

VOICES OF '74 – CONSEQUENCES

TEACHER OVERVIEW

The UWC strike brought down the Executive and the Sunningdale experiment failed in its attempt to find a solution to the increasingly devastating Northern Ireland problem. There is much debate as to whether the collapse of Sunningdale was a victory for Unionism, a 'pyrrhic victory,' or whether there was nothing good that came from Sunningdale's demise. It was a missed opportunity.

These activities use the testimonies to evaluate success and failure, offer explanations for the downfall of the Executive and utilise multiple perspectives to inform group work that aims to answer the inquiry questions, was Sunningdale a missed opportunity, or was the Good Friday Agreement, 'Sunningdale for slow learners?' There is a source activity and advice on answering reliability and usefulness questions.

KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- Was the UWC Strike and the fall of Sunningdale a victory for Unionism?
- Why did Sunningdale fail?
- Was Sunningdale a lost or a missed or lost opportunity?
- Could Sunningdale have worked? What is meant by the idea that 'The Good Friday Agreement was Sunningdale for Slow Learners'?


PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

- Students will have completed the sections on Sunningdale and the impact of the UWC strike and should be able to answer some open inquiry questions from this basis.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students should be able to discuss the UWC strike and the failure of Sunningdale in terms of Success and Failure.
2. Students should independently assess the different opinions on the UWC strike and the failure of Sunningdale through the investigation of multiple perspectives.
3. Students should compare different perspectives and be given the opportunity to discuss reliability and usefulness when dealing with multiple perspectives.

CONTENT

 Video Clips: [Consequences: Part 1](#) and [Consequences: Part 2](#)

Students are encouraged to watch each of the videos in their entirety, and this is noted in the resource.

WAS THE UWC STRIKE AND THE FALL OF SUNNINGDALE A SUCCESS OR A VICTORY FOR UNIONISM?

The UWC strike brought down the Executive and the Sunningdale experiment failed in its attempt to find a solution to the increasingly devastating Northern Ireland problem. As the testimonies below demonstrate, much debate remains as to the consequences of this collapse, how it was perceived within the Nationalist community, and whether it should be considered as a victory for Unionism.

BY THE END OF THESE ACTIVITIES:

1. Students should be able to discuss the UWC strike and the failure of Sunningdale in terms of Success and Failure.
2. Students should independently assess the different opinions on the UWC strike and the failure of Sunningdale through the investigation of multiple perspectives.
3. Students should compare different perspectives and be given the opportunity to discuss reliability and usefulness when dealing with multiple perspectives.


The UWC strike brought down the Executive and the Sunningdale experiment failed.

SUNNINGDALE MEANT:

- A Power-Sharing Executive in Northern Ireland – the Power-Sharing Executive included members from the UUP, the SDLP and the Alliance Party.
- A Council of Ireland – Seven Members from the Power-Sharing Executive and Seven Members from the Irish Government.

The UWC strike brought down the Executive and the Sunningdale experiment failed.

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

- Why did some of those who opposed Sunningdale dislike the power-sharing?
 - Why did some of those who opposed Sunningdale dislike the Council of Ireland?
 - Was the opposition that was created against Sunningdale mostly against power-sharing or the Council of Ireland?
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ACTIVITIES 1 – VICTORY FOR UNIONISM?

Students watch/ read the following extracts from *Consequences: Part 1* on Brian Faulkner.

Erskine Holmes

No, no, no. It was a, um, it was a disaster and, and the, the I mean, not enough is made of the breadth of the mind of Brian Faulkner, I came to know Brian Faulkner quite well and I was surprised at how radical he had become, you know. So I think they, they, they, they lost they lost a leader there when they lost Brian Faulkner...

Discussion Point:

Why does the source describe Brian Faulkner as radical? What does the source mean by 'they lost a leader when they lost Brian Faulkner'? Is this a Nationalist viewpoint or a Unionist viewpoint? Is this a reliable assessment of Brian Faulkner?

