

VOICES OF '74 – CONTEXT

TEACHER OVERVIEW

The UWC Strike of 1974 did not happen in isolation. Events in the late 1960s and early 1970s brought about huge changes to life in Northern Ireland. The outbreak of the Troubles had a negative impact on everyone in the country and totally transformed people's lives. Various political changes, culminating in the introduction of Direct Rule, were viewed as an opportunity for some but were a real challenge for others. During this period the media spotlight was very focused on Northern Ireland, giving an intensified significance to events. People's awareness of their own identity was heightened and there was much more concentration on the differences between people.

KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- 1) Did the people of Northern Ireland become much more aware of local events in the period 1968-1972, leading to an 'inward turn'?
- 2) How important was the sense amongst Unionists that they were losing control in Northern Ireland as a reason for the Ulster Workers' Council Strike?

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Pupils should have some knowledge of:



- The Civil Rights Movement
- The Reforms introduced as a result
- The creation of new Political Parties in the early 1970s
- The emergence of paramilitary groups and key events of the Troubles, particularly in 1971 and 1972
- The introduction of Direct Rule

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of the activities pupils should

- Understand that NI society was transformed in the period 1968-72, particularly socially and politically
- Understand that people developed a heightened sense of their own identity and for some there was a feeling that this was under threat
- Know why some Unionists felt that they were losing control in Northern Ireland and understand how this was a cause of the UWC strike

ACTIVITIES

- 1) Pupils complete Zone of Awareness task to help them focus on what is happening around them and think about what holds most significance for them
- 2) Watch video clip – [Context: Part 2.](#) 
- 3) Pupils should read selection of extracts and use them to complete table - could be done individually, in pairs or in a group
- 4) Discuss pupil findings as a class, then complete short question
- 5) Optional exam style question
- 6) 'Smartphone' discussion
- 7) Watch video clip – [Context: Part 1](#) 
- 8) Pupils should read selection of extracts and use them to complete diagram on losing control - could be done individually, in pairs or in a group
- 9) In pairs or small groups carry out sorting activity on which events from 1968-72 were most concerning for unionists
- 10) Answer question on how events 1968 – 72 were a cause of the UWC strike – this could be answered at the end of the whole study for a more in-depth answer.
- 11) Optional exam style questions

ZONES OF AWARENESS

What is happening in the world this week?


What is happening in the UK and Ireland this week?

**What is happening in
Northern Ireland this week?**

**What is happening in
school this week?**

ACTIVITY 1 - EVENTS 1968-72

Inquiry: Did the people of Northern Ireland become much more aware of local events in the period 1968-1972, leading to an 'inward turn'?

 Consider the extracts below, some of which are taken from the extended versions available online ([Context i](#) / [Context ii](#)).

Source A – Eileen Weir

I can honestly say I knew nothing about nothing anywhere else. It was doorstep, Shankill Road, you know, it wasn't even Bangor, you know, it wasn't anywhere else. It was it was Shankill Road because where I lived in the Shankill, I was between the Springfield Road and the Crumlin Road. I lived just off Tennent Street. So our fear was great because the police station was in Tennent Street, so they could come up from, before the interface was up and there were no walls up then, so they could drive straight up Cooper Street, up Lawnbrook Avenue right up in, into the Bone, in Ardoyne. But So we had a fear that we could be attacked at any time. The only thing that I can remember is the miners' strike. That's the only thing that I can really remember what was happening, outside of the Shankill Road ah, where I had no focus on what was happening in the rest of the world.

Source B – Don Anderson

Most of the police were in Belfast and these people were buckling and they didn't have replacements. And I watched a complete street in Londonderry burning from end to end, and it was the first time in my life I'd seen burning buildings and not a fire engine in sight. Nobody coming to put the fire out. The blaze was spreading from one building to the other. I watched this and you can imagine what the effect on me as a young man was. I said, this is society falling to pieces.

Source C – Mervyn Gibson

I remember one particular case where my Granda had died and my mother and father went into the Solicitors in town and I was waiting outside for them and it was the Athletic Stores just at the corner of Queen Street. I was standing and looked in the window at all the things I wanted and couldn't afford and I turned my back and a mighty bang went off and it was the first one hundred pound bomb in Belfast, and the curved windows in the Athletic Stores, they just went to pieces and thankfully they went almost like dust and I wasn't injured, but I was covered in glass dust. But that sort of became the norm in many ways. Bomb scares etc.. You were, you just got used to them basically.

Source D – Henry Patterson

But in in this period, the, I mean, '68, you had all the influence of the sort of events in in Paris and so forth and you had the influx of, of like Italian, French students and that coming to observe.

Source E – Jim Roddy

I'd be wrong to say I could recall anything else in the world, other than some football facts or whatever. Because football was my thing. You know, the Mexico World Cup of 1970 I guess would have been one that would have jumped out at me. Life revolved around [what was happening here]. There wasn't a day that went by that we got up in the morning went out on the street that the helicopter wasn't sitting so low that you know, it was one of these bubble helicopters, you could nearly see the faces of the people inside them they were that low or the tanks weren't about or there wasn't a riot taking place or, you know, it was all within touching distance. And that that became the centre of our life.

