Read the texts.

Ireland: a timeline

350 BC The Celts (tribes from Central Europe) invade and rule for more than 1,000 years.

AD 432 Saint Patrick arrives from Britain and brings Christianity to Ireland.

795 The Vikings arrive from Norway and Denmark and establish the new city of Dublin.

1014 The Irish defeat the Vikings at the Battle of Clontarf and the Vikings leave.

1170 Dublin is captured by the Norman English armies. There is constant rebellion and conflict.

1649 Oliver Cromwell, the British Head of State at that time, arrives and suppresses a rebellion with great brutality.

1845–50 The Great Famine.

1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin. Irish nationalists take control of the city, but eventually have to surrender.

1919–1921 The fight for independence. Ireland is divided into two. Northern Ireland remains part of the UK while the rest of Ireland becomes a republic.

1968 Start of conflict in Northern Ireland. The British government send the army there.

1998 Good Friday Agreement signed by the British and Irish governments and eight political parties. It is a chance for peace.
The Emerald Isle

1 Craic

Ireland and the Irish are well known around the world. Ireland is famous for its beautiful, wild, countryside (the national colour is emerald green). Irish pubs are famous for their Guinness, relaxed atmosphere and music.

Irish people have a reputation for hospitality, friendliness and conversation – summed up by the word craic. This is a Gaelic word pronounced ‘crack’. It means an enjoyable time sent with other people, especially when the conversation is funny and entertaining.

2 Irish culture

Ireland has a strong literary and musical tradition. Some of the greatest writers and poets in the English language were born here – Jonathan Swift, W.B. Yeats, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett, James Joyce.

Traditional Irish folk music played on the fiddle (violin), the whistle and the Bodhran (a kind of drum) is still very popular in pubs and at Céilidhs, pronounced ‘kaylees’ (another Gaelic word). It means a traditional dance. Modern Irish groups and musicians like U2, Westlife, Sinéad O’Connor and Snow Patrol are famous all over the world.

Ireland is also famous for horse-racing and rugby.
The Great Famine 1845–1850

The Great Famine was one of the worst in history and it decimated the population. About 12% of the 8 million people living in Ireland at the time died and many more emigrated to America.

The main food of the Irish population was the potato. For five years in a row, a disease destroyed the potato harvest, and so people had nothing to eat.

Many historians believe that the British Government, who ruled Ireland at the time, were responsible for the devastating effect of the famine, because they did not do enough to help the starving population.

The Celtic Tiger

In the 1990s and 2000s, Ireland has had astonishing economic success. It has changed from a traditional, agricultural country with high unemployment and a history of emigration into the ‘Celtic Tiger’, a young, dynamic, modern economy. Many international companies have moved there.

Why? Firstly, they pay less tax than in many other European countries, and secondly, the workforce is young and well educated. Ireland has the youngest population in Europe with over 40% under the age of 25. It also has more Science and Technology graduates than most other European countries.