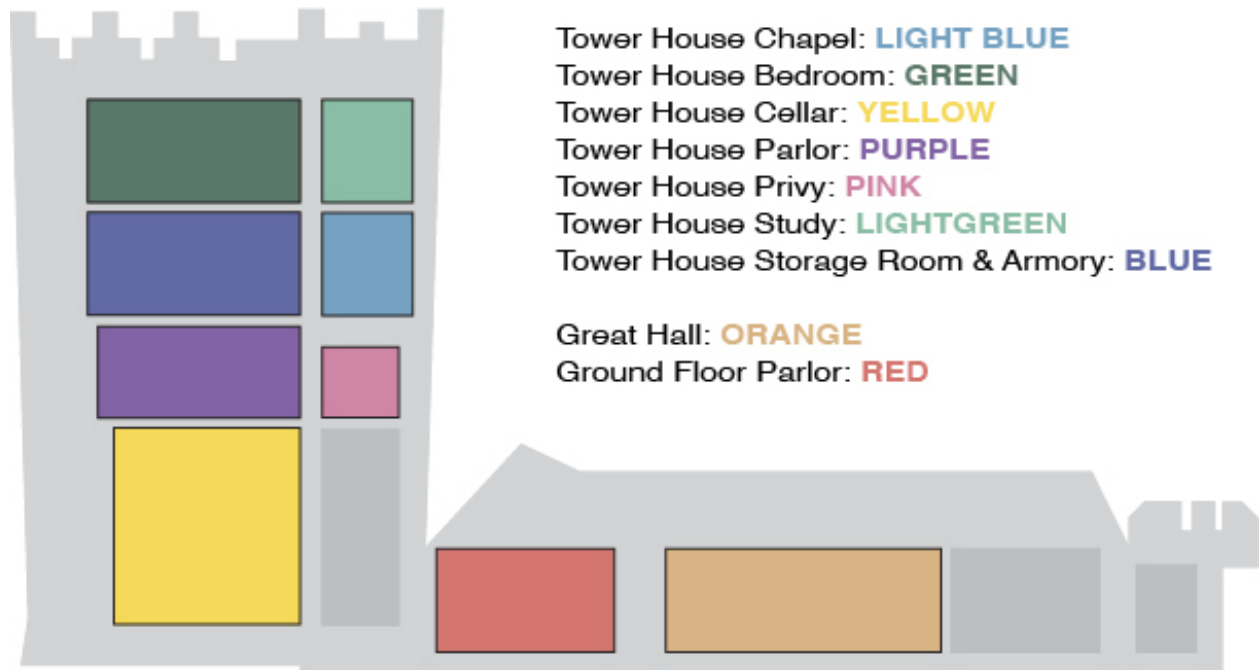


## Ground Floor Parlor Teacher Pack



### 1. Introduction: Colonialism

The focus of this room is the Munster plantation, which should be viewed as a case study for the examination of colonial ideologies, policies, people and events more generally. The class begins with the portrait of Elizabeth where students are introduced to the two key principles which drove colonial ideology, policy, and implementation in Ireland. The second station, the desk, addresses the creation of provincial presidencies as government structures designed to facilitate colonial ventures based on these ideologies. The tour then moves on to the sword for a summary of the second Desmond Rebellion because this event provided the English crown with a convenient justification to confiscate lands in the province of Munster. The portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh highlights the kind of individuals who were attracted to Ireland during this period by explaining his role in quashing the rebellion and his subsequent involvement in the Munster plantation. The map by Francis Jobson is used as an entry point to discuss how the Munster plantation was supposed to be organised *in theory*, while the tapestry station explores *the real* ways in which the colony both flourished and failed. Finally, the last station, the gun loop, addresses the dramatic overthrow of the Munster plantation in 1598.

A number of major colonial schemes had preceded the Munster plantation – Leix-Offaly (1556-1563); and Ulster (1572 under Sir Thomas Smith, and 1573 under Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex) – but these had been expensive failures which resulted in much bloodshed. Following these misadventures, one must wonder why the English crown continued to pursue colonial ventures in Ireland?

