



6TH CLASS PRIMARY SCHOOLS COMPETITION

Write a Story or Poem
about what you think life
would have been like for you
living through the War in
County Monaghan during the
period 1919-1923.

Winning Entries 2022

The Irish Civil War

June 28th, 1922

Dear Diary,

Yesterday was my birthday and my mother gifted me this diary so I will write all about my school life, which isn't really that interesting. I'm just a normal girl living in Emyvale, Monaghan but still I will try very hard to write as much as I can. Something horrible has happened and the worse thing is that no one expected it, you see a year ago Britain made a truce with Ireland but the unionists wanted to stay apart of Britain so that's how Northern Ireland became a part of the UK. Now, we all know that Eamon De Valera didn't like the truce which is why he sent Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith to London to negotiate with Britain but a 32-county united Ireland was never on the table. However, from this meeting the Anglo-Irish treaty was formed, which created the 26 county Irish free state and the border came about. The treaty was signed on December 6th 1921 at 10 Downing Street, London but De Valera left and Griffith took his place as president but that wasn't the end of De Valera, he went to Munster and told people that the treaty would only make things worse. And some people took his words to heart and started fighting back but still the real damage was yet to come.

Back to now, the British have been putting pressure on Michael Collins to stop the rebellion before it started. Winston Churchill threatened to send British troops over to stop it but Collins decided to do it on his own.

Today Michael Collins had the Free state army point tow British 18 pounder field guns at the four courts and open fire and now the Irish civil war had begun. It was no longer the Irish against the British but Irish against Irish. I like to think that this won't last long so we chose to ignore the gunfire and explosions mentioned in the news and outside our very own windows.

July 5th 1922

Dear Diary,

The battle of Dublin lasted a full week, it ended only today and it marked the start of the Irish Civil War. Everyday my ma reads the news and everyday her frown gets more prominent. There was another round of gunfire this morning right outside my window, it was so loud I swear I can still feel my ears ringing. It's like the Easter rising all over again except now it was the Irish Free State wielding the British forces weapons. My ma never told me any of the gruesome details of the war but I still heard about it from the old lady next door, Mrs. Connolly, who likes to gossip with anyone she could, including me. A man was killed today. He was shot then beaten to death, that was something I didn't want to hear as the man lived only a few streets away. After my talk with Mrs. Connolly I went back home, it was already dinner time, I guess I just lost track of time. While eating Ma told me my cousin who lives in Dublin would be coming to stay with us, my aunt and uncle were both worried for her. I guess there were more soldiers hanging around in Dublin than here. I didn't mind as me and my cousin get along well.

July 7th 1922

Dear Diary,

My cousin Shauna arrived today and she is staying in my room, sleeping on a small mattress on the floor. She told me the news from Dublin. Cathal Brugha, Minister for defence was shot on the 5th of July by the free state troops and died only today. The free state were now in control of the capital.

The IRA split and there was more republicans who also had more experience but they lacked the needed weaponry. Frank Aiken leader of the Northern IRA said they will remain neutral.

Liam Lynch was captured and brought to the four courts but allowed to leave so he could talk to his fellow republicans to stand down, however he did not do this instead he became the IRA chief of staff and organized the fortification of his home city of Limerick. Led by Eoin O'Duffy, Limerick was captured after a week of fighting along with much of Leinster and even Galway and Waterford.

July 28th, 1922

Dear Diary,

There hasn't been much going on but I'll give you a quick update. Frank Aiken was arrested and brought to Dundalk jail on July 16th along with 100 of his men but that didn't last long as only today Liam Lynch and his men blew up the Dundalk prison freeing Aiken and 200-300 prisoners.

There have been riots and fights going on everywhere. Everyone is fighting someone now so you can't go 3 steps out your door without someone yelling at you or shooting someone else. That's really it for now but I will be sure to write with further news.

August 1st, 1922

Dear Diary,

Shauna is still staying with us, her friend back in Dublin wrote her a letter and it said that in Skerries, Dublin Harry Boland, right-hand man to DeValera and former best friend to Michael Collins was shot dead while being arrested in a hotel. Also a lot of the Dublin IRA were arrested after their plan to blow up the bridges leading in to Dublin were foiled. Things were looking good for the free state.

