

# BILL CLINTON'S VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Resource

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A Digitisation and Outreach Project from the Linen Hall Library



A  
GCSE  
Toolkit



**DIVIDED SOCIETY**

Northern Ireland 1990 - 1998

Photo courtesy of The Irish Times





# Project and Curriculum Information

## Introduction

This education resource was created as part of the Linen Hall Library's 'Divided Society' project. It is a learning tool aimed at GCSE students studying the 1990s period, however those studying politics and history subjects will also find its material relevant. The resource can be used to stimulate debate and will help towards the development of empathy and understanding of the topic. Included in the resource are samples of political cartoons, newspaper front pages and political posters. Materials are held at the Linen Hall Library.

## Key areas of interest include:

- Ceasefires
- Bill Clinton's Visit
- The Good Friday Agreement
- The Referendum
- First Day of Power-Sharing

## Students will develop skills in:

- Research
- Thinking critically/analysing
- Reading/using primary sources
- Developing an understanding of history's value and significance for today's society
- Developing an awareness of how the past has been represented, interpreted and given significance for different reasons and purposes
- Acquiring an understanding of different identities within society and an appreciation of social, cultural, and religious diversity
- Recognising that their historical knowledge and skills help them understand the present and also provides them with a basis for their role as responsible citizens, as well as for the possible further study of history.

## President Clinton's 'Mission of Peace'

The Irish News article 'Clinton's Mission for Peace' 2nd December 1995

On the 30th of November 1995, President Clinton visited Northern Ireland. The aim of this trip was to encourage the peace process. He brought along his National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, who had played a key role in the process, and also his wife Hillary Clinton. Clinton travelled all over Northern Ireland taking time to stop and talk to local people along the way. He visited the Shankill and Falls Road, stopping at local shops to buy fruit and baked goods. Crowds were keen to see him and lined the streets in both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. During a speech at Mackie's factory in Belfast, Clinton made a heartfelt plea for peace and paid tribute to those working towards a settlement including John Major and John Bruton. He also singled out Gerry Adams, David Ervine and Gary McMichael, noting their efforts to end the conflict.

During his speech Clinton said, 'I believe that the greatest struggle you face now is not between opposing ideas or opposing interests. The greatest struggle you face is between those who deep down inside want to be peacemakers and those who deep down inside do not support the cause of peace...You must stand against terror. You must say to those who would still use violence for political ends that "your day is over".'



Please read the articles and answer the questions on the following pages.





# THE CLINTON VISIT

## PROFILE

Political editor  
**MERVYN  
PAULEY**  
looks at the  
background to  
the visit of a  
man who likes  
to relax by  
watching old  
movies, and  
who just  
might wow the  
Belfast crowds  
tonight with a  
rendition of  
Danny Boy on  
the saxophone



# The voice of America

**B**efore deciding on a career in politics, Bill Clinton had thought of becoming a doctor or a musician. He even briefly considered journalism.

An event that reputedly helped to shape his future was a handshake with the ill-fated President John F. Kennedy at a White House reception he attended in the '60s as part of a youth group from Arkansas.

The encounter had a profound effect on the young Clinton. Although even then he played a mean jazz saxophone and had formed his own combo known as the Three Blind Mice, by the time he returned to Arkansas his mind was made up — it was the political life for him.

On the face of it, it was an odd, even inapt choice, considering that the man who ended up in the White House in 1992 as the most powerful figure in the western hemisphere suffers from chronic laryngitis.

During bad attacks, his voice goes completely and he alleviates the problem by drinking lots of

water. At such times he has been known to restore his vocal chords by watching videos of two of his favourite movies, *High Noon* and *Casablanca*.

Today the people of Northern Ireland in general and Belfast and Londonderry in particular get the chance to see and hear Clinton the politician in action and to make their own judgment on his career decision.

William Jefferson Clinton arrives here in the wake of days of intensive diplomatic activity between London and Dublin, aimed at ending a peace process impasse which — according to Sinn Féin and its assorted allies — seriously threatened the tender plant of peace.

Amid growing concern in the community at large, there was no shortage of pre-visit advice for the President from both sides of the Ulster political divide.

Unionists urged him to light a fire under Sinn Féin/IRA on the crunch arms issue. The forces of pan-nationalism called on him to endorse demands that Britain drop its talks preconditions.

