help the students to look at the Hunger Strikes from different viewpoints and help to meet the lesson intentions.</p>

KEY INFORMATION
5.

THE HUNGER STRIKES

WHAT WAS SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS?

Prisoners were not treated like regular prisoners. They did not have to wear prison uniforms or do prison work. They were also kept with their fellow paramilitary prisoners and were allowed extra visits and food parcels.

1.)) DISCUSSION

Why did Republican prisoners want these demands met?

The introduction of internment in Northern Ireland resulted in serious opposition from the nationalist and republican communities. Many of the internees found themselves housed in HM Prison Maze. In 1972, IRA prisoners placed in Crumlin Road Jail in Belfast began a hunger strike to gain the right to be treated as 'prisoners of war.' With the British government in ceasefire talks with the IRA, secretary of state William Whitelaw accepted the demands giving 'special category status' to the prisoners. However, 1976 saw a new Labour government in power and they chose to end the Special Category Status. On 1st March 1976, Merlyn Rees, the new Secretary of State, announced that anyone convicted of terrorism offences would not have the right to Special Category Status. They were to be labelled as ordinary criminals. The new policy did not affect existing prisoners only those convicted after 1st March 1976. This development led to a series of protests centring in the H-Blocks (so-called because of their shape) of the Maze prison. The protests began in 1976 and culminated with the 1981 Hunger Strikes.

HOW DID THE PROTESTS BEGIN?

On 14th September 1976, convicted Republican prisoner Kieran Nugent refused to wear a prison uniform. Instead, Nugent clothed himself in a prison blanket in protest. These actions became known as the "Blanket Protest" and by 1978 resulted in approximately 300 republican prisoners refusing to wear prison uniforms or abide by normal prison regulations. The protest was an attempt to regain special category status. In March 1978 the blanket protest evolved to include a "No Wash Protest" and then a "Dirty Protest". The protests developed after several attacks occurred on prisoners while they left out their chamber pots. Following these attacks prisoners refused to wash and smeared excrement on their cell walls in further protest. The republican protest continued in an attempt to re-establish their political status through five demands:



A republican mural in Belfast which reads, 'Break Thatchers Back' and 'Status Now'

- 1 The right not to wear a prison uniform
- 2 The right not to do prison work
- 3 The right to one visit, one parcel and letter per week
- 4 The right to freely associate with other prisoners, and to organise recreational and educational activities
- 5 Full restoration of the right to appeal, lost through the protest

THE EVOLUTION OF REPUBLICAN PROTESTS WITHIN THE MAZE PRISON

Blanket Protest

The end of special category status meant that 'political prisoners' would now be treated as ordinary criminals. This in turn meant they would have to wear prison uniforms instead of their own clothes. In September 1976, Republican prisoner Kieran Nugent refused to wear a prison uniform and instead clothed himself in a prison blanket. These actions were the beginning of the Blanket Protest.

No Wash Protest

In March 1978, prisoners were refused a second towel to wash themselves. Not wanting to stand naked in the washrooms, prisoners requested showers be installed in their cells. This request was rejected and prisoners refused to leave their cells.

Dirty Protest

In April 1978, the No Wash protest evolved into the Dirty Protest when prisoners began pouring urine out of their cells and smearing excrement on the cell walls. The refusal of prisoners to leave their cells and the escalation of the protests was also attributed to violent beatings at the hands of the prison guards.

Hunger Strike

On 27th October 1980 republican prisoners stepped up their protests in an attempt to regain special category status by going on hunger strike. The strike ended after 53 days - without any deaths - after it appeared the British government had met the demands of the prisoners. On 1st March 1981 a new hunger strike – led by Bobby Sands – began when it became evident that prisoner demands were not being met. This new protest lasted until 3rd October 1981 and resulted in the deaths of 10 republican prisoners. The strike ended after a number of prisoners were given medical attention on the insistence of their families.

1980 HUNGER STRIKE

On 26th March 1980 the announcement was made that from 1st April, the special category status that existed for paramilitary activity would cease for all prisoners regardless of when the offence was committed. As a result there was a rise in republican protests across Northern Ireland. Between 27th October and 18th December, 30 male republican prisoners and 3 female republican prisoners went on hunger strike – 7 male prisoners began the protest in the Maze prison with a further 23 joining at a later date as well as 3 female prisoners from Armagh Women's Prison.

