

# VOICES OF '74 – CONCLUSION

## TEACHER OVERVIEW:

This section looks at how the UWC strike has been remembered, 50 years on. This final set of testimonies brings together concluding thoughts on how the interviewees would summarise their recollections and understanding of the 1974 UWC strike. This has created a diversity of responses for pupils to study in terms of the successes and failures of the UWC strike and the experiences of the people of Northern Ireland during the strike.

## KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS:

- What was the significance of the UWC strike?
- How did the people of Northern Ireland experience the strike?

## PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

- Students should have knowledge of key events during the period including Internment, Bloody Sunday, Bloody Friday, introduction of Direct rule, the collapse of power sharing through the UWC strike and the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the key events of the UWC strike.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

1. recognise the significance of the UWC strike in the context of events from 1971-85 and conclude as to which event was most significant
2. Using source material/ oral history account, summarise the significance of the UWC strike in one sentence
3. Debate key perspectives of the UWC strike
4. Complete a class poll on the success of the strike
5. Complete a wheel of consequence on the positive/negative outcomes of the strike
6. Describe how Unionists and Nationalists experienced the strike
7. Complete a written question on how reliable/useful a source is in the context of the UWC strike

# CONTENT



Students should have access to both the oral and written testimonies from [Conclusion: Part 1](#) and [Conclusion: Part 2](#).

Depending on the activity pupils may watch a range of material or an individual account.

Pupils may complete all or a selection of the activities below:

1. Walking debate on the UWC as one of the most important moments in the politics of Northern Ireland.
2. Using an individual account pupils will complete a one sentence summary task.
3. Students may undertake a class debate using the following extracts from accounts:
  - 'I desperately think that we should be dealing with the legacy of the past to allow our future generations move forward.'
  - 'It's a changed world. The levers that you would pull in those days are not there anymore.'
  - 'I think it's very important because it's about going forward. You have to know where you come from. And ... I think when people don't understand all of that, they tend to ... lose human rights in a way.'
4. Using an individual account - each student/ pair of students should take/ listen to one source. Use the sources below to create a word cloud/ word wall of the key sentiments felt by those who experienced the UWC strike.
5. Students may undertake a class debate using the following extracts from accounts:
  - '74 made it quite clear to me that Northern Ireland probably is a political entity destined to fail.' Do you agree?
  - The Ulster Workers' Council strike was a devastating abuse of power, held government to ransom, intimidated and frightened people, and didn't offer any solution for the future. Do you agree?
6. Class poll using white boards and evidence from the sources – was the UWC a success or a failure? (range of sources to be used at teacher discretion).
7. Wheel of consequence on the outcome of the strike (range of sources to be used at teacher discretion).
8. Thought bubble worksheet on how Nationalists and Unionists experienced the strike (range of sources to be used at teacher discretion).
9. GCSE style source questions using sources by Mervyn Gibson and Jim Dillon.

# KEY QUESTION 1: WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UWC STRIKE?



Students should watch [Conclusion: Part 1](#) and undertake the activities below.

Over fifty years on from Sunningdale and the seismic events of the UWC strike of 1974 what sort of resonance remains in the collective memory? Is there any overlap with contemporary debates? Or does the 1974 turning point simply go to show just how much the context in Northern Ireland has changed?

## ACTIVITY 1: WALKING DEBATE ON THE UWC AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENTS IN THE POLITICS OF NORTHERN IRELAND

### Paul Arthur

I think there's several seminal moments in the politics of Northern Ireland over the past half century, internment was one, Bloody Sunday and Bloody Friday, the introduction of direct rule, the collapse of power-sharing, through the Ulster Workers Council strike [...] The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 85, I think, was hugely important. And out of that the lead into talks about talks, culminating in the ceasefires in 1994 and then the agreement to seven 1998.

Students should:

- Be encouraged to express individual viewpoints on chosen topic(s)
- Interact with others and share their experiences to reinforce/change their viewpoints
- Listen actively and speak with confidence about their viewpoints

Students research one event each:

- Internment
- Bloody Sunday
- Bloody Friday
- Introduction of Direct Rule
- The collapse of power-sharing through the UWC strike
- The Anglo-Irish Agreement

**Walking debate:** the collapse of power-sharing through the Ulster Workers' Council strike was the most important moment in the politics in Northern Ireland over the past half century. Do you agree?

Each student will put forward the argument for their key event and then the class will decide (Agree, Disagree and Not Sure) and move to the sign that corresponds with their view. Students are then called upon to explain/justify their position.