Inquiry Question: **Was the UWC Strike and the fall of Sunningdale a success or a victory for Unionism?**

Students watch *Consequences: Part 1* then take the extracts below and highlight in two colours where it claims that it was a 'victory' for Unionism and where it claims that it was a 'failure' for Unionism. What other words are used to describe it? Students work in pairs in this task.

Carmel Hanna

I probably think it was a failure, but I at that time it just seemed to me that where are we going in Northern Ireland, you know that. And I still felt the only hope was somebody who had a plan. And I did think the SDLP probably were the only people who were trying to envisage a Northern Ireland, you know, to try to include everybody, to keep it as open and balanced and looking at the relationships. And I think that was something that was a threat to Unionists too.

Don Anderson

My view is that it was the high watermark of Unionism and everything from that point on has been a retreat. All of the things, every single one of them that those strikers fought for has been lost and probably irretrievably lost.

Bernadette McAliskey

I think there were maybe people within the Loyalist Association of Workers who got their fingers burnt and had not intended to get into bed with armed people intimidating other workers and so they lost that. They lost that to an extent as well. Yeah. But it strengthened it strengthened the loyalist paramilitaries.

Chris McGimpsey

Well, I think in a way it was a victory because, I mean, I think the Protestant Community needed a victory. And I think they had I mean, they had set up a goal they indicated how they wished to achieve that goal. They realised, they indicated what they felt would come after, out of that goal. And I mean, they achieved the goal. So, I mean, it was a victory, a victory at the time, and I think there would have been, there was a euphoria that carried on for two, or for a few years. But what has happened since we can look back now and say, well, you know, maybe we should have should have gone with Sunningdale, but nobody saw the value of Sunningdale. Everybody saw a vehicle trundling inexorably towards a United Ireland. And the spongers made up their mind they weren't going to go with it.

Douglas McIlldoon

No, I think, I thought I think it made union, Unionism, had the opportunity when it was in power to be magnanimous, to co-opt people into its project. The more they, they resisted doing that the less power they had, the less of a project they had to co-opt people into. They don't have any kind of project to co-opt anybody into now. No I think the Unionism, it wasn't a victory for Unionism. It was part of a long-term defeat for Unionism.

Boyd Black

Well, at the time it seemed to be a yeah, it probably did seem to be a in that It had seen off a Council of Ireland and I suppose that was seen as a, of, was perceived as a victory. I mean it would have been a what was it a Council of Ireland or what could it have ever have been. So was it a, was it a big victory? It probably was perceived as a victory for Unionism and Nationalism probably perceived it as a defeat, although the Provos would have probably thought it was a victory.

Tony McMullan

I think the hard liners probably still perceive it as a victory because they were able to get rid of the Council of Ireland and they were able to to stop power-sharing happening for another 30 years.

Students come up with two short lists and feed back to the rest of the class.

Evidence for Failure for Unionists	Evidence for Success for Unionists

The teacher should then lead a class discussion on these findings: Was the fall of Sunningdale a failure or a success for Unionism? Students should be given one minute to give a short 'gut instinct' reply to the inquiry. The teacher goes around the room and quickly gets as many student perspectives as possible.

ACTIVITIES 2 – THE PROBLEM OF VICTORY VERSUS FAILURE



Students should read the following short perspective from *Consequences: Part 1*.

Paul Bew

So no, it's not a victory at all. No, not absolutely not at all. But almost everything on one side or [...] the other thought was a victory throughout the entire troubles wasn't.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why does the source note 'But almost everything on one side or the other thought was a victory throughout the entire Troubles?'
- Why is it difficult for a historian to separate investigations of the past into simple thematic approaches such as 'Victory versus Failure?'
- Suggest other ways that a historian could use to look at a topic like this.

ACTIVITIES 3 – 'NOTHING GOOD CAME OF IT.'



Students should read the following perspective from *Consequences: Part 1*. Please note that some of the extracts below are taken from the extended versions available online (*Consequences i*).