Pressure began to mount on the British government when one of the hunger strikers – Sean McKenna – began to lapse in and out of a coma. After 53 days the decision was made to save McKenna's life and end the strike with the understanding that the British government had agreed to the prisoners' demands.

1981 HUNGER STRIKE

When the proposed settlement from the British government did not arrive, the prisoners released a statement highlighting their intention to go on another hunger strike. 1st March 1981 marked the fifth anniversary of the ending of special category status and the beginning of a new hunger strike. The aim remained the same: political status for republican prisoners. The British government remained opposed to granting this. Both sides were determined not to give in.

Between 1st March and 20th August 1981, 10 prisoners died as a result of being on hunger strike. Despite pressure from the clergy, the families of the hunger strikers and vice president of Sinn Féin Gerry Adams, the protest continued. The hunger strikers believed that anything less than the five demands would be a betrayal to their dead comrades.

The hunger strike began to falter when the mother of one of the strikers - Paddy Quinn - insisted upon medical intervention when her son lapsed into a coma. On 6th September the family of Laurence McKeown became the fourth family to intervene. It soon became clear that the families of the remaining hunger strikers would follow the same actions.

The strike was called to an end on 3rd October 1981 (**See Perspectives 3**). On 6th October, James Prior, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, gave partial concessions to the prisoners. The right not to work was the only outstanding demand.

2.))) DISCUSSION

Why was 'special category status' important to the prisoners?

LOYALIST PRISONERS IN THE MAZE

At this time in the Maze prison there was also a population of loyalist prisoners who, despite being opposed to the republican movement, shared the belief that they too should be granted special category status. On top of this, loyalist prisoners demanded that they be segregated from republican prisoners.

Not only did a small number of loyalists take part in a blanket protest, but six members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) took part in a hunger strike from 12th – 17th December 1980. Although several loyalist prisoners wished to partake in blanket protests and hunger strikes there was a lack of support from loyalism outside the Maze. The loyalist leadership on the outside believed that taking part in a blanket protest or hunger strike may have given the impression that loyalist prisoners were showing solidarity with, or support for republican prisoners.

BOBBY SANDS

On 1st March 1981, Bobby Sands, leader of the IRA within the Maze prison refused food and began another wave of hunger strikes. When the Republican MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone passed away, the decision was taken to put Sands forward for election. The election gained media coverage around the world. On 9th April 1981 Bobby Sands was elected to Westminster.

However, the British government refused to change their position on political status for prisoners. Despite visits from many influential people, Sands remained resolute in his protest. After 66 days on hunger strike Bobby Sands died on 5th May 1981 aged 27. His death resulted in mass riots all over Ireland. At his funeral the number of mourners exceeded 100,000.

The government also changed a piece of existing legislation called the Representation of the People Act, to prevent another prisoner contesting Bobby Sands' vacant seat. The election of Bobby Sands also proved to be a significant turning point for Sinn Féin. Following the success of Sands at the ballot box, Sinn Féin's new policy would see them contest elections in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in their pursuit of a united Ireland.



Protestors acting in support of the hunger strikers in Dublin's O'Connell Street, 2nd May 1981

(c) RTE Stills Library

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROTESTS AND HUNGER STRIKES

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became a republican hate figure and there was international condemnation of the British government for its handling of the hunger strikes

The hunger strikes proved to be a huge propaganda victory for the republican movement gaining it a lot of international sympathy and attention

Similar to the events of Internment and Bloody Sunday, the hunger strikes motivated many nationalists to join the forces of the IRA in retaliation

Between September 1976 and October 1981, 15 active Prison Officers were killed by republican paramilitaries

The hunger strikes became a significant turning point in Northern Ireland politics as Sinn Féin began its move towards mainstream politics – this became a key reason in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985

From March to October 1981, Northern Ireland plunged into violence on a scale not witnessed since the early 1970s with 62 people killed – over half of those were civilians

PERSPECTIVES



1. "One would hardly allow an animal to remain in such conditions, let alone a human being. The stench and filth in some of the cells, with the remains of rotten food and human excreta scattered around the wall, was almost unbearable. In two of them I was unable to speak for fear of vomiting. Several prisoners complained to me of beatings, of verbal abuse, of additional punishments (in cold cells without even a mattress) for making complaints, and of degrading searches carried out on the most intimate parts of their naked bodies."

