

Topic : Ireland, the Land of Music

AXE 1: Identities et exchanges

KEY QUESTION: How does traditional Irish music reflect Irish identity and culture?

How has Irish music helped to create a strong national identity?

LESSON 2

Irish Traditional Music and Cultural Identity

Music as a marker of identity

Activity 1 : Listening

How Music Shaped National Identity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4vfllAORts>

1. List the roles music has played throughout history

Activity 2 : PAIRWORK : Reading

Doc A : « Irish Traditional Music – A Living Cultural Heritage »

Traditional Irish music is one of the oldest and most respected forms of folk music in Europe. For centuries, it has been passed down orally — from generation to generation — through family gatherings, festivals, and local sessions in pubs. Today, it is more than just entertainment: it is considered a national treasure and a symbol of cultural identity.

In 2010, the Irish government officially recognised traditional music as part of Ireland's intangible cultural heritage, and efforts have been made to preserve it in schools and cultural institutions. Instruments such as the bodhrán, fiddle, uilleann pipes, and tin whistle play a central role in this living tradition.

The global Irish diaspora has also helped spread this musical heritage. From New York to Melbourne, Irish communities organise traditional music events, keeping the spirit of the homeland alive. UNESCO describes traditional music as “a vehicle for transmitting values, histories, and collective memory.”

As one musician says: “When I play a tune my grandfather taught me, I feel part of something bigger. It's not just a song — it's my story too.”

Adapted from UNESCO website on Intangible Cultural Heritage - Ireland and UNESCO Ireland.ie

Comprehension Questions

1. According to the text, how has traditional Irish music been transmitted over time?
2. What does the Irish government do to preserve this heritage?
3. Name four traditional Irish instruments mentioned in the article.
4. How does the Irish diaspora contribute to keeping traditional music alive?
5. Why is traditional music described as more than just entertainment?
6. What does the musician mean when he says: 'It's not just a song — it's my story too' ?

Doc B : “The Role of Music in Ireland’s Cultural Heritage”

A Melodious Legacy

Music is the heart and soul of Ireland, with a rich history that traces back to ancient times. Traditional Irish music, from the haunting melodies of the harp to the lively tunes of the fiddle, holds a special place in our cultural heritage. It's an integral part of our national identity, tying together generations and resonating deeply within the Irish soul.

Ireland's Musical Evolution

The Early Beginnings

The roots of Irish music can be traced back to the Celts, who brought their distinctive musical traditions to Ireland around 2,000 years ago. Over the centuries, these traditions evolved, influenced by various cultural exchanges and historical events.

The Emergence of Folk Music

By the 18th century, Irish folk music began to take shape. With its unique blend of lyrical storytelling and musical expression, folk music became the soundtrack of Ireland, capturing the spirit and struggles of the Irish people.

The Influence of the Irish Diaspora

The great Irish diaspora of the 19th and 20th centuries saw Irish music spread across the globe. As Irish immigrants settled in new lands, they brought with them their music, which would come to influence genres such as country, bluegrass, and even rock and roll.

Ireland's Influential Bands and Artists

Ireland has produced a wealth of talented musicians who have made significant contributions to the global music scene. From the iconic sounds of [U2](#) and [Thin Lizzy](#) to the poetic lyrics of Van Morrison and the heart-wrenching vocals of [Dolores O'Riordan](#) of [The Cranberries](#), Irish bands and artists have left an indelible mark on the world stage.

More recently, bands like [Fontaines D.C.](#), led by charismatic frontman Grian Chatten, are taking the music world by storm, melding tradition with modernity in their captivating sound.

Music and Ireland's Cultural Identity

Music remains an essential part of Ireland's cultural identity. It's not just about the melodies we create; it's about the stories we tell and the emotions we express. It's a shared language that transcends borders, unites us, and keeps our heritage alive.

At IrelandVinyl.com and Zhivago Gifts in Galway, we're proud to play a part in preserving and promoting Ireland's musical heritage. [...] From the website of Ireland Vinyl, June 29th, 2023

<https://www.irelandvinyl.com/blogs/news/the-role-of-music-in-ireland-s-cultural-heritage?srltid=AfmBOoqMYXFO7hJRcpENQN1DYtI6qyQYxgWOv2rwjTI5mnJ1QPBL8nk4>

Comprehension Questions

1. According to the text, how has traditional Irish music been transmitted over time?
2. What was the origin of Irish music ?
3. Explain why « It's an integral part of our national identity »
4. Name two traditional Irish instruments mentioned in the article.
5. Name two famous bands. Have do they contribute to keeping Irish music alive ?
6. How does the Irish diaspora contribute to keeping traditional music alive?
7. Why is traditional music described as more than just entertainment?

Present your document to the other group.

Together, using the 3 documents answer the following question :

- How does music represent Irish identity ?
- How does music preserve identity?

Activity 3 : Listening

A- Pre-listening activity

Prediction :

- Look at the title « *Song for Ireland* ». What do you think the song will be about?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY5nqkBFrnU>

B- While listening

Task 1 : Fill in the blanks while listening.

Walking all the day near tall _____ where falcons build their nests
Silver winged they fly, they know the call of _____ in their breasts
Soar Black Head against the _____
Between the _____ that run down to the _____
Living on your western _____, _____ summer _____, _____ for
more
I _____ by your Atlantic sea and _____ a song for Ireland

Talking all the day with true friends, who try to make you stay
Telling jokes and news, singing songs to pass the night away
_____ the Galway salmon run like silver dancing darting in the sun
Living on your western shore saw summer _____, asked for more
I _____ by your Atlantic sea and _____ a song for Ireland

Drinking all the day in old pubs where _____ love to play
Someone touched the bow, he _____ a reel, it _____ so fine and gay
_____ on Dingle beach and cast, in wild foam we found Atlantic Bass
Living on your western shore, _____ summer sunsets asked for more
I _____ by your Atlantic sea and _____ a song for Ireland

Dreaming in the night, I _____ a land where no man _____ to fight
Waking in your dawn, I _____ you crying in the morning light
Lying where the Falcons fly, they twist and turn all in you e'er blue sky
Living on your western shore, _____ summer _____ asked for more
I _____ by your Atlantic _____ and I _____ a song for Ireland

Task 2 : Match words to their meaning (sea, mountain, island, sorrow, hope, freedom).

C-Post-listening

1. Comprehension questions

- What landscapes/places are described in the song?
- What feelings/emotions does the singer express about Ireland?
- How does the song connect **nature** and **identity**?
- Is the song more nostalgic (past) or descriptive (present)? Why?

2. Vocabulary activity

Sort these words into categories:

- **Nature:**
- **Emotions:**
- **Culture/Tradition:**

3. Grammar focus: Simple Past / Present continuous

Task 1 : Highlight all verbs in the past simple and in the present continuous.

- **Present continuous:** description in progress (*walking, singing, watching*).
- **Past simple:** narration of past events (*I met, I watched*).

🔗 Exercise:

Complete with **past simple** or **present continuous**:

1. She _____ (to walk) all the day.
2. I _____ (to see) the sun go down on Galway Bay.
3. He _____ (to sing) a song for Ireland.

📝 Production

- **Oral:** Choose one image of Ireland (cliffs, sea, mountains). Describe it using **present continuous**.
→ *I am looking at the ocean, the waves are breaking...*
- **Written:** Write 5–6 lines about a place you love, using **past simple** (a memory) + **present continuous** (description).