Mike Nesbitt

But clearly it meant that we weren't going to have a devolved government for a very, very long time. It meant that the nascent sense of trust-building that attended, that that Executive for its short life was destroyed and not backwards. So nothing good, nothing good came of it. Further distrust, Nationalists looking at Unionism and saying, You're just not prepared to give us anything, Unionism perhaps thinking, well, all we have to do is show our muscles again and everything will be all right, but it won't be all right because this is contested territory. [...] And what happened in 74 with the collapse of the Executive and of Sunningdale was basically, to my mind, a reminder to the Nationalist people that [...] we're not budging on this.

Using the Perspective above, give two to three reasons why the fall of Sunningdale was described as extremely negative for Northern Ireland. Could this be described as a Nationalist or Unionist viewpoint? Is this a useful interpretation for a historian investigating the consequences of the fall of Sunningdale?

1.

2.

3.

Nationalist or Unionist viewpoint? Explain your choice. _____

ACTIVITIES 4 - WHY DID SUNNINGDALE FAIL?



Students should watch [Consequences: Part 2](#) and take down words that stand out and give their initial reflections on what they hear – identifying perspectives and conflicts in the recording.

'SUNNINGDALE COULD HAVE WORKED – WITHOUT THE IRELAND BIT.'

Mervyn Gibson

Sunningdale failed because the Unionist community didn't want a Council of Ireland, it was very simple, the vast majority didn't want to be a part of Ireland because they were they still had a legal territory claim over Northern Ireland, Articles two and three. I think it was, they they sort of still had this aspiration in their constitution that they controlled the whole island of Ireland. The IRA were at a very mounted a very severe and nasty campaign against the Unionist committee, against all the community, but particularly the security forces which were mainly Unionist, etc.. You know, we were pretty close to 72 when so many people were killed in the troubles, so the timing wasn't right? Yes. For those politicians, they thought it was, you know, grand, but they needed to bring their community with them. [...] And certainly they weren't bringing the Unionist committee with them.

Jim Dillon

I have never really figured it out, to be honest with you. The Ulster Workers Strike had vast majority support behind it. Sunningdale failed, because I don't think there was enough PR done for Sunningdale. I don't think it was sold well to the people, if it had been explained to them properly and sold it might have succeeded. Sunningdale could have worked without the Ireland bit and that that that could have been that could have been avoided being put in or better. That might have been the best option but it could have been taken out but then the other side might not have accepted it then.

Using the above perspectives, list the reasons mentioned on why Sunningdale failed.

Sunningdale failed because –

After doing this, students should consider if 'Sunningdale would have worked without the Ireland bit.'

Students should think in terms of –

- Unionists who supported Sunningdale
- Unionists who opposed Sunningdale
- Nationalists
- Republicans
- Loyalists
- British and Irish Governments

OPEN INQUIRY

– WAS SUNNINGDALE A LOST OR A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

Students could be placed into groups of 4-5 for this activity.

Students are given a position:

- Sunningdale was a lost opportunity.
- Sunningdale was never going to work.
- Northern Ireland was not ready for an agreement like Sunningdale in 1974.

Student groups read the evidence together and try to identify perspectives as they read: Unionist – Nationalist – Republican. Students should highlight a comment or sentence that influenced their decision. They can use the suggested grid.

Students prepare evidence bullet points for their position and feed these back to the class after ten to 15 Minutes.

This could be recorded on Flip Chart Paper – the three positions could then be stuck up at a different part of the room.

After student feedback, there should be a short discussion on the following discussion points:


- Who was more likely to see Sunningdale as a lost opportunity? (Unionist/Nationalist/Republican) Why did they say this?
- Who was more likely to say that Sunningdale would never work? (Unionist/Nationalist/Republican) Why did they say this?
- Who was more likely to say that Northern Ireland was not ready for an agreement like Sunningdale in 1974? (Unionist/Nationalist/Republican).

The three flip chart pages could be stuck up in the room. Students could then be asked to walk to the position that they believe is the most historically correct. The teacher could then engage in a discussion as to why the students picked this position and what is their evidence for what they have chosen?

Perspective	Sources	Phrases and Comments that helped me make my decision.
<i>Unionist Perspective</i>		
<i>Nationalist Perspective</i>		

<i>Republican Perspective</i>		
<i>None of the above</i>		

ACTIVITIES 5 – WAS IT A LOST OPPORTUNITY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND?

