

CBA 1, The past in my place: the census record for the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, as a case study

Junior Cycle History	CBA 1: The past in my place
Junior Cycle History Learning Outcomes	This lesson relates to CBA 1, The past in my place, where students conduct a structured, evidence-based enquiry into a historical aspect or theme relating to the locality, place or personal/family history of the student. The purpose of this lesson is to show how the census returns for a hotel in a local area can provide historical insights into that particular area. Students may be inspired to investigate a hotel or other guest accommodation in their local area as part of their CBA 1 investigation.
Learning Intentions	To be able to: • Investigate the 1926 census records for the Shelbourne Hotel as a digital archive, focusing on the birthplace, occupation and religion recorded for the people staying and working there • Draw conclusions from the evidence about the hotel's role as both an employer and a place of accommodation, and about the people connected to it • Consider the place of a hotel like the Shelbourne in the life of Dublin city in 1926 • Explain how the same approach could be used to investigate a hotel or other building in their own area for CBA 1



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Success Criteria	• I can navigate to the correct Shelbourne Hotel census records using the National Archives online records. • I can identify the birthplace, occupation and religion recorded for the people in my group's record. • I can work with my group to show what our record reveals about the hotel – who worked or stayed there, and where they came from. • I can tell the difference between what the census states as fact (e.g. a birthplace or occupation) and a conclusion I am drawing from it (e.g. someone's social standing). • I can suggest a hotel or other building in my own area that I could investigate for CBA 1 using the same method.
Resources	National Archives of Ireland online census records, specifically the following records for the Shelbourne Hotel: 1. Administrative staff 2. Housekeeping staff 3. Guest list 1 4. Guest list 2 The 1926 Census Guidance Note for Teachers 1926 Census – Learning Resource document Internet access Access to digital devices

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. See document <i>The 1926 Census Guidance Note for Teachers</i> In advance, the teacher should open all four records and check they load and are legible – the guest lists in particular contain less familiar entries (e.g. occupations such as ‘independent means’ or ‘annuitant’). Starter: Check in with students’ prior knowledge of what a census is; students may have experience of a census being taken in their own homes. Then turn to the theme: what role does a hotel or guest accommodation play in a town or city? For what reasons might people stay in one? Why might a hotel matter to the life of a place? 1. Teacher gives a brief overview of what a census is and of the 1926 census in particular as the first census of the Irish Free State. The document <i>1926 Census – Learning Resource</i> will be helpful here. 2. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the census records 1–2 (linked above), which relate to the administrative staff, the housekeeping staff and hotel guests at the Shelbourne Hotel on 18 April 1926. 3. Groups examine their assigned record, noting the birthplace, occupation and religion recorded for each person. As they work, teachers should circulate to help with any entries that are unclear, abbreviated or unfamiliar. These should be recorded as written, and queried, not guessed. Before groups start drawing conclusions, establish the distinction the plenary will build on: the record states facts (a person’s birthplace, occupation, religion); anything about their social standing is a conclusion the student is inferring from those facts, not something the census says. 4. Each group feeds back to the class. Taken together, the four records should reveal the hotel’s dual role as both an employer (its staff) and a service provider (its guests). Prompt the class to pull the records into a single picture: • Where did the staff come from compared with the guests? • What kinds of occupation appear in each group? • What does the hotel look like as a small social world on one night in 1926? Where students draw conclusions about the social standing of staff or guests, ask them to say which piece of recorded evidence they are basing it on, and to recognise where the evidence runs out and interpretation begins.
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Plenary	Students identify a hotel, guesthouse or other building in their own area that appears in (or might appear in) the 1926 census (note: the aim is a building recorded in 1926, which is not the same as a hotel still trading today). They consider, concretely, how they would use its census record for CBA 1: which people they would look at, what the birthplaces and occupations might tell them, and what the record could and couldn't reveal about the building's place in the area. Note: students may not know these buildings, but can find them by searching their DED and looking for people who are listed as 'Boarder' or 'Guest' in relation to the head of the household.
Differentiation	Of the four records, the housekeeping staff record is the most straightforward, with shorter, more uniform entries, and suits groups who need an accessible way in. Students who finish early could compare two records directly (staff versus guests) to draw out the contrast, or follow one named person using another source as a model for their CBA enquiry.