## ACTIVITY 2: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UWC STRIKE - ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY TASK

- Students are each given a source from *Conclusion: Part 1* – from it they must take what they think is the most important message and summarize it in one line
- The teacher will collate the ideas on the board.
- Think, Pair, Share activity: Students must now choose what they think is the description that for them most sums up the significance of the UWC strike - pair up to discuss their thoughts, then share their insights with the larger group.

### Derek Moore

I think it's an important reference point because it shows that the power of people, if they can work together, you know, I'm not saying that it should be used for that sort of thing. But I'm saying if everyone in Northern Ireland took the attitude that the people took and that there only on one side. But you know, if you work together to do something, then you can do it, you can influence government, you can influence policy, and you do have power.

### Bronagh Hinds

I do think it is a reference point, and I hope the reference is that they learned the lesson that this doesn't work rather than does work. You get a short-term gain, but you don't get any long-term achievement.

### Bernadette McAliskey

There was a lesson there for them. I think that a that fortnight is glossed over in Unionist history and it would be interesting to understand why, why it is not counted as important, why nobody wants to talk about it. And I think the answer to that is based in what you know, when it was pulled apart, where its component parts went.

### Chris McGimpsey

Am, I think it's almost forgotten about, believe it or not, having said all the things and indicated, the major support it had, never even mentioned. I don't think anybody thinks about it. It's kind of a, it's ancient history. You know there's been there's been too, so many defeat after defeat after defeat piled on the Unionists' heads that nobody can get round to remembering a victory 40 years ago, was it, what was it 50 years ago. And so, so the short answer to that is no, I don't think it plays a thing now at all, and I don't think it has, for a long time it was used as a as a stick to beat Unionism by Nationalism. I don't think they even do that anymore

### Kathy Wolf

Yeah, I'm not saying it's a repeat in any sense. But no, but does resonate(you). Yeah. I think its the same I think we're still at the pat on the head, you know, and because that if I look at one side of the community and I see where they went out the likes of Sinn Féin went out into different centres and talked about what was happening and whatever. That didn't happen. I have yet to hear of any of the DUP or the UUP, that actually came out into centres and said, here's what it is. And even with the protocol, you know, we have ran sessions on the protocol to try and get people to understand we've just finished one. There were its a breakdown of the Windsor agreement that people have put into shorter form so that we can understand it better.

### Nelson McCausland

It's a changed world. The levers that you would pull in those days are not there anymore. The danger sometimes I think of looking back at the past and the danger for Unionism of looking at the 1912 period and thinking, oh we need that again. So yeah, there is undoubtedly, I know we're coming up to the 50th anniversary and there'll be a lot of discussion around it, but I don't think as yet there has been any reflection within Unionism on lessons to be learned.

### Jim Dillon

Well, the sad thing about it was most of the people that were really involved and remember 74 are they're dying out and the younger ones. I mean, my grandchildren, for example, will look at me as though there is horns growing out of my head.

### William Mitchell

I think people like those that are, you know, belligerent Unionists would wish the UWC again, now, I think they would wish they would be able to repeat what Paisley and Craig and others were able to influence then, but are actually never going to so in that respect we're never going to have another UWC, I don't believe. But I think some people would definitely wish that one way of addressing the protocol would be to do what loyalists did in 74, in opposition of Sunningdale [...] I don't know anyone that wants to go back to them days. I don't know of anyone given the deprivation we all live in or the hardship we're experiencing, would want to visit the UWC agenda on anybody in our communities these days.

### Helen Crickard

I think it's very important because it's about going forward. You have to know where you come from. And and I think when people don't understand all of that, they tend to we can you can lose human rights in a way. You know, you can think, oh sure, that's not that important. That's not that important. Those things are important every life is value is valuable and should be nurtured and treated really well. So if you start if you start ignoring what happened in the past, you could very easily find yourself there again...

### Jim Roddy

I desperately want to see people respecting people's memory of the past and not dictating what their memory should be or how they should feel. But I desperately think that we should be dealing with the legacy of the past to allow our future generations to move forward. Having acknowledged the hurt that we've all that we've all imposed on others, either by thought or deed and and and and I think we couldn't have done that in 74.

### Henry Patterson

I think in, I think, it's essentially remembered as a, certainly within Nationalist Northern Ireland as a coup, as a sort of coup d'état as semi-fascist where once again you using - shows its inability to compromise, and it's incapacity to reform. [...] There is a defeatist paranoid element that will read, read '74 and would use '74 as a, but I mean I think it's fundamentally wrong because first of all taking into account what happened in Omagh. Clearly the threat of violence hasn't gone away, but clearly the bulk of Republicanism is committed to, to peaceful, peaceful means. So we're in a totally different situation from that point of view.