August 12th, 1922

Dear Diary,

I'm sorry for not writing but today the whole country got this news. Today Arthur Griffith, president of the free state dropped dead. William T. Cosgrove is set to take his place as president. There has been more activity around Dundalk and it's all anyone talks about anymore. I think my hopes for this war ending are hopeless as it seems its only just begun.

August 22nd, 1922

Dear Diary,

Things are getting worse, 8 days ago Frank Aiken led a surprise attack with about 400 anti-treaty IRA men on Dundalk, they blew holes in the army barracks and rapidly took control of the town. This caused 240 republican prisoners to be freed and 400 rifles to be stolen. While in control of the town Aiken publicly called for an end to this war.

That isn't all though today Michael Collins went on a trip down to Cork to try to get peace with some of the anti-treaties but in Béal Na Bláth he was ambushed and shot dead. His funeral is set for the 28th August. Michael Collins was the closest thing between the two sides and with him and Griffith gone on one knows how anyone is going to act, we just know that right now they are at the moment in mourning of Michael Collins.

August 28th, 1922

Dear Diary,

Today was Michael Collins funeral; he was laid to rest in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin alongside all national heroes who fought for Irish freedom. It's a sad day but as I suspected the free state have gotten bitter at the republicans who simply refuse to surrender.

September 27th, 1922

Dear Diary,

Today the Dáil passed, 41 votes to 18, emergency legislation which allowed those who were captured with weapons against the free state would be executed. I personally don't think it was the right thing to do as killing more people will only cause more trouble. Most of the Cumann na mBan happen to fight against the treaty believing a republic to be the best thing for women's rights. I'm proud to say they have already come far, there are female judges in the Dáil courts and in last years election there were six women appointed as TD. Cumann na mBan lead their own attacks against the free state and are quite helpful to the IRA but still some people are not their biggest fans which I don't see the point, I think they are brilliant. I don't believe in all their beliefs, I still support that it's an all females thing. But alas this month Cumann na mBan was declared an illegal organisation by the free state government and the catholic churches started speaking out about them.

November 30th, 1922

Dear Diary,

Three IRA members were executed today by the free state. The IRA have sworn to kill TD who voted for the public safety bill but nothing has happened yet. I have to go now as my ma needs help with dinner but I promise I will write as soon as hear news or maybe Shauna will get another letter and I will get news from it.

December 8th, 1922

Dear Diary,

The IRAs words were truthful, they shot Sean Hales dead in Ormonde Quay, Dublin yesterday, and the free state retaliated by executing Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Richard Barret who had been imprisoned since the taking of the four courts.

February 1st, 1923

Dear Diary,

I took a break from writing in hopes that the next time I wrote in here I would be able to say the war was no more but sadly I can't as things seem to have gotten even worse. The IRA have been burning buildings and homes of TDs they have also been executing their prisoners while the free state execute theirs.

Also public support has been dying out and the churches have stopped allowing IRA members to enter the church. Ma and I noticed this when we saw a few IRA members standing outside arguing with the priest.

Even De Valera wanted a cease fire but he had no control over the IRA. Things are only going to go downhill from here.

April 19th, 1923

Dear Diary,

Today Liam Lynch was killed by the free state and 100 of his men were captured. Nobody can decide if this was a good thing or not, I don't think violence can solve anything but it seems to be the only way people can communicate nowadays. I pray this war will end with no more killing but I know if this war is to ever end it will end in a bloodbath.

April 30th, 1923

Dear Diary,

Frank Aiken who had been recaptured became the new chief of staff for the IRA and today ordered a ceasefire, all IRA members are supposed to drop their weapons and stop fighting. De Valera ordered the military to stand down as well. The free state won.

When I first got this diary I thought I would write about my school life and my friends but instead I wrote about the gruesome things my country has gone through but now I feel as though the end of this war is a good way to end these diary entries.