While the ethnocentric notion of providing the allegedly barbaric Irish with models of civility and good religion afforded proponents a moral purpose, the real reasons were more practical: security and profit. Money was to be made through the acquisition and development of land as well as through the exploitation of natural resources (especially wood, fish, and minerals). Colonising Ireland also meant the crown could extend its control through the island and thereby prevent it from falling into the hands of enemies, be they foreign or domestic. England was overpopulated during the Elizabethan period, thus colonial ventures offered a purpose for England's surplus men: beggars and other undesirables; younger sons of gentry with no occupation; ex-soldiers for whom the crown couldn't afford to pay pensions; and those seeking fame and glory. For these reasons, Ireland served as a colonial training ground where the crown and its agents experimented with colonial plans while colonial leaders, like Raleigh, Gilbert, and Drake gained their first experiences.

## 2. Extra textual context and sources for some stations:

### **Portrait of Elizabeth I: Elizabeth and Colonial Policy:**

In *Solon His Follie*, Epimenides is explaining that the handful of natives permitted to keep their lands following rebellion would be both too poor and too dispersed to present a challenge to newly planted colonies. He argues that the natives who survived the original war and plantation should be grateful for the supposed clemency they received; the gratitude they owed the crown would, it was presumed, keep them obedient. However, if they forgot themselves and resumed their former behaviour, they would be mercilessly crushed. Beacon's opinions on the treatment of the Irish, as well as the purpose and implementation of colonies, can be compared to other treatises. Below are two examples: one written by an anonymous New Englishman and the other by an anonymous Old Englishmen. The authors' attitudes towards the Irish and their approaches to plantation differ considerably. Students should consider how the background of each writer informed their opinions and why their opinions about the Irish and the process of plantation differed.

- a) Written shortly after the 1598 overthrow of the Munster plantation, the anonymous author of "The Supplication of the Blood of the English Most Lamentably Murdered in Ireland, Cryeng Out of the Yearth for Revenge" wrote in favour of punitive plantation. He was highly critical of both the Irish and Old English communities and argued that they needed to be subdued and supplanted.

"This malice of theirs naturally engrafted in their stomackes this canker deeply eaten into their hartes, will never be worne out, untill either they have cleane worne up out of the contry, or yo<sup>re</sup> ma:<sup>tie</sup> weeded them. Weedes they are O Queene, the naturall plants of their owne soyle; the earth of Irland is their naturall mother, a stepdame to us: yo<sup>u</sup> can never soe cherishe us, what care soe ever yo<sup>u</sup> take about our plantinge, unless yo<sup>u</sup> seeke to supplant them, or at least to keepe them downe from their full groweth, but that they will overshadowe us, but y<sup>t</sup> they will keepe the warmethe of the sonne from us."

“What wise gardiner would have suffered them soe to have growne? What polityck governor that had had any care of the Comon Wealthe 3ommitted to his chardge, any regarde of his owne honor, (for in the flourishing estate of the cuntry consistes the honor and glorie of the ruler) yea, any respect to his owne securitie and safety, would have slepte till they had ben soe strengthened? till they had ben soe weaponed? till they had been soe throughly w<sup>th</sup> all kinde of armor furnished? But god hath taken away the wisdome of o<sup>re</sup> wisemen, that o<sup>re</sup> punishment might come the roundlyer, and the redylyer on, after o<sup>re</sup> transgressions and offences.”<sup>1</sup>

- b) Also written in 1598, the author of “That planting of Collonies, and that to be begonned onely by the dutch, will geue best entrance to the reformation of Vlster” was in favour of exemplary plantation. Internal evidence strongly suggests that the author was an Old Englishman, possibly the lawyer Richard Hadsor. According to this author, the Irish could be taught “civil ways” if the plantation presented itself as a peaceful colony in which undertakers adhered to strict regulations and guiding principles. Unlike “The Supplication”, this author blames greedy colonists and adventurers for the shortcomings of previous colonial ventures.