## EXTENDING WRITING ACTIVITY: WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UWC STRIKE? EXTENSION ACTIVITY: KEY AREAS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION / DEBATE

- 'I desperately think that we should be dealing with the legacy of the past to allow our future generations move forward'
- 'It's a changed world. The levers that you would pull in those days are not there anymore.'
- 'I think it's very important because it's about going forward. You have to know where you come from. And ... I think when people don't understand all of that, they tend to ... lose human rights in a way'

## KEY QUESTION 2: HOW DID THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND EXPERIENCE THE UWC STRIKE?

Students should watch [Conclusion: Part 2](#) and undertake the activities below.

This final set of testimonies brings together our interviewees' concluding thoughts on how they would summarise their recollections and understanding of the 1974 UWC strike. Each was given 30 seconds, and the diversity of responses underscores the multi-perspectivity that characterises the memories of this crucial period...and perhaps the conflict more generally.

### ACTIVITY 1:

Each student/ pair of students should take/ listen to one source each from [Conclusion: Part 2](#). Use the sources below to create a word cloud/ word wall of the key sentiments felt by those who experienced the UWC strike. Please note that some of the extracts below are taken from the extended versions available online ([Conclusion ii](#)).

#### Don Anderson

'74 made it quite clear to me that Northern Ireland probably is a political entity destined to fail. The physical destruction, and I mentioned seeing street burning from one end to another, that actually is etched on my memory as, in microcosm, what was actually happening to the whole of Northern Ireland. And I haven't departed from that view. '74 was very important, but the lessons of it have yet to be learned more widely, and that's a job for you historians.

#### Paul Arthur

1974 induced in me a huge degree of despair which was reinforced by events over the next four or five years, but also raised the whole question of resilience that we've gone through this, we're coming out of it. The only way forward is through a constitutional solution. So that's where we need to set our minds. Violence does not work.

#### Paul Bew

I was aware of the ambiguities of the Council of Ireland idea the territorial claim not been properly dealt with by the Irish government. Even so, it was a great disappointment to me when it fell.

#### Boyd Black

I think it was personally a developmental experience for me in that I did feel I was understanding politics in a very acute way in a very acute situation to an extent. And, and having it validated, having my understanding validated by the way things worked, probably to a greater extent. What age was I at the time 29 or something like that. Yeah, that's maybe what it meant to me. It probably gave me confidence that, you know, I had a grasp of politics that wasn't off the wall completely.

#### Helen Crickard

Well, for me, it was a it was a period of fear, constant fear. And exclusion. That's how it felt and that's how it was. And I think it was a it was a it was like a dog pissing in the street you know, letting them know we're in charge and we're going to continue to be in charge and yeah.

#### Anne Devlin

Oh well I, it was a turning point for me because it meant that I always knew that I was leaving.

### Jim Dillon

The Ulster Worker's strike was a complete success. It was well organised over a period of time, not rushed, brought about, and it was obviously coordinated. And what wasn't coordinated fell into place beautifully. I think perhaps there was a lot of good luck, good fortune, and everybody worked together because they thought their country's life blood was at stake and out of that we won at that time.

### Jim Gibney

Well, I think it was I think in summing up the strike, it was for us on the inside. It was a fearful, a fearful time full of trepidation. I also think it was a significant political defeat for Unionists and loyalists from, from the British government's point of view. I think from that point onwards they decide, no, this is it, we're going to influence much more directly the, the way forward because Unionists can't be trusted. Unionists cannot be allowed untrammelled political power the way they the power that they had during the Unionist government days. That power had to be stripped from them. And I think 74 is one of those moments for the British as well as everybody else. And I think they realised no politically speaking Unionist power, untrammelled power. They helped to bring it to an end.

### Mervyn Gibson

I think it showed to me that Unionism, if it works together, can achieve something. It had one aim and that was to bring down the Executive and stop the council of Ireland and it achieved that aim by everybody having the same purpose. Everybody cooperating together and I believe if we do that again then we will face any threat that comes our way.

### Carmel Hanna

So we moved to a real house and we had a baby. And it was just sort of a different life starting then, you know, because it's so different to being living in the North or Northern Ireland then, you know, we came away from chaos and chaos was still there, really.

### Eamon Hanna

I think and my only echo of it was talking to people who were of the Unionist persuasion.