Source F – Erskine Holmes

There was a general belief, I think, that membership of Europe had economic benefits to Northern Ireland. But there are some who, in spite of that, thought, well, those economic benefits could equally well come from not being in Europe.

Source G – Dawn Purvis

Yeah and I remember actually people talking about evacuating us to Scotland or England if things got really bad. So there was a whole lot of talk about evacuation and evacuation plans, am, and my granny stockpiling tins of this and that and the other. [...] I remember Mary Peters, I remember the, the Olympics and Mary Peters winning. I remember watching snooker on TV because we had a black and white TV that somebody had give us.

Source H – Nelson McCausland

And the frequency of killings was becoming so common that it, it didn't fully register with you, day after day after day. And if you see something in the newspaper one day and then it's superseded by another event the next day, it's not sinking in in the way that it would now where there would be maybe a week of newspaper coverage. And you look back at it and think, was a human life simply covered in five lines in a newspaper? In some cases not even a report of the funeral, just, just the actual shooting. Those were horrendous times.

Source I – Dawn Purvis

You know, it felt like nearly at least once a week we were woken out of our sleep and evacuated out of the house, one, one, at one stage it was our next-door neighbour's car and they got us all out of the house. And ran us physically, you know, half lifting us, half trailing us to Betty Hogg's house at the bottom of the street, because it was one of the biggest houses that could take everybody. And just these people huddled and these kids with big, wide eyes, you know, looking around each other, you know, what's happening, what are we doing here? Then thankfully, that turned out to be a bit of a hoax and they carried out a controlled explosion and within 45 minutes, an hour, you know, it was back to bed.

Source J – Jim Dillon

O'Neill came in as Prime Minister and obviously he was a much more moderate prime minister than what we had before he tried to woo the minority community, for want of a better word and it didn't really work. It didn't really work with them and it didn't really work with the community that should've been supporting him because he, he, he lost a bit of the trust that he should have had. He came on the television, I can well remember his crossroads speech, Ulster is at the crossroads and that that didn't really go down with the people, it probably went down with the moderates.

Source K – Douglas McIldoon

I spent the summer of '69, I was working in Butlin's. And at night you'd go and watch the Americans' landing, walking around the moon and things like that. And then there's this going on in Belfast.

Source L – Mike Nesbitt

The event I remember most was Bloody Friday and the BBC coverage at teatime and sitting at the tea table with my mother and my father and my sister, and watching that incredible, incredible shot of body parts being literally shovelled into a binbag. And I've actually seen that shot since. And I'm glad I did because over the years I began to doubt whether it actually had happened and I had actually seen it, but I had. No, I can remember it because all those explosions so quickly were incredibly frightening. Even though you were living through a conflict, this took it to a whole different level.

Which events from 1968-72 do the authors of the sources recall?

Sort them into the following categories:

Local Events – Troubles related	Local Events – Non-Troubles related
National Events (UK and Ireland)	World Events

Question: To what extent were the increasing violence and political changes becoming the centre of people's lives in Northern Ireland by 1972?

Exam style question

Source B – Don Anderson

Most of the police were in Belfast and these people were buckling and they didn't have replacements. And I watched a complete street in Londonderry burning from end to end, and it was the first time in my life I'd seen burning buildings and not a fire engine in sight. Nobody coming to put the fire out. The blaze was spreading from one building to the other. I watched this and you can imagine what the effect on me as a young man was. I said, this is society falling to pieces.

Using the source and your contextual knowledge, give one reason that explains why the Troubles were having an increasing impact on people's lives by 1972.

_____ [2]

ACTIVITY 2 - THREATS TO UNIONISM

Inquiry: How important was the sense amongst Unionists that they were losing control in Northern Ireland as a reason for the Ulster Workers' Council Strike?



Consider the extracts below, some of which are taken from the extended versions available online (*Context i / Context ii*).

Source A – Nelson McCausland

Things that seemed to be there to be stable and permanent, were gradually disappearing. The disbandment of the Ulster Special Constabulary. It wasn't that you were encountering them every day. You weren't. They were really there on certain occasions, but it was quite a symbolic thing. You had all of the interventions from London, and you just were beginning to wonder, where is all this going?

Source B – Henry Patterson

First of all you've got RUC reform, you've abolition of the B Men, then RUC reform and then the beginning of the campaign, you know, with killing the first policemen in 1970, coming of British troops, there is a sense that the whole ... the state...which is true, it wasn't a perception it was reality...that the Unionist Party had lost control of the state and the British government was intervening but wasn't clear what its policies were[...] And then you got the abolition of Stormont. So within a period of two or three years, the whole settled framework of Unionism was sort of blown up. And then you have a very intensive Provisional campaign going on in '71, '70 in '71, particularly with the object of bringing about Direct Rule, which was successful. They brought about Direct Rule and it continued, the intense campaign. You had a campaign of loyalist violence and sectarian assassinations.