“The onely way then must be to plante collonies, and that by geuinge absolutely to one great Personnage some one Shire, assigning him some certain number of Gentlemen of estimation, to whome the whole may be distributed in sundry partes, w<sup>th</sup> a Subdiuision from those men to a lower sorte, and still planting neere together, that they may be the better able to seconde each other vpon all occasions. Prouided alwaies they be wholly Englishe.”

“So shall they be tyed to the obedience of such orders and lawes, in keping numbers of horse and foote of the Englishe, and all other obseruances, that shalbe sett downe in their Tenures: where otherwise such planters as are leaft to their owne willes, haue taken libertie to sell awaye their possessions, or lett the same to ferme, to such as will geue moste, be he what he liste, Irishe or ells. By meanes whereof Leyse and Offaly, called the Kings and Queenes Contrie, are destroyed, wasted, and in a manner loste, being but lately conquered and inhabited w<sup>th</sup> {fol. 233r} Englishe, for lack of one chief man to tye them to their obeysance of their limited dueties. And Munster is lyke to followe in the same sorte, yf preuention be not the sooner vsed in constraining them to keepe English Tenants according to their Tenures.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The Sword: The Second Desmond Rebellion (1579-83):**

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<sup>1</sup> W. Maley (ed.), ‘The Supplication of the Blood of the English Most Lamentably Murdered in Ireland, Cryeng Out of the Yearth for Revenge (1598)’, *Anal. Hib.*, No. 36 (1995), pp. 38-9.

<sup>2</sup> TNA: PRO, SP 63/202(4)/75. (1598. That planting of Collonies, and that to be begonned onely by the dutch, will geue best entrance to the reformation of Vlster). See Ruth A. Canning, “‘May she be rewarded in heauen for righting her poore subiects in Ireland’: Lawyer Richard Hadsor and the Authorship of an Elizabethan Treatise on Ireland”, *Irish Jurist*, Vol. 55 (2016), pp. 1-24.

The devastation caused by the rebellion, but especially the scorched earth tactics of crown forces, is crucial to understanding the experiences of civilians, and the Irish more generally, during the late sixteenth century. Students should consider the impact war has on society, the economy, and physical geography. Indeed, how did colonial conflict affect people's livelihoods, families, and daily affairs?

- a) This excerpt from Edmund Spenser's *View* describes the desolation of Munster following the Desmond Rebellion. Spenser's comment about cannibalism was undoubtedly meant to reinforce the notion that the Irish were barbarians. It was probably as exaggeration as there are no other sources which corroborate incidents of cannibalism during the conflict. Nevertheless, the devastation depicted in this excerpt sheds light on the suffering endured by the inhabitants of Munster.

"I saw sufficiently exemplified in these late warres of Mounster; for not withstanding that the same was a most rich and plentifull countrey, full of corne and cattle, that you would have thought they should have beene able to stand long, yet ere one yeare and a halfe they were brought to such wretchednesse, as that any stony heart would have rued the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glynnes they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legges could not beare them; they looked like anatomies of death, they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eate dead carrions, happy where they could finde them, yea, and one another soone after, insomuch as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and, if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue therewithall; that in short space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentifull countrey suddainely left voyde of man and beast; yet sure in all that warre, there perished not many by the sword, but all by the extremetie of famine, which they themselves had wrought."<sup>3</sup>

### **The Gun-loop: The Nine Years' War and the Attack on the Munster Plantation (1598)**

In autumn 1598 the Confederate cause swept through Munster causing many native Irish to join the war. Unfortunately, these events have not been adequately studied from an Irish perspective. Instead, historians have been over-reliant on English sources for the history of early modern Ireland because they are more accessible, both in terms of language and availability. The excerpt presented on the tour is from one of the few surviving Irish sources, the *Annals of the Four Masters*, which recorded events from the Irish perspective. Students should consider how Irish people viewed events in Ireland, what the overthrow of the plantation meant to them, and why they restored lands and castles to the earl of Desmond. To better appreciate how divergent Irish and English accounts of Irish affairs were, the passage from the Four Masters can be compared to English interpretations, like the following excerpt from a letter by William Saxey.

