

Using the 1641 Depositions to 'Read like a Historian'

Learning Objectives	Context	Success Criteria
*Awareness of the main points of 'historical thinking' *Closely read primary documents *Awareness of bias	*The Plantations *The 1641 Rebellion *17 th Century Economy and Society	*Discussed and debated * Evaluated information and data *Co-operated

The depositions are witness statements, which demand the full power of historical reading to understand and interpret. There is a large amount of hearsay in the depositions, as deponents were asked to report on anything they had heard about happening, as well as what they had witnessed first hand. This class is designed to introduce students to the difficulties of dealing with witness accounts. It also introduces the core concepts of 'reading like a historian' which demands that students source, close read, contextualise and corroborate (where possible) the primary sources they are dealing with.

Lesson Road Map

1. Once the class are in their groups distribute a copy of the Deposition of John Gregg to each group. They need highlighter pens of a few different colours to complete this task.
2. Introduce the video of Ciaran reading the deposition of John Gregg as an example of 'reading like a historian' that they are going to emulate. You will be playing and pausing this video four times.
3. Play the video. The first thing you will see is Ciaran 'sourcing' the document. Pause the video after the text on sourcing has been displayed. Ask the teams to scan the document for the information that Ciaran picked out when he sourced the document and highlight it. Get them to look at where it is within the document. Make them aware that the sourcing information may not always be at the top. When reading a historical document they should always look for this information first.
4. Play the video. You will now see Ciaran 'close reading' the document. The text after this section describes the kinds of things that Ciaran is doing. Pause the video here and ask the students to closely read the document. In a different coloured pen get the students to mark the areas Ciaran has mentioned in the document. Talk through the questions he raises. The deposition was not given in a court but was given in before judicial officials. The witnesses were asked questions

in a certain order. The people that were being accused were not there – it wasn't like a court of law.

5. Play the video again. We will now see Ciaran 'contextualising' the document. He begins to ask questions about who the deponent was, what was his motivation, where he was and what was going on in Ireland at the time. Now ask the students to read the deposition again and highlight the information Ciaran is talking about. They are looking for the broader circumstances here.
6. Play the video again. Now we will see Ciaran begin to ask questions about how to 'corroborate' this deposition. He begins to ask questions beyond the scope of the information given. He needs to find other sources to cross check the story told.
7. Here is an opportunity to extend this activity online. If you can gain access to the computer room or have access to laptops go to the 1641 Depositions website (<http://1641.tcd.ie/>) and get the students to search for places and people mentioned in John Gregg's deposition in order to corroborate his evidence.