EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

QUIZZES! PUZZLES! GAMES!

AND MORE

Learn about Genealogy and how to become a family history detective

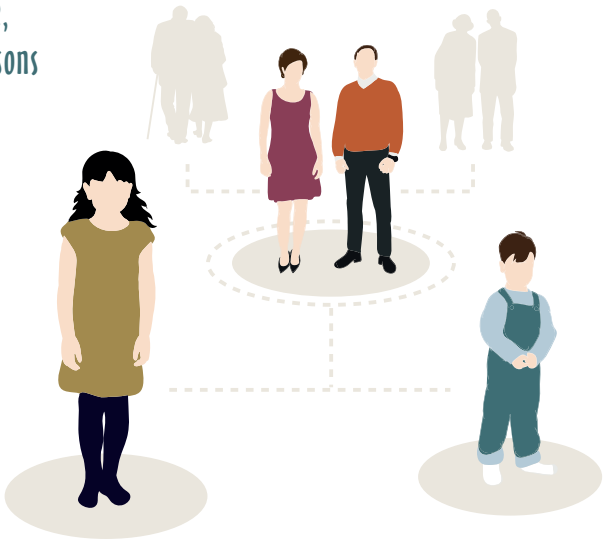
GENEALOGY

Classroom Pack

Read about William Butler Yeats and his artistic family

A HISTORY OF... Genealogy

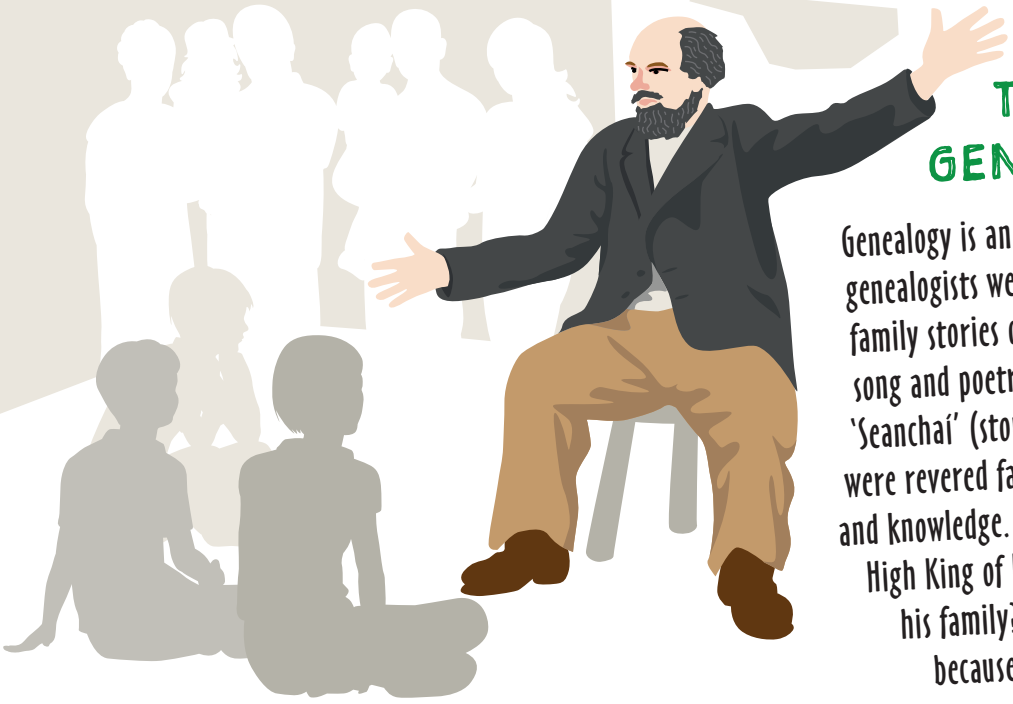
Genealogy is the process of studying and tracing our family lineage, line, or history. People research their family history for many reasons – they might be curious about what happened to their ancestors, want to know more about where their family came from, see if there are any reoccurring patterns (like a particular career or hobby), or want to understand themselves, their identity, and their place in the world better.



WHAT IS A GENEALOGIST?

There are many types of genealogists. There are amateur genealogists, people who typically research the history of their own family. Then, there are professional genealogists, like those at the Irish Family History Centre located in EPIC, experts who have trained for many years to use things such as research software and record analysis to help other people discover more about their family history. There are also genealogists who specialise in a particular area, time period, or subject. Some genealogists even work alongside police or lawyers as detectives, analysing DNA and family records to help track down family members to solve crimes!