- a) William Saxey was an English judge who was appointed Chief Justice of Munster in 1594. He was accused of corruption on numerous occasions and his handling of Irish land claims and disputes was often dishonest. In this letter, Saxey describes the attacks

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<sup>3</sup> Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds.), (Oxford, 1997), pp. 101-102.

on the Munster plantation to Elizabeth's chief counsellor in England, Sir Robert Cecil. Saxey portrays the violence as unjustified and barbarous without acknowledging the fact that the lands in question had been confiscated from the Irish by dubious means following the Desmond Rebellion.

“These combinations and revolts have effected many execrable murders and cruelties upon the English, as well in the county of Limerick, as in the counties of Cork and Kerry, and elsewhere; infants taken from the nurse's breast, and their brains dashed against the walls; the heart plucked out of the body of the husband in the view of the wife, who was forced to yield the use of her apron to wipe off the blood from the murderers' fingers; [an] English gentleman at midday in a town cruelly murdered, and his head cleft in divers pieces; divers sent into Youghal amongst the English, some with their throats cut, but not killed, some with their tongues cut out of their heads, others with their noses cut off; by view whereof the English might the more bitterly lament the misery of their countrymen, and fear the like to befall to themselves”

“Besides, the manifold spoils, thefts, and violences daily done unto the English, the sight and consideration of which miseries would force any Englishman to bleed in the common calamity of the English, who in manner all are utterly undone, and every one after the rate of his fortune doth smart exceedingly. And these execrable parts are performed by the Irish tenants and servants of the English; and those that but the last day were fed and nourished by the English, are now the thieves that violently before their faces take from them their corn, cattle, and other goods; and the party spoiled thinketh himself happy, if he escape without loss of life, or other shameful villainy to himself, his wife, or children; whereby it seemeth that it is a plot laid down by the traitors, that every Irish next inhabiting should kill and spoil his English neighbour.”<sup>4</sup>

## **2(a). Additional Resources**

Video link:

- Fergal Keane on Britain's colonial legacy in Ireland, BBC News (5:20 minutes)  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qgQT7ZjfSbw>

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<sup>4</sup> William Saxey to Sir Robert Cecil, 26 Oct. 1598, *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1598-99*, p. 300.

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## **4. Teaching Plan**

Students should consider how colonisers (the English) justified confiscating lands from their original proprietors (the Irish). They should also think about the purpose of colonies, how they were established, and the kind of personnel who took part in such ventures. Finally, students should reflect on native reactions: how were natives supposed to react to English encroachment during the sixteenth century?

### Class Discussion Questions

- 1) Why did the English want to establish colonies in Ireland?
- 2) How does Richard Beacon expect the Irish to behave following their conquest? Is this a “fair” expectation?
- 3) How did provincial presidencies undermine the great magnates of Ireland?
- 4) What kind of authority do the “Instructions for the President and Council of Munster” grant provincial presidents?
- 5) Is it fair that provincial presidents could torture individuals based on “vehement suspicion and presumption of any great offence”?
- 6) How did James Fitzgerald use religion to legitimise his rebellion in 1579?
- 7) How did the second Desmond Rebellion affect the lives of individuals in Munster?
- 8) What does the excerpt from Raphael Holinshed reveal about Sir Walter Raleigh’s character?
- 9) Watch Fergal Keane’s BBC video (link above). Consider how the legacies of famous colonisers are interpreted differently. Are colonial “heroes”, like Raleigh and Gilbert, really

heroes? And as historians, how do we rewrite history to include those who suffered at the hands of celebrated figures?

- 10) What chief concerns are revealed by the abstract for repeopling Munster and how did they propose to overcome them?
- 11) Based on these articles, what lessons do you think the English had learned from previous colonial enterprises?
- 12) What does Robert Payne's "Brief Description" tell you about the kind of people who settled in Munster?
- 13) What actions or behaviours undermined the survival of the colony?
- 14) What, in your opinion, were the main problems facing colonial projects in Ireland?