

Mother and Baby homes: Tuam Mother and Baby home, April 1926

Leaving Certificate History	Strand 3 Ireland, option 2 1919–66 Lived experience and hidden voices: State and church institutions: industrial schools, asylums, prisons, Magdalene laundries, and Mother and Baby homes
Leaving Certificate History Learning Outcomes	1.2 Locate and select relevant source material and resources and identify appropriate repositories. 1.5 Evaluate source material through the process of historical analysis. 1.6 Situate their sources within wider historical contexts, events, ideas, and processes. 1.9 Explore why historical interpretations are incomplete and provisional and why omission has historical significance. 3.6 Investigate how women experienced work, politics and society. 3.8 Examine the experiences of family separation and institutionalisation in these settings.
Learning Intentions	To be able to: • Locate and navigate the 1926 census record for the Tuam Mother and Baby home using the National Archives of Ireland online records • Extract and interpret evidence from a primary source (the census record) about the lived experience of individuals in the home • Identify the language and categories used in 1920s official records (e.g. 'illegitimate') and explain why such terminology is historically situated and no longer acceptable • Compare evidence from a primary source (census record) with a secondary source (oral history interview, Commission of Investigation chapter or newspaper article) on the same subject • Explain why consulting multiple sources — rather than relying on one — strengthens historical investigation



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Success Criteria	• I can locate and navigate to the correct census forms for the Tuam home using the National Archives online records • I can extract specific evidence from the census record about life in the home (e.g. occupations, ages, number of occupants) • I can identify the term 'illegitimate' as used on the 1926 census form and explain why it reflects the attitudes of the period and why it is not acceptable today • I can compare one piece of evidence from the census record with one piece of evidence from a second source (oral history interview, Commission report chapter, or newspaper article) • I can explain, with an example, why using more than one source produces a fuller or more reliable picture of the past • I can distinguish between a verifiable fact and an interpretation when discussing a historical source
Resources	National Archives of Ireland online census records, specifically the record for the Mother and Baby home at Tuam Worksheet, 'Tuam Mother and Baby home' Newspaper article, Rory Carroll, <u>"A stain on Ireland's conscience": identification to begin of 796 bodies buried at children's home</u>, <i>The Observer</i>, 25 June 2023. <u>Oral history interview, Tom Warde, the Tuam Oral History Project</u> <u>The 1926 Census Guidance Note for Teachers</u> Internet access Access to digital devices
Inclusion	When completing the worksheet, some students may focus only on the information retrieval questions which are Qs 1, 2 and 5 on the worksheet. For the second source material, some students may prefer to listen to the oral history interview rather than read the newspaper article.

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Lesson activities	At the start of any lesson using census records, teachers should make students aware of sensitivities around the personal nature of the data being used. This is particularly the case with census records relating to Mother and Baby homes and other institutions. Teachers are advised to highlight the historical use of the term 'illegitimate' used in the census form to describe the 'marriage or orphanhood' status of children living in Mother and Baby homes. It should be emphasised that the use of this term is unacceptable today. It is also important to make students aware that individuals recorded on the census represent the lives of real people, some of whom are still living, or who have descendants who are alive. Teachers are advised to read <i>The 1926 Census Guidance Note for Teachers</i> guidance document in advance of this lesson. 1. Check in with students' prior knowledge of Mother and Baby homes. In this lesson they will encounter the Mother and Baby home in Tuam, Co Galway, run by the Bon Secours sisters from 1925–61. Mother and Baby homes were institutions established for women who became pregnant outside of marriage, at a time in Ireland when having a baby outside of marriage was highly stigmatised. 2. Distribute the worksheet 'Tuam Mother and Baby Home, census record 18 April 1926'. Ensure that students understand the task outlined in the worksheet. 3. Having completed the worksheet, students share their findings as a class. Ask students how examining the census record has enhanced their knowledge of the operation of Mother and Baby homes in Ireland in the 1920s. 4. In pairs or small groups, students examine another source relating to Tuam Mother and Baby home which could include: Tom Warde's interview as part of the Tuam Oral History Project – University of Galway (which has an accompanying transcript) or the article reporting on the work of historian Catherine Corless into the operation of Tuam Mother and Baby home, 'A stain on Ireland's conscience': identification to begin of 796 bodies buried at children's home. Ask students to consider how examining another source has added to their knowledge of the operation of Tuam Mother and Baby home.
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Plenary:	Host a class discussion on the question: 'What makes something a 'fact' in historical study?' • Prompt students to distinguish between verifiable data/evidence (e.g. a name, age or occupation recorded in the census) and interpretation or perspective (e.g. a historian's or journalist's framing of why something happened, or how it should be understood). Ask: is a statistic from the census the same kind of 'fact' as a conclusion drawn in the Commission's report or the newspaper article? Why or why not? Ask students to write down one fact they learned about Tuam Mother and Baby home from the census record and one fact they learned from the second source. Ask them to answer the following questions: • Why is examining more than one source important when investigating the past? • Where might students encounter this same challenge of separating verifiable fact from interpretation or opinion outside the history classroom (e.g. in news reports, social media or other real-life contexts)? Ask students in pairs or small groups to evaluate the importance of historians examining more than one source when investigating the past.
Find Out More	The NCCA have created resources for teaching about Mother and Baby homes for Junior Cycle History – Supporting the Curriculum NCCA Chapter 15 Tuam in the <i>Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes</i> Other interviews in the the Tuam Oral History – University of Galway Clann: Ireland's Unmarried Mothers and their Children: Gathering the Data is a joint initiative by Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA) and Justice for Magdalenes Research

Worksheet – Tuam Mother and Baby home, census record 18 April 1926

Before you begin

This worksheet uses real census records relating to the Tuam Mother and Baby Home. The individuals named were real people, many of whom have living descendants. Please treat the material with care and respect.

The census form uses the term 'illegitimate' to describe the marriage/orphanhood status of children. This was the official language of the period – it does not reflect how we would describe someone today, and its use here is historical evidence, not an endorsement.

The record for [Tuam Mother and Baby Home is accessible through this link](#) or by searching **surname:** Barry; **first name:** Priscilla; **county:** Galway; **townland/street:** Toberjarlath; **DED:** Tuam Rural.

The census record for the building includes sixteen Household Returns (Forms A) and two Enumerator's Abstract (B Forms).

Forms you will need for this worksheet:

[Household Form A1](#)

[Household Form A3](#)

[Household Form A5](#)

[House and Building Form B1](#)

1. **A)** Examine **Household Form A1**, which contains details of the Bon Secours sisters residing at the home. What occupations are listed for the sisters? List three.

List of occupations

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1. B) What might these occupations suggest about how the home was staffed and run?

2. Can you find evidence in **Household Form A3** for two mothers and their children living in the home on census night? Provide the names of the mother and child and their ages.

Names of mother and child	Ages

3. Examine **Household Form A5**, which contains a list of children living in the home. Calculate the average age of the children listed in this section of the census form.

Average age

4. For the children listed in the census return their birthplace is given as 'Galway' and no further detail such as a townland is provided. Why do you think this was the case?

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5. Examine **House and Building Form B1**. What is the total number of occupants of Tuam 'Childrens Home' and what is the breakdown by gender? Why do you think the number of females living in the home is far greater than the number of males?

Total number of occupants	
Males	
Females	

6. According to **House and Building Form B1**, how many rooms are in the home? What does this tell you about living conditions in the home?

7. Every source has limits. What can this census record **not** tell you about the lived experience of the mothers and children living here? What questions does it leave unanswered?