Was, I, I suppose I hadn't realised how somebody used the word silent, silent hatred and I hadn't realised how many of them had really not bought into this idea that there had to be equality and that disappointed me and friends, you know, that they just and maybe they had maybe there had been their minds had been affected by the violence of the, of the Provos and others, but they just didn't want to know about dealing with it from a position of equality. Obviously, the people say in Alliance who are generally good guys in these things, they had bought into that and they were, they were predominantly Unionist, but the majority of the Unionist population just didn't want to know. You know, and that disappointed me. And I think the lesson has to be learned by all of us, you know, we have to make compromises.

### Bronagh Hinds

The Ulster Workers' Council strike was a devastating abuse of power, held government to ransom, intimidated and frightened people, and didn't offer any solution for the future.

### Erskine Holmes

Well, that's really a bit difficult because that that strike led me into organising a seminar for some of the paramilitary leaders in the UVF, in particular at Scottish Churches, House in Dunblane and seeking to cater for their interest in developing a political role as opposed to a military role. And I also was able to get the measure of some of the Ulster Worker Councils strike people who were there, the following week, one of whom was Jim Smith, who ended up working for a housing association. He was the chief Executive of Woodvale and Shankill Housing Association, was involved in the voluntary housing movement. Um, the, the work that I did for those two weeks confirmed to me that you should just talk to everybody and work with everybody, regardless of what your own views are. You know, seek to, seek to find an accommodation no matter what. And I've already explained that one person that I was talking to there may well have been involved and one of the most horrific bombings of the, the troubles. Should I have been talking with them? Of course I should have been talking with him. Had I known what he was involved in, what would I would have said? I don't know.

### Geraldine Kane

It confirmed at that point where the power was, even though we looked like we were, as member of the Catholic community, although I'm not a very good Catholic, but I was a member of the Catholic community, it completely confirmed that there really was no give whatsoever.

### Bernadette McAliskey

'74 workers' strike for me demonstrated the depth of the sectarianisation of the labour force inside and without challenge by the trade union, the amount of weapons held within the Protestant community legally, Vanguard showed that as well. And the difference between the capacity of the loyalist working class as a class at that time from, from the interests of the, of the Unionist political classes and, and it lost that and it lost that.

### Nelson McCausland

It was the coming together of the Unionist community in a way that we hadn't seen for quite a long time. And it was a victory, but it was a victory that in some ways was wasted.

## AREAS FOR CLASS DEBATE: QUOTES TAKEN FROM SOURCES:

- '74 made it quite clear to me that Northern Ireland probably is a political entity destined to fail.' Do you agree?
- The Ulster Workers' Council strike was a devastating abuse of power, held government to ransom, intimidated and frightened people, and didn't offer any solution for the future. Do you agree?



## ACTIVITY 2: TAKE A CLASS POLL USING WHITE BOARDS ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUE:

- 'The Ulster workers' council strike was a success.'
- Students must qualify their position

