Galway in Objects

Classroom Activities

Claddagh Ring

by Richard Joyce
c. 1700



múseam museum
GALWAY CITY MUSEUM
MÚSAEM CATHRACH NA GAILLIMHE

Write a Museum Label

Museums write labels to tell visitors about the objects on display. A label usually gives the title and date (if known) of the object, the name of the maker (if known), and some other interesting details.

Taking what you have learned about the Claddagh Ring, write a label in two or three sentences.

Your label could include a short description or a fascinating fact (or it could be a personal response to the object).

Claddagh Ring, *c.* 1700

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Keywords

Create a word bank on your whiteboard, displaying unfamiliar and interesting words to support the label writing; for example: *fede* (faith), Richard Joyce, silversmith, goldsmith, Claddagh, crown, heart, hands.

Activity 2 Storyboard

Read the story of the Richard Joyce.





Silver reliquary of St Ursula and crucifix made by Richard Joyce. © Galway City Museum.

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The Story of Richard Joyce

The story goes that, around 1675, a young Galway man named Richard Joyce was on a ship bound for the Caribbean when it was accosted by Algerian pirates. At that time, Barbary pirates – called corsairs – roamed the Mediterranean and east Atlantic seizing European ships, confiscating their cargo, and taking captives for ransom or slavery. Joyce was taken to Algiers in North Africa and sold as a slave to a wealthy Turkish goldsmith. While a slave, Joyce learned and mastered the goldsmith's trade.

In 1689, William of Orange became King William III of England, Scotland and Ireland. He sent a representative to Algiers to demand the release of all slaves who belonged to his kingdom.

When the Turkish goldsmith learned that the talented Joyce was about to be released, he offered him his only daughter's hand in marriage and half his fortune to entice him to stay. Joyce refused and instead returned to Galway, where he set up as a goldsmith and became quite successful. He also married and had a family in Galway.

Is the story true? Maybe. The story was first told in a history of Galway written by James Hardiman in 1820, less than 100 years after Richard Joyce's death. The Museum has several silver objects in its collections that feature Richard Joyces' stamped initials, including a reliquary casket containing what is said to be the skull of St Ursula, dated 18 June 1723. He also sometimes stamped his work with an anchor, the symbol of Galway. So, we know for sure that there was a goldsmith of that name living and working in Galway and that he made Claddagh Rings.

A storyboard is a series of drawings that show the key moments in a story. Create a storyboard using drawings and text to tell the story of Richard Joyce. Download and print out our storyboard template (A3 landscape).

Activity 3 Creative Writing

Diary Entry

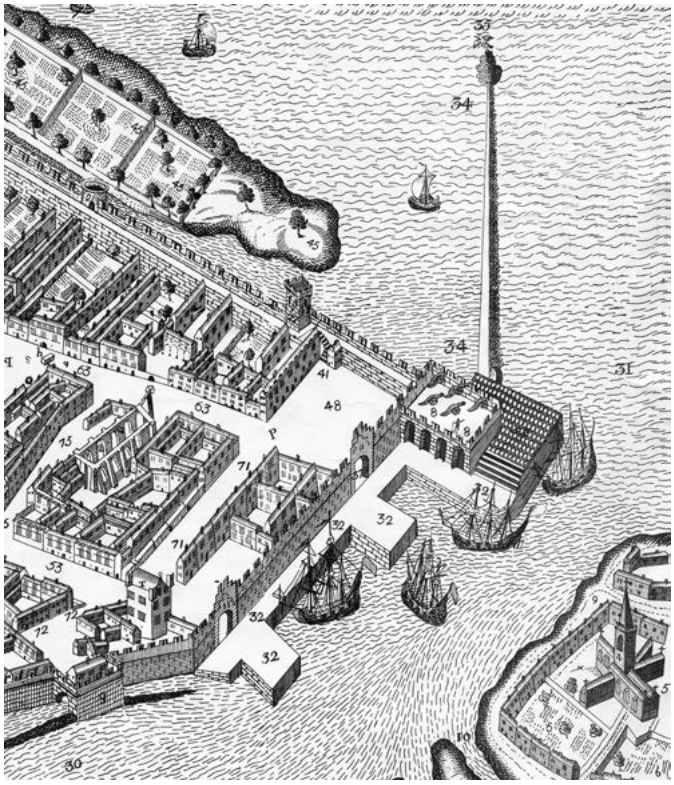


Imagine you are Richard Joyce from Galway. The year is 1694, you have just been released from captivity and you are returning to Galway for the first time in many years. Write a diary entry for the day. Describe the ship, the journey and how you are feeling. What are you most looking forward back in Galway? What are your worries? What are your hopes for the future?