 Students should consider [Consequences: Part 2](#) and the extracts below. Please note that some of the extracts below are taken from the extended versions available online ([Consequences ii](#)).

Jim Roddy

I think as I said before, if, if you're going to find agreement, you have to have willing partners. I don't think people were willing at that stage to do the agreement. I think people were yearning to get agreement and people were yearning to get an agreement that would end violence and take us to a better place. But were the people ready for that?

And I think that's, that's probably, you know, my views on where we, where we were at then. It Would it have been great to have had that agreement then ringfenced and we wouldn't have had the further years of violence? Absolutely.

Chris McGimpsey

I think it was, I personally feel, although I wouldn't have been supportive at the time, but I realised fairly early on that if we had gone with it, I think that it could have been it could have been the end, it's a lost opportunity. Who knows how it would have ended. But I think was a major lost opportunity.

Danny Morrison

No. Missed opportunity, the continuation of British military during Sunningdale, they continued to blow up bridges and roads, isolating border communities, funnelling all human traffic through 12 major checkpoints, around a 360 mile border, no, and remember we were excluded. Sinn Féin was a proscribed organisation. The SDLP were conceding military matters to them cross-border the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, for example.

Eamon Hanna

A historic missed opportunity, you know, and I, I've had words with Danny Morrison about this. You know, he said, you know, Good Friday agreement, you know, was far superior. And I mean, I said, but there were 1300 people killed by you in the period '74 to '98, you know, you know, and for what, you know. And, but again, people aren't keen to talk about it. But it was just so missed.

Jim Roddy

There's lots of missed opportunities. Politically Sunningdale would be a missed opportunity, absolutely but, but again, a missed opportunity for whom. The politicians or the people? And if the people weren't ready for it then it really wasn't a missed opportunity because there was no opportunity if the people weren't ready for it. That might seem very cold. It's not meant to and it's not in any way disparaging against those politicians who, who had manoeuvred this, this agreement or this opportunity. But it's only an opportunity if you have the people with you. If you don't have the people with you, then, then it's not really an opportunity. The secret for me of Good Friday was a referendum. Because it brought the people and it changed everything.

Paul Arthur

You know, I'm not 100% certain that Sunningdale was a missed opportunity, a, in retrospect and painfully, I think we had to go through it. Sunningdale in itself was not going to work. Sunningdale... nearly 40% of the Unionist population did not support Sunningdale. If you were going to move forward. [...] I think that Sunningdale had to fail. I think, unfortunately, we had to go through what we went through before the penny dropped and we realised that we needed to have a greater vision than what we had heretofore.


Nelson McCausland

I don't think it was a missed, I don't think it was a missed opportunity because Unionism at that stage was not in a place where it could even contemplate power-sharing and later on even it's well into, you're going on a right few years before Unionism comes to the point where it accepts that there's some sort of inevitability about that and then, it's not a question of slow learners because that's just downright insulting to say that if you've been pummelled in the way that the community had been at that time, you weren't in a place where you could contemplate these things, you felt isolated and alone.

Mike Nesbitt

It depends what would have happened in terms of the output of the Council of Ireland. To my mind. I would be optimistic, confident that the Executive would have worked, that that power-sharing would have worked out. And I think that that would have saved a lot of lives, a lot of agony, a lot of wasted time. But the Council of Ireland, I don't I just don't know how that would have worked out if you could have organised it in a in a manner where anything the Council of Ireland agreed had to be endorsed by the Assembly, by Dail Eireann as we have with the North South Ministerial Council and the North South bodies, [...] it could have been a good thing. I think the power-sharing Executive was a missed opportunity, but I can't agree that the Council of Ireland with Executive powers was a missed opportunity.

ACTIVITIES 6 – DETECTING RELIABILITY AND USEFULNESS IN PERSPECTIVES

 Students should consider *Consequences: Part 2* and the extracts below. Please note that some of the extracts below are taken from the extended versions available online (*Consequences ii*).

