

## **Teacher's Guide**

### **General learning aims for the entire teaching unit**

Roger Casement was a multi-faceted person. This is in part due to the fact that his life was lived in a tense, turbulent time, when European colonialism and the exploitation and violence directed against the colony's inhabitants were at their peak. Casement seems "to have had a candid, prophetic grasp of the tragic turmoil of his age", as his struggles against injustices in the Congo and the Putumayo region indicate (Mitchell 5). However, Casement not only advocated for people overseas, but also at home in Ireland. As an Irish nationalist, he strove for the Irish liberation from England. To achieve this, he pursued the strategy of recruiting Irish prisoners of war for an Irish brigade against England during World War I in Germany. When this scheme failed, he was sentenced to death and hanged in England for treason. Because of his alleged gay identity, which was strategically leaked during his trial through the so-called 'Black Diaries', he became a conflicting martyr for Ireland.

The above-mentioned aspects of his life and identity make him an intriguing person to study. However, besides this factual contextualization, Casement also proves to be a somewhat elusive figure, and "to talk about posthumous Casement is to talk about what people have projected onto his name" (McDiarmid 170). So, one needs to consider both the factual contextualization and representation of what is effectively known about Casement and the externally imposed speculative representation of Casement.

This teaching unit thus aims at transmitting a basic understanding of who Roger Casement was, what he did and what the historical context surrounding his life was. The focus will be on providing factual evidence on Casement's life and his historical context, but the unit also wants to create an awareness in students that those representations of him can never be completely factual. Indeed, such presentations of Casement tend to have a speculative and subjective aspect to them.

The factual information will mostly be transmitted through a short biography, a poem and an excerpt from a screenplay based on his life. The students will be asked to read these texts and then work on them by completing the questions and assignments of each task. An understanding for the speculative nature surrounding Casement's life will be instilled in students through the grammar and the writing exercise, for the students are prompted to write speculative sentences on Casement's life and are asked to write a short essay imagining the unfolding of the events in Germany. By having students write their own subjectively colored sentences about Casement, they are introduced to the speculative nature of texts written about

him. However, this teaching of the speculative nature of texts narrating Casement's life is secondary, for the tasks can also be treated by focusing exclusively on grammar and writing, without insisting upon the aspect of subjectiveness.

This teaching unit treats different texts and excerpts and focuses on other grammar topics and writing exercises than the other units. Teachers are thus advised to look at all the teaching units and decide for themselves which tasks they find useful and want to work with.

### **Structure of the teaching unit**

The structure of the teaching unit is such that it will give a very general overview of Casement's life and then focus on one particular episode of it, namely when he was in Germany. This historical moment was chosen because it exemplifies Casement's individuality, illustrated through his self-identification as an Irishman and his struggle for national liberation, while simultaneously focusing on the larger context of World War I and world politics at that time.

**The core task** serves as an introduction into the topic. It needs to be completed first, and if teachers decide to work only on one task, it must be the core task. Students can familiarize themselves with Casement and the context in which he lived through the short biography on his life and the additional information on the historical context. The exercise, which asks students to map his life and some important information on a world map, will help them retain the most important facts on Casement's life in a tangible way.

**Additional task 1** follows the core task, as it still transmits rather general information on Casement, which adds to the broad overview given in the core task. The exercise asks students to retrieve different names and descriptions attributed to Casement and recognize the different semantic nuances to the words (i.e., whether the words express an emotive, formal or neutral attitude). In this way, students learn about the various aspects that constituted Casement's persona, while also getting a sense of words having different connotations. The teaching unit leaves it up to the teacher, whether they actually want to work with the term 'connotation' and 'denotation'.

Ideally, **additional task 2** will only be worked on after the completion of both the core task and the additional task 1. It can also be treated if task 1 is omitted, but the teacher must be aware that students will have to create sentences on rather limited knowledge on Casement's life. As they are asked to write speculative sentences, this can work fine with a strong class. However, additional task 1 adds some information on Casement's life on which students can then base their speculative sentences. In case of time constraints additional task 2 can be

omitted, as it does not add any new information content-wise, but only allows to practice the grammar topic of “Modal Verbs for Speculation and Deduction”.

**Additional task 3** can follow additional task 1, or additional task 1 and 2, or it can be treated right after the core task. Note that task 3 does not offer the same broad approach as the core task and additional task 1. For task 3 focuses on Casement’s time in Germany, specifically a scene where he tries to convince Irish prisoners of war to join his Irish brigade. This task lends itself well for an interactive classroom activity, as it asks students to talk in groups and discuss questions among each another. The task’s focus lies on the perception of accents. This is something that concerned and affected Casement, but the topic of meaning associated with accents can also be recontextualized to today’s time and students can discuss their own experiences with English accents. This discussion can be further opened to students’ perception of accents more generally, including Swiss German accents or Standard German. Thus, the topic, which is accompanied by an interesting video, will allow for animated group discussions.

**Additional task 4** is strictly based on knowledge gained from the reading included in additional task 3 and can thus only be treated once task 3 is completed. Additional task 4 is similar to additional task 2, as both tasks focus on students’ writing. Whereas additional task 2 is strictly based on the grammar topic of “Modal Verbs for Speculation and Deduction”, additional task 4 has a broader focus on language production. The only requirement is that the students assume the role of a prisoner of war or Casement and describe the incident from that person’s perspective. Like task 2, this task alludes to the subjective presentation of Casement’s identity. This can be explicitly mentioned by the teacher, but it is not required. This task can also be omitted if there is a lack of time, as it does not provide any vital information on Casement.

## **Bibliography**

McDiarmid, Lucy. “The Afterlife of Roger Casement: Memory, Folklore, Ghosts, 1916–.”  
The Irish Art of Controversy. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005. 167–210.

Mitchell, Angus. “A Strange Chapter of Irish History: Sir Roger Casement, Germany and the 1916 Rising.” *Field Day Review*, 2012, pp. 4-21.

**Schematic depiction of the teaching unit's structure**