That the "Washington factor"

was in play behind the scenes throughout the fraught Anglo-Irish exchanges, which ended late on Tuesday night with the Downing Street initiative, became fairly obvious two days ago amid accurate reports of a breakthrough following White House intervention.

The news came against a backdrop of suggestions in Belfast that the President would use his influence and considerable political clout to try to clear the logjam.

"A personal initiative by Mr Clinton along those lines is out of the question — he's not going to Belfast to crack heads together," one senior US source confided.

**T**he comment, while seeming to indicate a grasp of the practical realities of a complex and delicate situation, was nevertheless taken with a pinch of salt by many a scribe who noted the loaded phraseology.

When a mood of disappointment among all the President's men was transformed to one of glad tidings and talk of optimism in Washington, it justified the media stance.

US Consul Kathleen Stephens struck a balanced note on Tuesday. "We believe some variation on the twin-track approach might work and we have encouraged all parties to consider that approach and to contribute ideas."

"The President has said a number of times that in order to make progress flexibility and imagination is needed on all sides."

Naturally the last thing Mr Clinton wants is to antagonise any section of the Northern Ireland people. The Major/Bruton initiative notwithstanding, he will tread carefully in the Ulster political minefield, having underlined the need to continue Washington's "even-handed and supportive approach".

Former US Congressman Bruce Morrison, no stranger to Belfast before and after the IRA ceasefire, says: "I don't think this trip ought to be seen as the sum total of Mr Clinton's involvement. His involvement will continue after this trip is over."

One can only hope that all goes well for the President, and that he develops no new allergies during

his visit to add to his already fairly impressive list. For he is allergic, in varying degrees, to dust, mold, pollen, cats, beef, dairy products and certain greenery — including Christmas trees!

Which throws a new light on his involvement in the switching-on of the specially imported Christmas Tree at Belfast City Hall tonight.

If, as reported, Van Morrison gives a rendition of his hit song *Days Like This*, will the President be ready, willing or able to accept an invitation to regale the crowds on the saxophone?

Afterwards, he goes to a glittering reception in the Whitla Hall of Queen's University, where there are plans for him to have "good substantive exchanges" with leaders of all the political parties, including Gerry Adams.

Mercifully, according to a US official, arrangements have been made for some form of separate get-togethers to cope with the "sensitivities" of the Unionist leaders, who might object to being under the same roof as the Sinn Féin chief.

Mr Clinton is not the only one with allergies!



## General Questions

1. Why did the President of the United States visit Northern Ireland at this time?

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2. Who are the important political figures Clinton mentioned in his speech?

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3. What places did he visit?	4. Why did he go there?
5. Who did he meet?	6. Why did he meet these people?
7. Who did he mention?	8. Why did he choose these people?



## Group Activity

In a group discuss the questions below. Continue your answers on a separate page if you need to.

1. Why was it important that Bill Clinton visited the Shankill and the Falls areas?

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2. Describe how important it was that Bill Clinton spoke at the Mackie's factory on the Springfield Road.

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3. Why was it important for Bill Clinton to meet so many politicians and local people?

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4. In his speech Clinton said, 'Dialogue is not surrender.' Discuss in a group what he is referring to.