Yours truly,

Reanna Livingstone

Reanna Livingstone

6th Class

Edenmore National School

Joining the army By Shauna Callan

1920 November 7th

My name is Connor O'Shea I live in Ireland county Monaghan with my mum and dad. I'm going to be sixteen next week. After hearing about the tragic death of Kevin Barry I've been thinking about joining the army. My mum is all against the fighting and all that's happening in Ireland right now. But my dad is the opposite of the mum and all that he talks about is the war. He never puts down the newspaper. I know he wants to join the war but he knows he can't leave me and my mum.

I know if I did go to war my mum wouldn't stop worrying about me and there would be no one to help my dad on the farm. I don't know if I agree with all the fighting or not but I know my uncle Barry does. He hosts these meetings around where I live.

I want to join the war now because especially after hearing about the death of Kevin Barry. Lots of young brave men like him are going out risking their lives every day and all I do is help my dad on a farm I know it's good to help out but my dad wants me to own the farm when he dies but I want to do something exciting with my life.

Today I spoke to my dad about joining the army the only thing he was worried about was who would help him on the farm while I was gone. But after a discussion we had he agreed and he said he will try and persuade my mum. Later that night I heard my dad and my mum arguing in the kitchen below me. My mum did not want me to go. After about ten minutes the fighting has stopped. Then I heard someone coming up the stairs. It was my dad he knocked on the door and came in sorry son your mum has made up her mind you can't go. I felt so mad after my dad had left the room I said to myself it's my life and I get to decide

Later that night after my parents had gone to bed I packed a bag and wrote a note.
Dear mother and father it's my life and I get to decide what I want my future to be. Please don't worry about me. The time you have read this note I'll be long gone. I'll be back soon. From your loving son Connor xx

After that I went over to my Uncle Barry's house. Surprisingly he was still awake sitting by his fire. I built up the courage and knocked on his front door he opened it quit quickly. Ah well isn't it my favorite nephew Connor he said. I laughed sorry to bother you at this time of the night but I wanted to know are you still recruiting soldiers. He said so are you finally looking to sign up I was beginning to think you weren't going to, come inside it's freezing out here. His house is one of the biggest houses in Monaghan. We walked inside his big hallway and then went to his kitchen. "Why are you here so late it's almost 12'oclock" he said. I told him that my parents wouldn't let me join the war. Strangely enough he didn't make me go home and said that he would help me. He said "I know a guy who might know where the closest recruiting center is". He said "follow me" and brought me to a shed at the back of his house. You take that bike and I'll take this one he said. We got on to the bikes and started to peddle.

We arrived at this guy's house at around 1.30am. "My legs are exhausted" I said. Barry walked up to the door and knocked on it. The man opened it. "Why are you here so late Barry and who is this young man with you" he said. Barry said "this is my nephew

Joining the army

By Shauna Callan

Connor O'Shea he's looking to join the army I was hoping you could help sign him up." The man looked at me and said "hello Connor it's nice to meet you I'm John would you's like to come in". Barry said yes that would be nice it's freezing out here. Barry told me to go into John living room and they went to the kitchen to talk. I'm pretty sure I fell asleep because when I woke up it was 2.10am. Shortly after Barry came in. "Come on Connor we are going now say goodbye to John." Me and Barry said goodbye. Just as I was going out the door John whispered into my ear "Be careful". Barry called me "Come on Connor". I shouted "I'm coming." Its was freezing outside and so dark but we had lights on our bikes. He didn't tell me where we were going he just told me to keep on peddling. It was around 2.40 now. My hands were so cold and my legs where tired and sore. After a while we stopped at this huge tent with loads of men outside. Barry walked up to one of them. The tall man standing in front of Barry said can I help you. Barry said yes this young man is here to sign up for the army. The tall man laughed he looks about 12 and then called out Michael. Then I saw a man walk up to us he had a grumpy look on his face. I guessed he was Michael. The man said so I'm assuming you're here to sign up. I stood up tall and cleared my throat "Yes, yes I am".