### USE THE INFORMATION FROM THE SOURCES TO COMPLETE THE TABLE BELOW:

The UWC strike was a success	The UWC strike was a failure

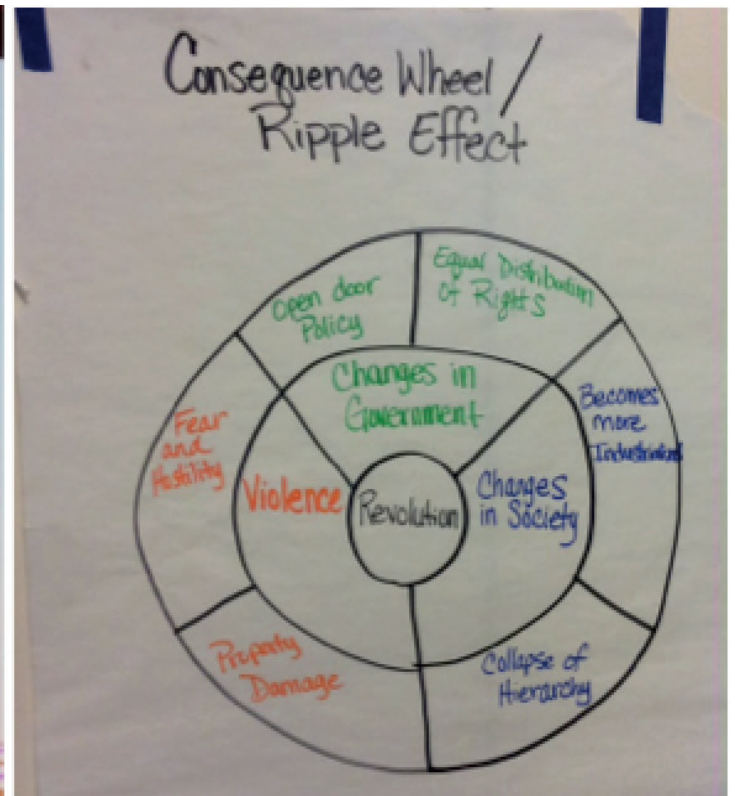
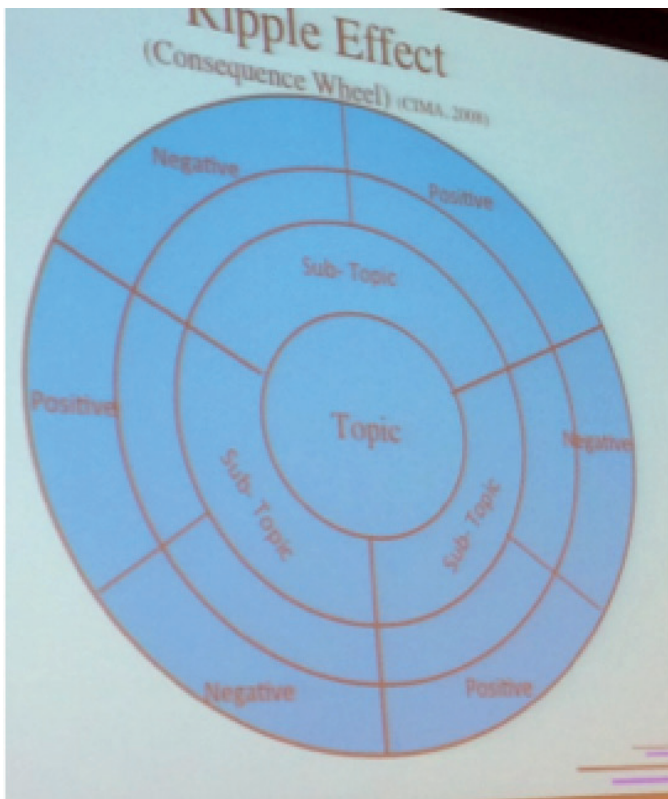
- Students should retake the poll after completing the table
- If any have changed their mind, they should explain why their position has changed/ if not then why not

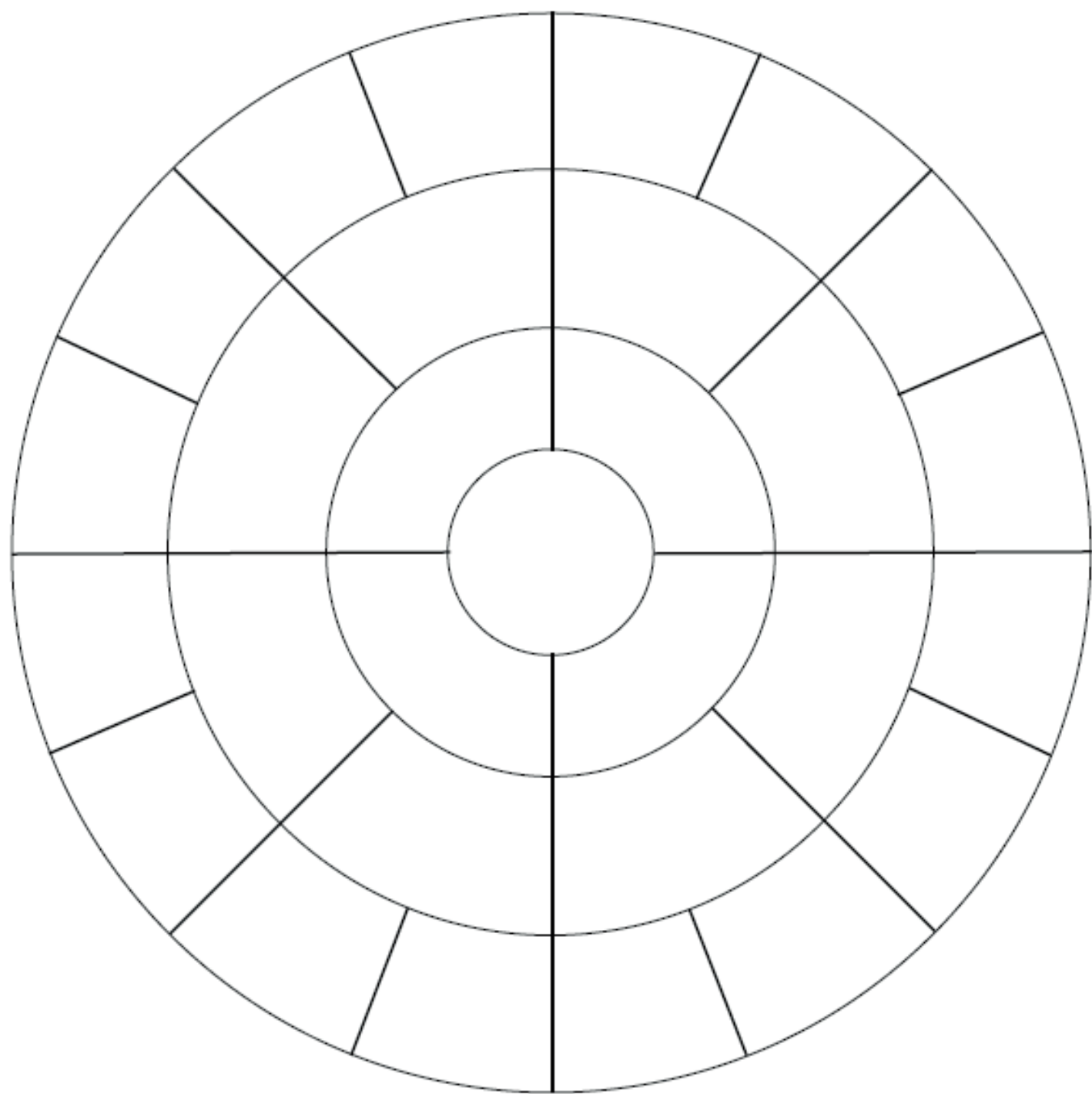
## ACTIVITY 3: CONSEQUENCE WHEEL:

Use the sources to complete the consequence wheel on the experiences of the UWC strike

- Put the topic in the middle; experiences of UWC strike.
- Add the consequences in the first ring.
- Add the details, both positive and negative in the next ring.

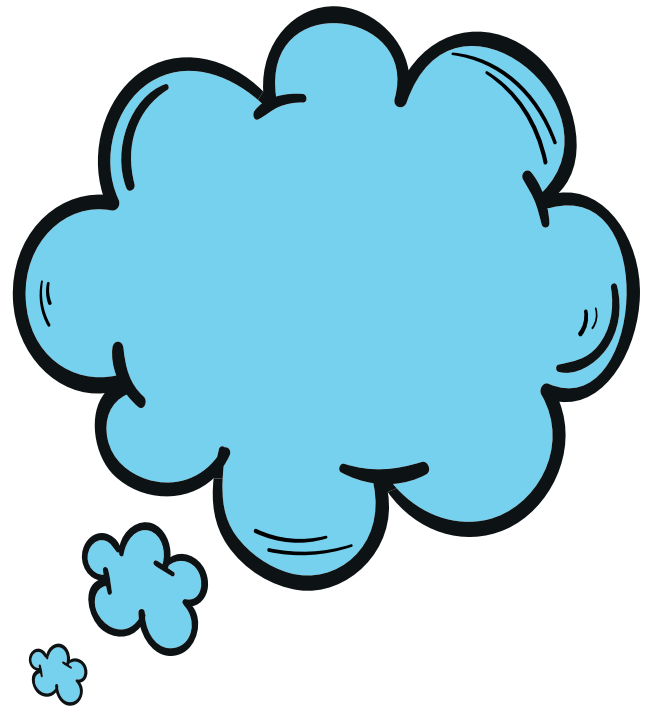
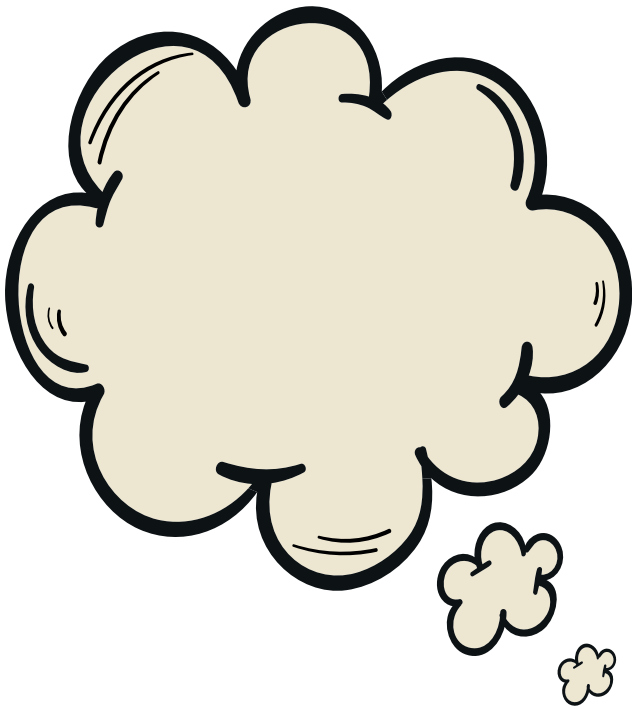
See example below:



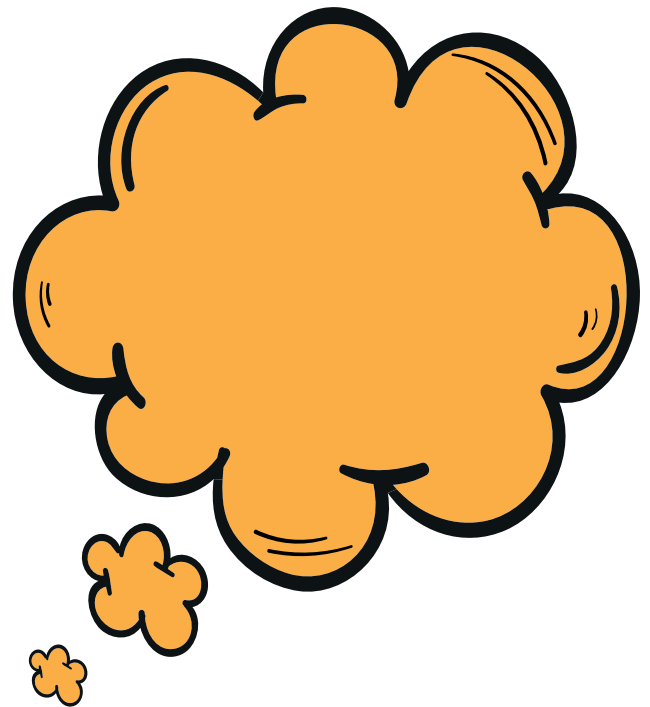
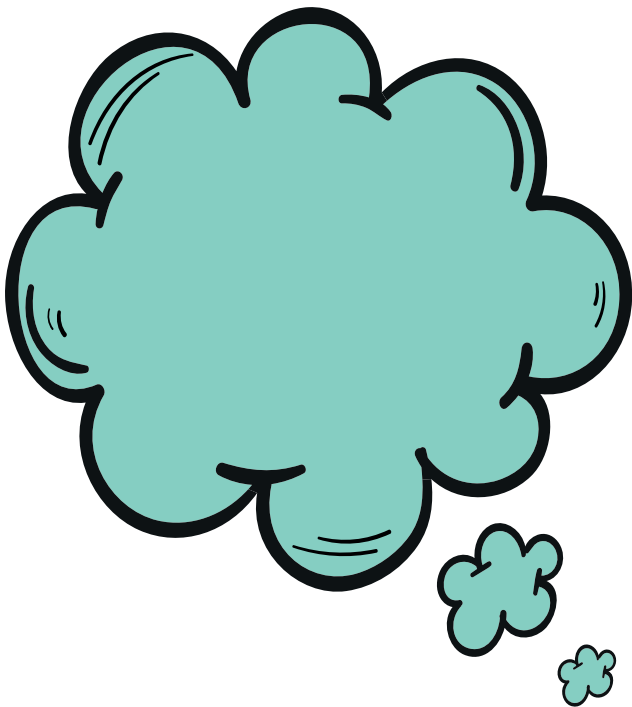


## ACTIVITY 4 – COMPARING NATIONALIST/UNIONIST EXPERIENCES

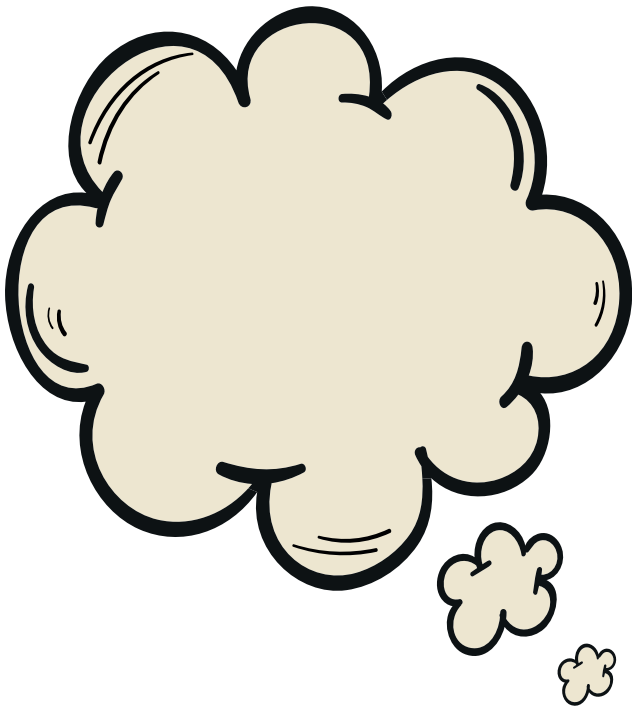
Use the evidence in the sources to complete the activity below