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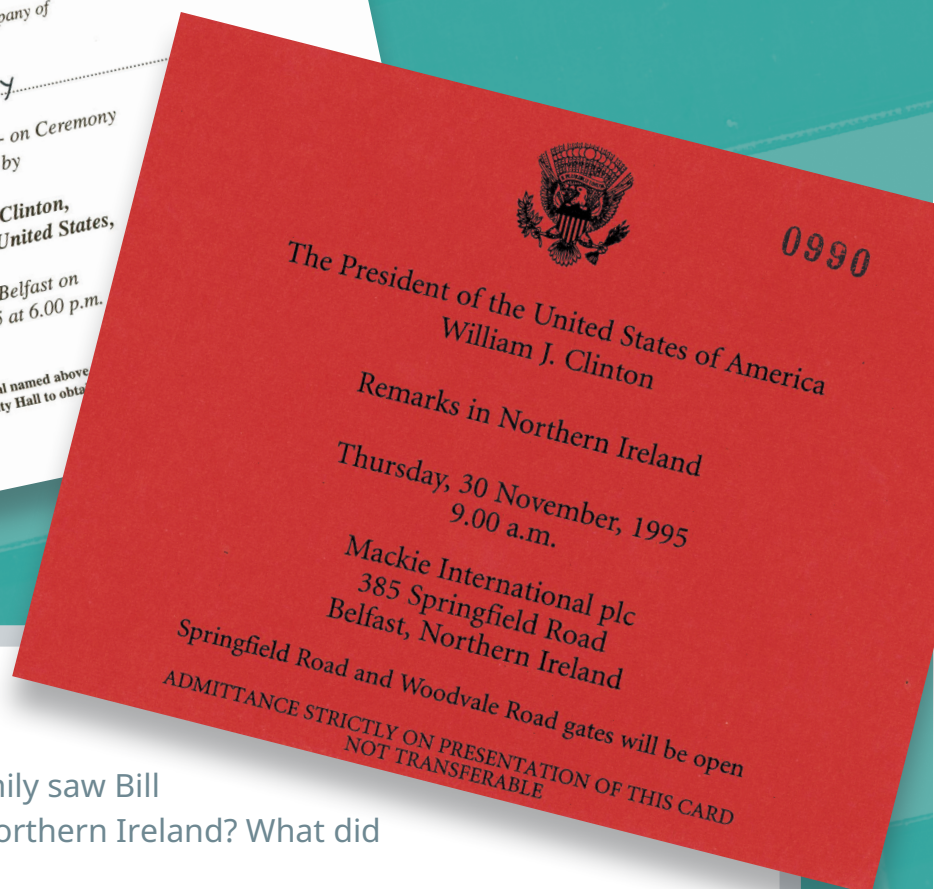
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5. Who were John Major, Albert Reynolds and Gary McMichael?

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## Complete at home

- A. Find out if any of your family saw Bill Clinton when he visited Northern Ireland? What did they think of his visit?

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- B. Search the internet to find footage of Bill Clinton's visit. What was the atmosphere like? Do you think Bill Clinton's visit was important to local people?

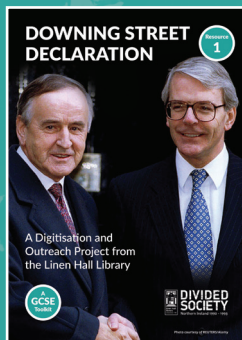
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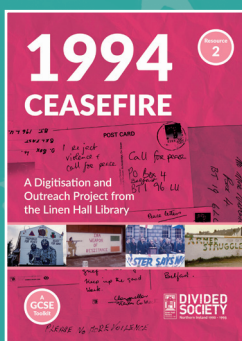
## DOWNING STREET DECLARATION

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# DIVIDED SOCIETY

Northern Ireland 1990 - 1998



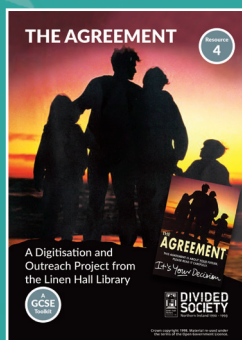
## 1994 CEASEFIRE

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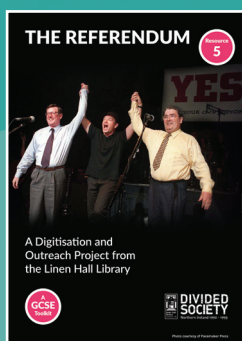
## BILL CLINTON'S VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND

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## THE AGREEMENT

Resource  
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## THE REFERENDUM

Resource  
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## FIRST DAY OF POWER-SHARING

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Since 1968 the Linen Hall Library has been collecting material relating to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Over the years the Library has become the repository for a vast amount of material relating to the subject and the subsequent Peace Process.

The Northern Ireland Political Collection now consists of over 350,000 items including books, pamphlets, leaflets, posters, manifestos, press releases, newspapers, objects and many thousands of periodicals. It is a completely unique collection that is unrivalled throughout the world.

The Divided Society project sees a significant section of the Northern Ireland Political Collection digitised. The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Ulster Garden Villages, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Hundreds of Periodical titles relating to the conflict have been digitised and made available from the new Divided Society website. These are publications that were published between 1990-1998 in the UK, Ireland and further afield, and documented the issues that affected Northern Ireland during that period.

This was a significant time in Northern Ireland's history and included events such as the Downing Street Declaration, several ceasefires, and the ongoing peace negotiations which culminated in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

### Divided Society, Linen Hall Library

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### Note of thanks

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