Shauna Callan,

Scoil Naoimh Éanna

Killanny

The Bombshells of Now

BOOM, BANG, WHOOSH, the bombshells of now
Every single second, CRASH, WHISH, POW

I wish I could go back, to the days of before,
The day of free will, the days prior to the war

Two sides to every story, well now you best believe
Nothin' left to do now, apart from fight and grieve,

My dad has gone away, my mum has left me too,
We used to meet beside the square, it was our rendezvous,

Never thought I'd see it, my county of white and blue
Torn and ragged soon enough its death warrant will be due.

Ireland, beautiful Ireland why turn on yourself
Please please go back, this is not your true self

When will this end, the gunshots, the noise
How long until we can go back to the joys

I long for the days when the war is over,
Maybe just maybe I might be as lucky as a four-leaf clover.

Conor Keyes
Sixth Class
SN Iorball Sionnaigh

The Life of a young girl in the Civil War:

Molly was a young girl who grew up in County Monaghan in a normal area. She was seven years old and went to school like every other child. Molly was special. She loved being outside in all kinds of weather. She always loved learning about Ireland's history and how we fought for our rights. Little did Molly know however that she was going to see history repeat itself.

Early 1919 and Molly was in school doing a boring maths lesson, when one of her friends whispered to her, "Did you hear that bang?" Molly replied, "It could be the head master hitting the table again with his wooden cane." Then a little while later, there was another bang, but this time louder, even the teacher Mr. Murphy remarked on it. He said it was probably a farmer shooting crows nearby. Later on, the children went for lunch. They were playing a friendly game of football when they seen many men gather with guns and weapons. Suddenly, the head master called them inside the school to safety, until the men passed. The group of men passed by firing shots up into the air. The children in the classrooms stayed down low and hidden from view in case of getting hit by bullets.

Molly left school that afternoon thinking about the men with the guns and where they were going or what they were going to do. To get to Molly's house you had to cross many fields. When she got home her mother was boiling some spuds on the cooker. Molly told her mother what had happened at school and said she was worried. Her mother looked scared and worried that day, so Molly asked where her father was and Molly's mother stuttered a little and answered that he had gone to town to do a job. Molly doubted her mother's answer. Something was going on that Molly didn't know about. She went to her nanny Kathleen's house for a mug of tea and a chat. Her nanny was a little unsettled too. Molly asked her, "Are you ok nanny, you look worried?" Kathleen answered quietly that of course everything is grand. Molly wasn't satisfied with her answer. She continued on with the conversation, asking "where is granda this evening?" Quickly she answered, "In town doing a job." Same old answer as her mother thought Molly. Molly went home that evening and her father had still not returned home, so she went to bed to think over the day and soon she fell fast asleep.

Early the next morning Molly got up to a very quiet house. She noticed her father wasn't there as normal. She went downstairs and ate her breakfast. She had her school uniform on when her mother said to her that today she would be staying at home to help around the house, which was strange because Molly's parents were very strict on attending school. Molly did the jobs that her mother sent her to do. Then she heard her neighbours Mary and John having a very serious conversation about the men with the guns and weapons Molly had seen at school the previous day. She heard that it was all over Ireland and it was going to be serious too. The neighbours went on to talk about Molly's father. The wind was blowing strong so Molly didn't hear the full conversation, but what she heard was enough to put the pieces together. Her father was part of a War.

Molly did more research on the war and what it was all about. Why was Ireland fighting? Well, she found out that Ireland was fighting over what was known as the Anglo Irish Treaty. This was an agreement between Ireland and Britain. The agreement was that twenty six out of the thirty two counties in Ireland would be considered as the Irish Free State, but the other six counties would remain under British rule. This caused great conflict between some Irish leaders, those who were prepared to accept the deal to end the violence of the War of Independence and those who refused to accept the terms of the Treaty. Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith signed the Treaty in Britain.

Frightened, scared and confused, Molly went to her nearby chapel to say a prayer that the conflict would end soon and that her father would come home safe. Unfortunately, this was not to be...

Leah McCarron
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