Archbishop Tomás Ó Fiaich, 2nd August 1978, on a visit to the Maze Prison

2. "These criminals are totally responsible for the situation in which they find themselves. It is they who have been smearing excreta on the walls and pouring urine through cell doors. It is they who by their actions are denying themselves the excellent modern facilities of the prison. They are not political prisoners; more than 80 have been convicted of murder or attempted murder, and more than 80 of explosive offences. They are members of organisations which are responsible for the deaths of hundreds of innocent people, the maiming of thousands more, and the torture by kneecapping of over 600 of their own people."

The Northern Ireland Office responds to the comments of the Archbishop, 1st August 1978

3. "Mounting pressure and cleric-inspired demoralisation led to [family] interventions and five strikers have been taken off their fast."

Statement by Republican Prisoners, 4th October 1981

4. "We are not prepared to consider special category status for certain groups of people serving sentences for crime. Crime is crime is crime, it is not political."

Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, 21st April 1981

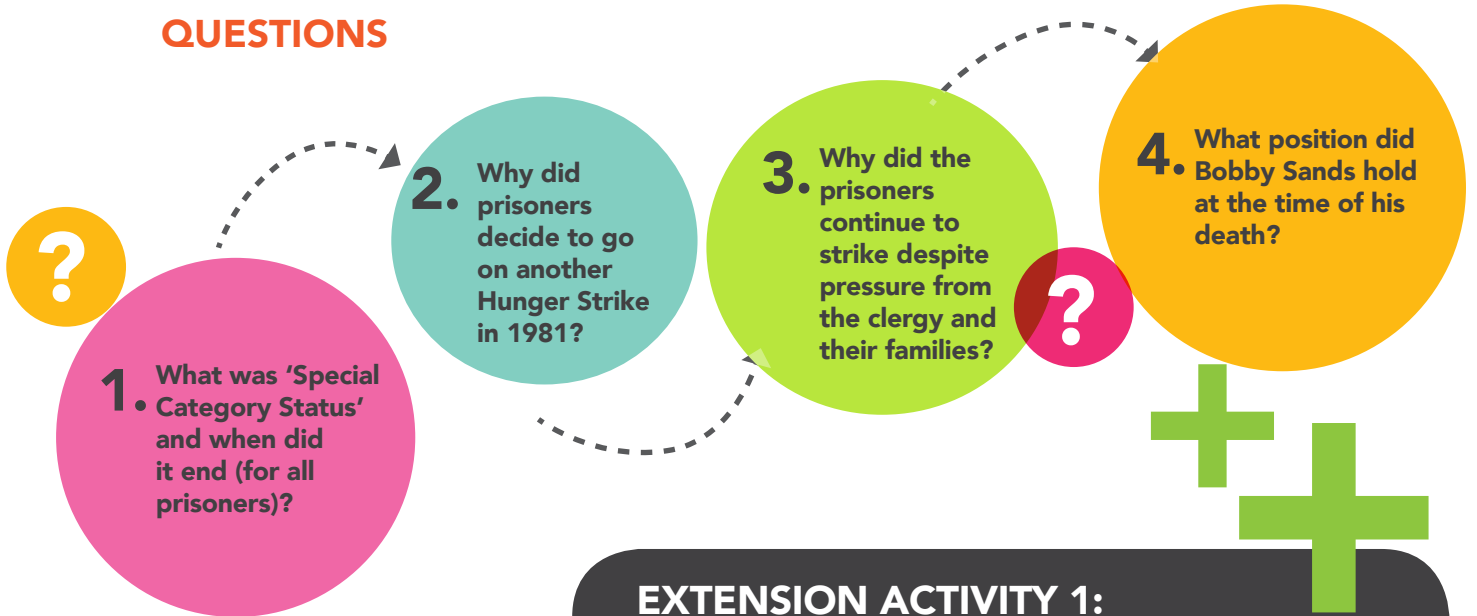
5. "Mr. Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organisation did not allow to many of its victims."

Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, 5th May 1981

6. "People later kept asking me about the [republican] hunger strikers of 1981. Says I, 'I respect those men because they are doing something I had done myself.' How could I disrespect them? I agreed with their goals and that they were non-criminal prisoners."

Former Ulster Volunteer Force leader and Progressive Unionist Party member Gusty Spence, quoted in Roy Garland's book, 'Gusty Spence'

QUESTIONS



EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1:

Create a spider diagram which states the 5 demands of Republican prisoners.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2:

Taking Perspectives 3 & 4 into account, why do you think that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became a Republican hate figure?



