



Discovering Women in Irish History



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INTRODUCTION

Discovering Women in Irish History is a programme designed to make the history of women in Ireland more accessible, interesting and attractive to Transition Year and other Senior Cycle students in post primary schools in Ireland. It comprises a handbook and CD ROM.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

Handbook

The handbook is an introduction to the programme. It contains a selection of lessons on the theme of women in Irish history. It is really intended to be used in conjunction with the website or CD ROM, but may be used separately, as some of the material is duplicated.

CD ROM

The CD ROM considers women in Irish history under the following headings:

- Early & medieval
- Early modern
- Later modern
- Education
- Vote
- Independent Ireland

Timelines and biographies are provided also.

Each section contains overviews and summaries of research to date on the topic of women in Irish history. The questions that follow cater for a wide variety of approaches and abilities. Activities are suggested, based on methodologies appropriate to Transition Year students. In addition each section contains a selection of documents extracted from both primary and secondary sources. Hints are provided for students hoping to do their own research and comprehensive bibliographies are also provided.

AIMS

The overall aims of the programme are:

- to increase awareness amongst teachers and students of the role of women in Irish history
- to explore the contribution women made to Irish society in the past: the lives they lived, the work they did, how they affected and, in turn, were affected, by developments in politics, economics, religion, social customs and attitudes, emigration, law, medicine and general culture
- to explore how change came about in women's lives in Ireland
- to promote original research at local and national level in this discipline
- to encourage inquiry, analysis and freedom from bias
- to make existing research more accessible to second level students
- to increase awareness of relevant national and local primary sources
- to provide bibliographies and guides to primary and secondary sources for the history of Irish women
- to develop a variety of methodologies appropriate to the study of history

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the programme are that students may:

- become more aware of, and interested in, the role of women in Irish history
- consider how change came about in the role of women in Ireland
- become aware of the relevant national and local primary sources
- be empowered to conduct and publish their own research
- reflect on the values and beliefs of the past
- extend and deepen their understanding of contemporary gender relations through inquiry into the past
- approach the study of women in the past with openness, impartiality and freedom from bias

HOW MIGHT THE PROGRAMME BE USED?

The programme is versatile and adaptable and several opportunities arise for using a cross curricular approach.

There are a number of possibilities for teaching *Discovering Women in Irish history* during Transition Year:

- the programme may be timetabled for the full year, in which case the teacher will select sections from the programme that are appropriate to the class
- one section or, indeed, a selection, may be chosen and timetabled as a module
- a particular theme may be selected and considered in its broader historical context, using traditional history textbooks, such as those the class already studied for Junior Certificate History
- topics may be chosen for research or project work. There are several suggestions throughout the programme.

BACKGROUND

The history of women has emerged as a major field of scholarly inquiry, especially since the 1970s, and an extensive literature has accumulated in Ireland as elsewhere, recognising and documenting the contribution women made to Irish society in the past.

Although the Department of Education and Science has encouraged the study of women's history at all levels, problems arise in practice, mainly because of the lack of secondary sources appropriate to the post-primary level and the perceived difficulty in detecting and accessing primary sources.

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