SOURCE A

Danny Morrison

No. Missed opportunity, the continuation of British military during Sunningdale, they continued to blow up bridges and roads, isolating border communities, funneling all human traffic through 12 major checkpoints, around a 360 mile border, no, and remember we were excluded. Sinn Féin was a proscribed organisation. The SDLP were conceding military matters to them cross-border the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, for example.

SOURCE B

Jim Dillon

I have never really figured it out, to be honest with you. The Ulster Workers Strike had vast majority support behind it. Sunningdale failed, because I don't think there was enough PR done for Sunningdale. I don't think it was sold well to the people, if it had been explained to them properly and sold it might have succeeded. Sunningdale could have worked without the Ireland bit and that that that could have been that could have been avoided being put in or better. That might have been the best option but it could have been taken out but then the other side might not have accepted it then.

STUDENTS SHOULD LOOK AT THE ABOVE TWO PERSPECTIVES.

Take each source in turn:

- How useful is this source for a historian explaining why Sunningdale failed?
- How reliable is this source for a historian explaining why Sunningdale failed?

Use the Usefulness and Reliability grids to help you.

Remember Key Words:

Author Date Audience Purpose Tone Insinuation Limitations Gaps Distortions Context

How useful is Source A for a historian explaining why Sunningdale failed?

How reliable is Source A for a historian explaining why Sunningdale failed?

CONCLUDING ACTIVITY



Students should consider [Consequences: Part 2](#) and the extracts below. Please note that some of the extracts below are taken from the extended versions available online ([Consequences ii](#)).

Eamon Hanna

Well, I think Seamus was right. It was mainly aimed at the Unionists, at the Unionist communities. But the Provos affected to be offended by it, you know. But I, I, I think he summarised it, you know, as I said, all, I mean, all those dead people just, you know, what was it all about?

William Mitchell

I do agree with Seamus Mallon saying that the Good Friday Agreement was Sunningdale for Slow learners and you know, it's probably equally aimed at loyalists and Republicans or Unionism and Republicans and most certainly the Republican movement. I think it is because, you know, it's almost like John Hume dragged people screaming to the negotiating table. But if you look at any assessment at the time there was a stalemate, I mean, this place was going nowhere the IRA were never going to defeat the British army.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Could Sunningdale have worked? 'The Good Friday Agreement for Slow Learners.'
- Did the public understand Sunningdale?
- Did the public truly understand what the Council of Ireland was? What was the Council of Ireland going to do? What powers would it have?
- Modern Day Equivalent – Did voters know what Brexit would look like? Does the wider public understand the protocol?

THE TEACHER EXPLAINS WHAT SEAMUS MALLON MEANT.

Students are simply asked the following questions:

- Could Sunningdale have worked?
- What would have made it work?
- Was this possible in 1974?
- Was it a failure, a missed opportunity, or a victory for Unionism?
- Was it none of these or all of these?
- Was it the Good Friday Agreement for slow learners?

Complete the table below.

Tick what elements you think were in both agreements and what you think was only present in one agreement.

After completing this task, students should answer the question again – was Sunningdale the Good Friday Agreement for slow learners?

*Tick all that apply	Good Friday Agreement	Sunningdale
Executive		
Assembly		
Council of Ireland – Council of the Isles (GB/North/South Relations)		
Council of Ministers (North/South Relations)		
Consultative Assembly – 60 Members – Dail/Assembly (North/South)		
Principle of Consent		
Security Devolved		
Mitchell Principles of Non-Violence – End of Violence		
Decommissioning of Weapons		
Prisoner Release		

Amendment of Articles 2 and 3 in Irish Constitution												
Reform of Policing												
Normalization of Security Arrangements												
North/South Consultative Forum – Civil Society												
European Convention of Human Rights – a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland – Human Rights Commission												
Involved in Negotiations (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)	SF	LOY	UU	SDLP	DUP	ALL	SF	LOY	UU	SDLP	DUP/ VAN	ALL

***How did BREXIT affect relationships between the UK and Republic of Ireland?**

VOICES OF '74



Nottingham Trent University