TASK 1

Consider **Perspectives 2 and 4**. The British state saw PIRA prisoners as criminals. The PIRA prisoners saw themselves as political prisoners or prisoners of war, who deserved special category status. Even today, the hunger strikers who died are celebrated in some sections of nationalist and republican communities as heroes who gave their lives protesting against the British state, whereas to many in the unionist and loyalist communities they were nothing more than terrorists.

In groups, discuss the difference between a 'terrorist' and a 'freedom fighter'. Note down all your discussion points.

Further to your discussion, use online research to discover quotes or news articles which describes the feelings of a unionist politician and a republican politician towards the hunger strikes (alternatively this may be their thoughts on a hunger strike memorial march).

TASK 2:

THE METHOD OF HUNGER STRIKING HAS BEEN USED THROUGHOUT HISTORY AS A MEANS OF NON-VIOLENT PROTEST.

Research two past examples of hunger strikes and one recent example (in the last five years). For each example, answer the following: When did the hunger strike take place? Who was on the hunger strike? Why was this person/group on hunger strike? Put your answers in the form of a table.

WHEN?	WHO?	WHY?

ALTERNATE TASK

- Each student will be given a statement that is cut out from M2L5Statements.
- Students will circulate the class and cluster into groups depending on their statement. The groups are: DEMANDS OF THE HUNGER STRIKERS, THE 1980 HUNGER STRIKE, THE 1981 HUNGER STRIKE and AFTERMATH OF THE HUNGER STRIKES.
- After students have clustered, each group will read out their statements to the other groups – has everyone clustered correctly?
- Alternatively, students could be formed into groups and organise the statements under these titles.

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



1) http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/blanket_no-wash_protests_maze#p00lx3vm – Kieran Nugent talks about 'political status'



2) http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/blanket_no-wash_protests_maze - 'Blanket' and 'no wash' protests in the Maze prison



3) http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/republican_hunger_strikes_maze - Republican hunger strikes in the Maze prison



4) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4941866.stm - What happened in the hunger strike?



5) <http://www.thejournal.ie/margaret-thatcher-ireland-haughey-north-861575-Apr2013/> - 6 key moments that defined Margaret Thatcher's relationship with Ireland



6) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mw7WJLZmVF4> Hunger Movie Trailer



7) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LICW4R0VG8Q> Some Mother's Son Movie Trailer

MODULE 2. THE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

5: THE HUNGER STRIKES

The right not to wear a prison uniform

The right not to do prison work.

The right to freely associate with other prisoners, and organisation of recreational and educational activities.

The right to one visit, one parcel and letter per week.

Full restoration of the right to appeal, lost through the protest.

The strike started on 27th October.

The strike ended on 18th December.

The strike involved 30 male and 3 female Republican prisoners.

The strike lasted 53 days.

The Hunger Strikers believed the British government had agreed to their demands.

The strike ended when Sean McKenna began to lapse into a coma.

The Hunger Strike began on the 1st March.

10 Hunger Strikers died.

The strike began to falter when families insisted upon medical intervention for their dying relatives.

Bobby Sands lead this strike.

Bobby Sands was elected to Westminster.

Partial concessions were given to prisoners after the Hunger Strike.

The strike ended on 3rd October.

Sinn Féin became more prominent in Northern Ireland politics.

Membership for the IRA increased





DIGITAL TASKS

IMAGE EDITING TASK



TASK DESCRIPTION

Students will manipulate an image to communicate the demands of the Hunger Strikers. Students will research suitable images. Choosing 1 image, students will edit it and use the text tool to add text to communicate the demands of the hunger strikers.

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.



DIGITAL TASKS

FILM MAKING TASK



TASK DESCRIPTION

Students will create a movie of at least 30 seconds which details the reasons why prisoners went on Hunger Strike in 1980/81 and the aftermath of their actions. Students will research images (and if possible audio and video) and information from the internet which will be used in their movies.

PLAN

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, videos, audio and information 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.
- Students will use the information and media they have sourced and construct a storyboard for the making of their movie.

DO

Students will import the various media items they sourced from the internet. Using their storyboards as a guide, students will construct their movie using various editing tools (Splitting, Trimming, Transitions, Effects and Captions/Titles). Students will complete their piece of work by exporting it in a suitable file format (i.e. WMV).

- Encourage students to consider the size and style of fonts, the size of images, the effects/transitions 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 viewing selected pieces of 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 movie file. This may be completed in the form of a saved document.