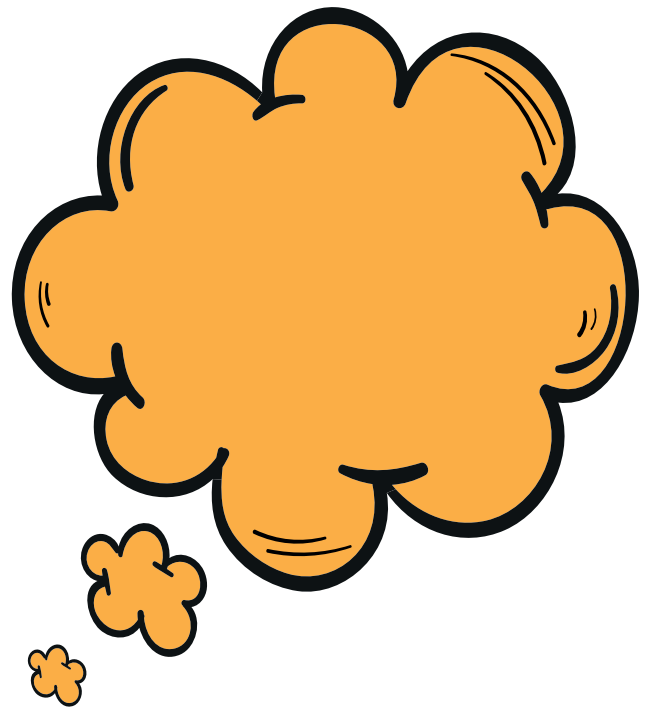
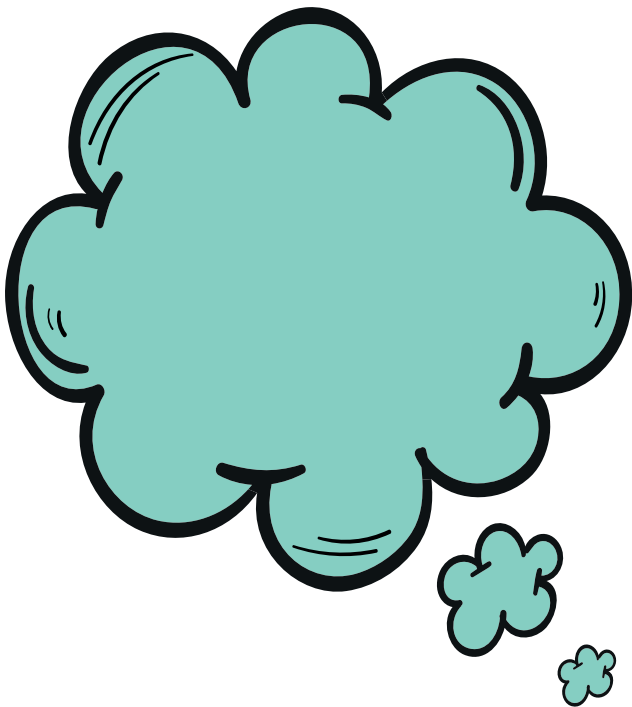
**HOW DID NATIONALISTS EXPERIENCE  
THE UWC STRIKES**



Use the evidence in the sources to complete the activity below



**HOW DID UNIONISTS EXPERIENCE  
THE UWC STRIKES**



# ACTIVITY 5: SOURCE TASK

Study the sources below and answer the questions that follow.

## Mervyn Gibson

I think it showed to me that Unionism, if it works together, can achieve something. It had one aim and that was to bring down the Executive and stop the council of Ireland and it achieved that aim by everybody having the same purpose. Everybody cooperating together and I believe if we do that again then we will face any threat that comes our way.

Using the testimony above and your contextual knowledge, give two reasons that explain what the aims of the UWC strike were

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[2]

## Jim Dillon

The Ulster Worker's strike was a complete success. It was well organised over a period of time, not rushed, brought about, and it was obviously coordinated. And what wasn't coordinated fell into place beautifully. I think perhaps there was a lot of good luck, good fortune, and everybody worked together because they thought their country's life blood was at stake and out of that we won at that time.



VOICES OF '74



Nottingham Trent University

