

Northern Ireland

Changing from conflict to peace

by

Paul Bracey
Senior Lecturer in Education (History)
Northampton University College

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Introduction

This study unit looks at how a group of teenagers in 1994 felt about the peace process in that year.

We know that this broke down but was taken up again in 1997.

The road to peace has not been easy and the unit concludes by trying to suggest how the teenagers might feel about the changes so far.

1. Ideas about each other

Catholic and Protestant children in 1994

You are going to find out what groups of Catholic and Protestant children thought about each other in 1994.

On the following page are extracts written by children aged 13 about what they think or know about children from 'the other side'.

Cut out each extract.

Task

- 1. Working in pairs read through each comment.**
- 2. Make two separate piles - one for Catholic comments, the other for Protestant comments.**
- 3. Divide each pile in two, separating (a) the comments which show that children dislike the other side from (b) the rest.**
- 4. What do you notice about the comments in (b)?**

- 5. What do you think the children would find easiest and most difficult in getting together with the other side?**

I don't know all that much about Protestants but I don't think that they are all that different from us.	I just thought they were Taigs or Finean B's, which is what we call them. I didn't know anything about them, we just used to fight.
Catholics play different sports like Gaelic and hurley and things like that.	Protestants want Northern Ireland to be part of the UK.
The thing I don't like about Protestants is that they march and parade and they still seem to be treated better by the police. They also have English names and their religious sermons are different.	Their houses look like ours and I suppose they aren't that different but I think they have bigger families because they don't believe in contraception.
Most Protestants are Loyalists and want to remain part of Britain.	I know that Catholics have different names like Kieran, Sean and Patrick.
I don't know much about Protestants but all I know is that they are human, just like us.	We call Protestants Orange B's and Snouts, I don't really know why!
Catholics support football teams like Celtic, Rangers or Cliftonville - if you see someone wearing that football strip you know they're Catholic.	Protestants believe that Ulster is part of Britain. They support the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) because it is part of the British police force.
Protestants play sports like rugby and cricket.	They have pictures of the Pope in their houses.
Protestants have pictures of the Queen in their houses and Union Jacks flying on street corners.	Most Catholics think that the RUC police force is Protestant so they hate the police and also the British army.
Protestants will wear Rangers and Linfield football kits. They also live in places like the Shankill which is a Protestant area.	What everyone knows about Protestant communities is that they light bonfires on the 11th of July and they go marching through the streets of Belfast celebrating King William's victory at the Battle of Boyne.
The Catholics here are different to Catholics in southern Ireland. I met some Catholics in Dublin and they didn't care about a united Ireland, but the ones you meet here are all Republican and believe in a united Ireland.	I couldn't stand Protestants, I thought they were the scum of the earth. I used to go to school just down the road and I had to go past the Protestant estate every day. I used to get lots of hassle because they knew I was Catholic because of my school Uniform.
Catholics live in different areas to us, like the Falls which is a Catholic area. They do to different churches to us which they call 'Mass', but I don't know why. They believe in God as Protestants but they put much more emphasis on Mary than we do.	

2. Case studies: Sean and Chris

Task 1 - your experience

1. Have you ever been bullied or had nasty things said or done to you?

2. How did you feel about it?

3. How do you feel about the people who did this to you?

Task 2 - finding out about Sean and Chris's experiences

Work in pairs. One person is to read and answer the following questions on Sean's story and the other is to read and answer questions on Chris's story.

Sean's story		Chris's story	
1	What is his religion?	1.	What is his religion?
2.	What happened to him?	2.	What happened to his family?
3.	What does he want?	3.	What does he want?

Task 3 - sharing what you have found out

1. Share the experiences of the two young people and write them down in the above chart?

2. Think about how peace may affect Sean and Chris.

You may wish to think about the following:

how are they the same?

are there differences - if so, what are these differences?

Task 4 - looking to the future

Using the information you have read and your own ideas, suggest what you think needs to happen to help peace overcome problems faced by people like Sean and Chris.

1. The next few weeks

2. The next year

3. The next 5 years

4. The next 50 years

Sean, aged 17

I live in Newtonabbot in North Belfast in a Catholic community called Longlands. I have four brothers and at the moment I am unemployed. My mum and dad are separated and my dad works in the Republic, but he comes back at the weekends.

My life during the troubles

I couldn't stand Protestants, I thought they were the scum of the earth. I used to go to school just down the road and I had to go past the Protestant estate every day. I used to get lots of hassle and once I was beaten up. -I was cutting through a field and some kids were playing golf in the field and one of them came over and hit me with the golf club. They knew I was Catholic because of my school uniform.

I got up and tried to walk away. It wasn't too bad, no broken bones, but after that my mother brought me to school for a few weeks and then I took a different route for a while until they forgot about me.

I used to fight a lot before I joined the integrated youth group. All the people from the Catholic estates used to meet on the bridge between Longlands and White City. You don't really do much, just throw stones at each other. Some would get beaten up, but I've never actually hit a Protestant. The worst thing I've done is throw a stone which caught a boy right under his nose, split his mouth open.

At the time it made me feel good but now I feel disgusted. Now I know they are normal human beings, just like me, only a different religion. All you have to do is go up and talk to them and find out what they're really like.

The youth group brings people together and opens up their views and beliefs. Before I didn't know them, I just thought I didn't like them. It took about a month to get to know each other and after the long summer holiday it's a bit like starting from scratch again.

What peace means for me

There is still a lot of hatred. One of my brothers can't stand Protestants, but you can't get through to him, he thinks he's one of the lads. But now I can walk through Protestant estates, with a lot less prejudice. I want jobs, equality, no racial discrimination, being able to talk to a Protestant, being able to walk into a bar without any hassle. You have to talk to them and find out what they are really like.