© Galway City Museum

Activity 4 Drama

Freeze Frame





Left: Galway Docks when Richard Joyce was a boy.

Above: Algerian slave market, 1680s.

© Galway City Museum

The Life of Richard Joyce

Drama Activity A:

Group work

Break into groups. Based on what they have learnt, each group selects three significant moments or scenes from the life of Richard Joyce. The groups will enact these moments, which will be presented as if they were frozen in time, as if a 'snapshot' was taken of each one. Each 'snapshot' will have a narrator to describe the scene, and the rest of the participants will be in it.

1. What is happening? Where is it happening? Who is there? Think about who each person is in this 'snapshot'? Individuals in the snapshot may be tapped on the shoulder and brought to life to explain what is happening, how they feel, etc. If you are asked a question, can you answer as the character?
2. Can you portray more than just people with your bodies (buildings, etc.)?
3. Feel free to use simple props.
4. Rotate the role of narrator.

Alternative Activity:

This exercise can also be done as an individual exercise. Students draw the three moments as 'visual panels'. These can be linear in time, or non-linear.

Extensions and side-coach tips:

- Is this a moment made from the facts that you heard?
- Could it be a moment that is not described in the story (Richard as a child, Richard as an old man, a moment with other characters, etc.)?
- Can everyone be clearly seen in this snapshot? If not, is it for a particular reason, or do we need to adjust it.
- What is the mood of this snapshot?
- Can you capture three different moods.

Reflections:

- Was this fun? Was it realistic? Did your opinion of Richard Joyce change?

Activity 5 Make & Do

Symbols of the Ring

Claddagh Ring

Background: Given as a love token, the Claddagh Ring is made up of three symbols: a heart (symbolising love), a crown (for loyalty), and a pair of hands (for friendship). This ring-making activity is based on the theme of love and symbols. What do the pupils in your class love?

Materials: gold and silver metallic card (cut into squares – approx. 12cm x 12cm); scissors; pencils; modelling/jewellery wire or gold and silver metallic card (cut into long, thin strips).

Duration: 30–45 minutes.

Activity:

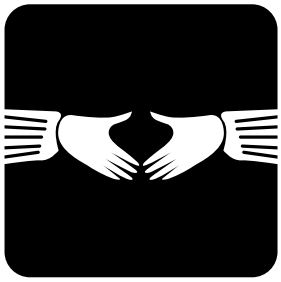
- Working in groups of 3, pupils discuss what they love: a favourite hobby, sport, musical instrument, animal, song, etc. and feedback their ideas to the class. They may need visual references.
- The pupils then sketch simple outline silhouette (not too much detail) symbols to represent what they.
- Each pupil is given a square of silver or gold card to draw their symbol on the back (card side).
- Pupils cut out their symbols and decide which symbol they want in the middle and on either side.
- The pupils cut two slits in the middle of their card symbols and slide them on to the wire or thin strip of card in the order that they have decided.
- Join the card or wire together to make a ring.
- Show each design to the class and ask the other pupils can guess the symbols.
- Each group can then explain how the symbols represent what they love.



heart



crown



hands

Online Activity

Visit London's Victoria & Albert Museum online and design your own virtual ring: **www.vam.ac.uk/designaring**

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Did you know...

- The Claddagh in Galway gets its name from the Irish word *cladach,* which means a shore.
- Like the shamrock and harp, the Claddagh Ring has become a symbol of Irish heritage.
- In the famous statue of Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse holding hands, called *Partners,* Disney is wearing a Claddagh Ring. Walt Disney was of Irish descent; his grandfather Kepple Elias Disney was born in Co. Kilkenny in 1832.
- Gold is a soft metal. In fact, it is the most malleable of all metals. Malleability is a metal's ability to be beaten or pressed into various shapes without breaking or cracking.
- Gold is more expensive than silver because it is rarer, so it takes more time and energy to find and mine gold than it does silver.
- Originally from Wales, the Joyces of were one of the fourteen merchant families – known as the 'Tribes of Galway' – that ruled Medieval Galway. They gave their name to Joyce Country in North Connemara. The name is Seoighe in Irish.
- A finger ring is made up of two basic parts – the hoop and the bezel. The hoop is the circular band that encircles the finger and the bezel is the top part of the ring, which may be a flat surface with an engraving or designed to carry a gem or some other ornament.

Test Your Knowledge

- What are the two basic parts of a ring called?
- Where did the Joyce family originally come from?
- How many 'Tribes of Galway' were there?
- Where did the Claddagh get its name?
- Name three symbols of Irish identity?
- What does 'malleable' mean?
- Which is more expensive – gold or silver? Why?

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