

Conflict from Compromise: The Anglo Irish Treaty

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Individual Performance

Process Paper: 495 words

The National History Day theme “Conflict and Compromise” turned my mind toward politics since political decisions can impact the lives of many. Because of my family ancestry in Ireland, I explored the idea of Irish politics. Background reading of tertiary sources such as BBC History and History.com led me to the quest for Irish independence. This narrower scope yielded reading of more focused sources until I finally decided upon one of the most significant and tangible steps in that quest for independence: the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

During further research, I read a paper titled “The Freedom to Achieve Freedom” which illustrated the conflict between Eamon de Valera and Michael Collins. This intriguing narrative inspired me to narrow my research to the conflict I would later nickname the Intra-Irish conflict, a conflict amplified by the compromise in the Anglo-Irish Treaty. I searched databases for both American and Irish newspaper articles on Irish politics and the Irish Civil War. Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, a project of various institutions, provided an extended collection of documents regarding the treaty including letters, memos and meeting minutes that were solid research gold. Secondary sources were also crucial to my research. The invaluable *Big Fellow, Long Fellow*, yielded detailed analysis and numerous direct quotations of Collins and de Valera. After extensive research I had a story--the intra-Irish conflict--ready to be told, I just needed a method to tell it.

Having explored the idea of a performance from the beginning, I wanted to portray characters who could engage the audience. Because of the numerous primary sources that would provide original historical dialogue, it seemed my best option. My most important decision in the writing process was designing the performance to be similar to a play rather than a lecture. I attempted to craft the performance to be as historically accurate as possible by incorporating direct quotations. Excluding the narrator and the characters’ first two speeches, written to present context, 60% of the characters’ lines are direct or minimally edited quotations. I endeavored to make the historical characters distinct. In terms of characterization, Michael Collins, the former soldier, was portrayed with a lower voice in a hunched

position while de Valera, the intellectual, spoke with a higher voice and stood with a conceited posture. I watched several of Lloyd George's speeches to match my portrayal with his cadence and style of speaking. Several aspects of the performance were crafted to portray the story, time period and characters.

Throughout my research, I learned that the intra-Irish conflict embodied the theme. It seemed peculiar to me that the Irish were in factions entering negotiations. After the agreement was signed, the division within Ireland would only grow and invert the way we view conflict and compromise today. In the end, Ireland's settlement was neither a failed compromise nor a perfect one. While the Anglo-Irish Treaty attempted to solve the conflict between Britain and Ireland it instead amplified the intra-Irish conflict to the point of civil war.