We can make it through

Music by Eamonn Barrett.

Words by Jeff, Paul and Allen

If I can be your friend you can be my friend

Together we can make it through

You've walked along your roads

I've walked along my roads

Together we can change it, know we're gonna

make it true, we're gonna make it through.

Chorus

So many years we've been hearing of pain

For the first time in our lives

We sense the time for change

Together, forever

We're gonna make it through.

What is the difference between you and me

Born into this world just waiting to be free

Along came the guns, along came the

bombs,

So tell me my friend what has done wrong?

We're gonna make it through.

Chris, aged 16

I live with my mum and my older brother Geoffrey in County Down, just outside Belfast. We have lived here for about 10 years. I am doing my GCSEs at the moment, and I like playing football and going out with friends. I want to stay in Northern Ireland because most of my friends and family are here. The countryside is nice and the people are very friendly.

My life during the troubles

The last thing I remember about the troubles was the bombing at Enniskillen. I think the IRA planted a bomb on Remembrance Day. I was 5 or 6 when it happened, and it has always stuck in the back of my mind. I didn't see a lot of the troubles because I wasn't allowed to travel into Belfast. My mum thought it was too dangerous.

My dad worked in the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) as a dog-handler, sniffing out explosives all over Northern Ireland and Belfast. He didn't talk about his work at home, but he used to bring explosives home and put them out in the garden for the dog to find. Bruce, a black Labrador, was like a family pet. I wouldn't say I worried about my dad, but I did worry if I heard cars coming down our lane at night because we were scared of terrorist attacks.

Only my mum's closest friends knew my dad was a policeman. Every time I went on holiday I was told to say he was a draughtsman, which is what he did before he joined the police. You never knew who you were talking to, and the IRA were going around shooting policemen. I don't know why, maybe because most of the police were Protestants and they thought they were more supportive towards Protestants.

What happened to my dad

When I was 11 years old, my dad was shot by two IRA gunmen. It was a Saturday morning, my brother and I were watching TV, when my dad's Sergeant came to the door and told us he had been in an accident. Later on I found out he and his workmate were shot in their van while they waited for the security gates to go up in the centre of Belfast. He must have been on his way to check somewhere.

My first reaction was to think it wasn't serious, that he had only been shot in the leg or something. When I realised he was dead, I felt anger at first at the people who did it, then hurt and sorrow for myself.

We kept Bruce, my dad's dog, after that. It was good to have something to remember my dad by. For the most important years of my life I didn't have a dad to talk to and take me places. I remember seeing dads taking their kids out and thinking 'you're on your own here'. You can't forgive things like that, I don't think I could ever talk to the men who shot him, I have too much hate.

The police are a necessity. If we didn't have them it would be like a world war here. They're saving people from both sides of the community from being hurt by bullets and bombs, and reducing crimes like robbery. At one stage I wanted to join the police, I went there for my work experience, but now that there is the ceasefire I have heard that they are cutting back on the number of police officers in Belfast so I am thinking of other careers.

Now people can go into Belfast without fear hanging over them. I think my dad would feel that he had fulfilled part of his job if he had been alive to see the peace now. He wanted to make people's lives in Northern Ireland better, to help people. He believed helping everyone by finding bombs and saving lots of lives.



Ann Todd and her sons pictured at the funeral. His dog Bruce lived with the Todds and now the RUC has decided that the labrador can stay on as a family pet.

3. Hopes for the future

Peace poems written by children in Belfast aged 13-14

Work in groups.

Task 1

1. Each of you has to look at a different poem by yourself.
2. Choose two different coloured pencils.
Make a key:
Colour 1 = things children hated in the past.
Colour 2 = the children's hopes for the future.
3. Read your poem and underline words/phrases in the appropriate colour.

Task 2

1. Discuss what you have found out with the rest of your group.
2. Find out any fears or hopes which the different young people have which are the same and make a list of them below.

A long time ago when they started to fight
People found it hard to sleep at night
The shooting and killing refused to stop
But now its peace that we have got

The people are happy and so am I
And no more families will have to cry
They now feel safe when they're alone
which makes them feel happy to stay
at home.

Now where we live there's a lasting
peace
And during the day there are no police
Maybe in future they'll all go home
And leave us all to live alone

Maybe now we can live together
Protestants and Catholics will be forever
Ireland will now be a happy place
where everybody has a smile on their face

'Peace at last'

I'm glad that it's all over now,
I wish that it could stay like this,
Because if the killing would stay
life wouldn't be worth living.
Why can't it be like France or Spain?
No fighting or no killing.
I'm glad that peace has arisen
because we don't want any more killing.

No soldiers or no army
No checkpoints or barriers
to separate the two religions
from fighting and from killing.
These two religions, foes of the past
are trying to get peace and love
at last.

Fenians and prods used to fight
But with some help
there could be light.

Poem: Ireland's future

25 years of war in my mind
Now its time to put it behind
With a new future for Ireland to have
Now its a time to grow and love
Catholics and Protestants enemies of the past
Its now a time to love at last.
The tri-colour and the Union Jack
Now its time to put them back
With a peaceful country not yet known
Hopefully soon, Ireland will be grown.

Every night before the peace
I experienced frights
If I was alone and I heard a noise
I thought it was terrorists

When I was a child
I had nightmares of ghosts
but in the last five years
they have been about terrorists
coming into my house at night
guns blazing killing all my family

Now peace makes me feel much better
without fear, without that nightmare
Its rooms I'm look to ghosts.
Peace is a breath of fresh air,
for me and my family.
though I'm sure peace means much
more to other people
People who are worse off than myself.

What has come true?

Timeline

Tasks

1. How many of the things which you noted in your previous tasks have happened?

2. How do you think Sean and Chris and the children who wrote the poems would feel about the changes since 1994?