Source C – Bernadette McAliskey

I think the important starting point is that that 1969 was the arrival of the British army on the streets. So from 1969 till we get to the point of the loyalist worker strike in 74, we are in a position of increasing militarisation at every level. [...] People do tend looking back to totally forget that when we were in 1969, at that point when the British army arrived on the street, there was no Social Democratic and Labour Party. There was no big split in the control of the Ulster Unionist Party of the politics of Unionism. There was no provisional IRA. Those things didn't exist. So you have a very rapidly changing landscape of political infrastructure and military infrastructure between 1969 and 1974.

Source D – Mervyn Gibson

I specifically remember internment. So I witnessed internment. First hand, not 7 o'clock in the morning, when the doors were being rapped, but it didn't last just for an hour in the morning. It went on throughout the day. So we seen the tension and seen and from a unionist point of view, they were dealing with those who were murdering. They were dealing with terrorist organisations. And we were pleased and internment for us was a good thing. Now you can look at it back and say the intelligence wasn't there and etc. It was a recruiting ground for the IRA, all those things. But if you live in the community that was under constant bomb, not only the community but the city centre, not only the Protestant community but the people from Northern Ireland were under threat from the IRA and violence form the IRA. So, internment coming along was going to help stop that that it was a good thing at the time.

Source E – Paul Arthur

And you saw a complete breakdown in relations between Stormont and Westminster. In comes Direct Rule and direct rule was a massive kick in the teeth to Unionism, to the psychology of Unionism, to everything that Unionism stood for. You had, for example, William Craig, who went on to found the Vanguard party saying that no British government can do that. There's a convention from about 1923 that we rule Northern Ireland and you must stay outside. And of course when direct rule does come in, the then Prime Minister Brian Faulkner has to resign with this said no government that is doesn't control its own security, doesn't have any control. So he resigns and you go into this constitutional abyss.

Source F – Eileen Weir

I can remember, you know marching up the hill and down the hill again at that time because of the fear of losing what we, what we had and that, that was, you know, becoming a United Ireland.

Source G – Dawn Purvis

I remember Bloody Friday quite clearly because my mum's sister, one of my aunts, had been in town and we were in the street playing and the bombs sort of started to go off and from where we were you could see the plumes of smoke, you know, going and then you could hear another bomb, and then you could hear another bomb. And it was like, it was like panic in the street, you know. And I remember one woman had like a wee radio and she had it tuned in to the police messages listening to what was going on and what was happening and oh, my goodness, there's another one, oh my God, there's another one, you know, and just this despair, I think, and real panic. And I remember actually feeling it myself because of course my mum thought her sister was missing.

Source H – William Mitchell

En bloc almost 30 of them moved from it being a tartan gang into a Paramilitary Unit literally overnight. In fact, I know from experience they actually all did it the day before Bloody Friday on 20th July 1972. That's when the Woodstock Tartan ultimately became East Belfast Red Hand Commando.

Which events from 1968-72 made some Unionists feel that they were losing control?



GROWING CONCERNS FOR UNIONISTS, 1968-1972

Cut out the cards and discuss in your group how each one might have been a cause for concern for Unionists. Place them in order from the most concerning to the least concerning and be prepared to justify your decisions. (Perforated line on all boxes to be cut out).



VOICES OF '74

Split in Unionism with creation of new political parties - Vanguard, DUP

VOICES OF '74

Formation of Civil Rights Movement

VOICES OF '74

Disbanding of B-Specials

VOICES OF '74

Five Point Programme

VOICES OF '74

Demand that Stormont give up control of security issues

VOICES OF '74

Internment

VOICES OF '74

Introduction of Direct Rule

VOICES OF '74

Introduction of One Man One Vote

VOICES OF '74

Formation of a new Nationalist party, SDLP

VOICES OF '74

Growing violence from the Provisional IRA

VOICES OF '74

Arrival of British troops

VOICES OF '74

Loyalist violence

Explain how the sense amongst Unionists that they were losing control in Northern Ireland could have caused the Ulster Workers' Council Strike?

Exam style Questions

Source E – Paul Arthur

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Using the source and your contextual knowledge, give two reasons that explain why some Unionists were very worried about the situation in Northern Ireland by 1972.

1. _____

2. _____

Name the leader of the Ulster Vanguard.

[1]

Name the leader of the DUP.

[1]

Give one reason why the British government introduced Direct Rule to Northern Ireland in 1972.

[1]

Give one reason for the introduction of internment in 1971.

[1]

Give one response to the events of Bloody Sunday, 1972.

[1]

Describe one response to the introduction of Internment in 1971.

[2]

Describe one response to the introduction of Direct Rule in 1972.

[2]

Explain the reasons for the introduction of Direct Rule in 1972.

[9]

VOICES OF '74



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