Irish Family History Centre



THE FIRST GENEALOGISTS

Genealogy is an old art. Some of the very first genealogists were bards: people who shared the family stories of royal rulers through storytelling, song and poetry. In Ireland, they were known as 'Seanchaí' (storytellers) and 'Filídh' (poets), and were revered far and wide as custodians of history and knowledge. Have you ever heard the tale of High King of Ireland, Fionn mac Cumhaill, and his family? These stories only survive today because of these early family historians.

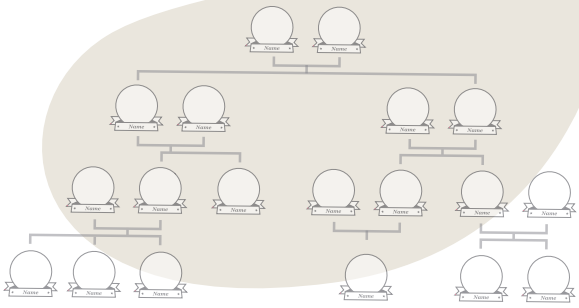
CRESTS AND FAMILY TREES

Chinese philosopher Confucius

As time went on, genealogy grew from a mostly oral, or spoken, tradition, into a written one. While elements of family crests (pictures and symbols) and family trees (records of relatives' names) can be found as far back as the Vikings and in the Bible, they didn't become common place until the Middle Ages, around the 11th century AD. At this time, it was mostly still royal families that recorded family history, but nowadays many families have their own crest or tree. The longest family tree in the world to date is that of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BC), and includes more than 2 million people!

McCarthy

O'Neill

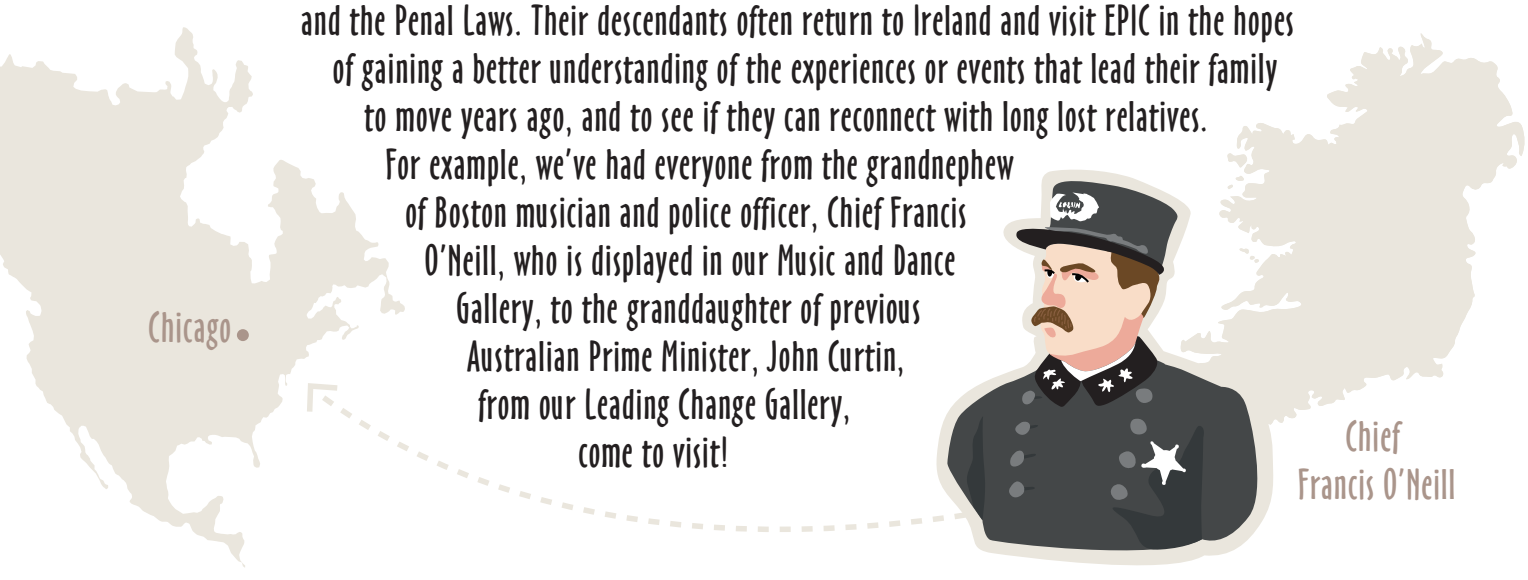


GENEALOGY TODAY

Nowadays, family history is researched, recorded and represented in many different ways. From the more traditional forms of oral storytelling, theatre, family trees and diaries; to newer inventions such as object analysis, exhibitions, and film!

At EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum, we tell the stories of many Irish people from all around the world. These people emigrated, or left Ireland, for all sorts of reasons: because they were looking to get married, find work or obtain land; they wanted an adventure or to have new experiences; or because they had to due to terrible events such as the Great Famine of AD 1845 – 1852 and the Penal Laws. Their descendants often return to Ireland and visit EPIC in the hopes of gaining a better understanding of the experiences or events that lead their family to move years ago, and to see if they can reconnect with long lost relatives.

For example, we've had everyone from the grandnephew of Boston musician and police officer, Chief Francis O'Neill, who is displayed in our Music and Dance Gallery, to the granddaughter of previous Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, from our Leading Change Gallery, come to visit!



Chief Francis O'Neill

GENEALOGY TRIVIA... wordsearch quiz

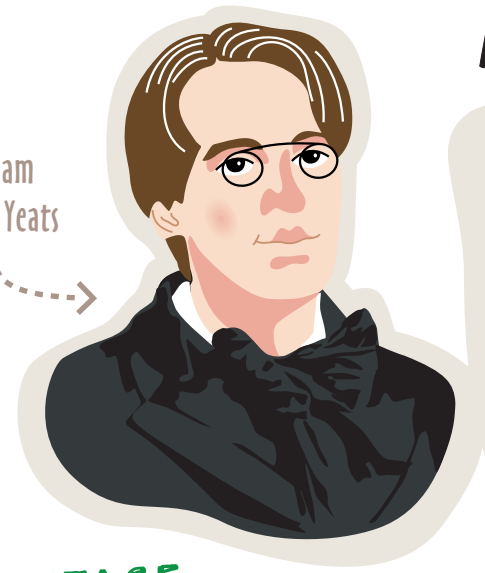
Now that you've learnt all about what a genealogist is, answer the questions below, and then find the answers in the word search.

1. Genealogy is the study of what history?
2. Researching your family history could help you discover more about this aspect of yourself.
3. Some of the earliest genealogists were known as this.
4. Ancient Irish storytellers.
5. Early genealogists were concerned with the histories of these rulers.
6. When someone leaves their home country.
7. Aspects of family crests can be traced back to these ancient people.
8. The event that forced the most people to leave Ireland.
9. The person with the longest family tree.
10. A career that genealogists may choose that involves solving crimes.

T	I	B	U	M	H	B	Z	W	U	C	D	E	R	U
B	H	Q	I	I	B	O	A	K	J	E	B	T	O	T
V	U	E	E	A	H	M	E	R	T	B	S	A	Y	P
B	C	C	G	M	H	G	P	E	D	G	C	R	A	W
Z	O	W	K	R	B	C	C	N	N	S	F	G	L	L
X	N	G	P	Y	E	T	N	I	Q	L	V	I	A	H
I	F	D	Q	C	I	A	K	A	A	U	L	M	P	B
I	U	N	T	V	Q	I	T	O	E	T	G	E	W	K
G	C	D	E	K	V	I	Y	F	V	S	E	P	R	F
Q	I	M	H	Y	X	Q	F	E	A	O	C	A	K	B
D	U	M	R	M	N	T	W	C	D	M	T	N	P	R
Z	S	K	L	S	J	A	J	W	P	U	I	E	J	J
R	Z	X	J	F	H	N	X	L	W	Y	L	N	Q	I
Y	T	I	T	N	E	D	I	C	U	M	H	V	E	Y
F	A	M	I	L	Y	J	U	Y	Z	J	T	N	H	P

Answers:
Family
Identity
Bards
Seanchai
Royal
Emigrate
Vikings
The Great Famine
Confucius
Detective

A FOCUS ON The Butler Yeats Family



William Butler Yeats

NAME
John, Susan, William, Jack, Lily and Lolly

ALIAS
The Butler Yeats family

DATE OF BIRTH
19th century

PLACE OF BIRTH
Ireland and UK

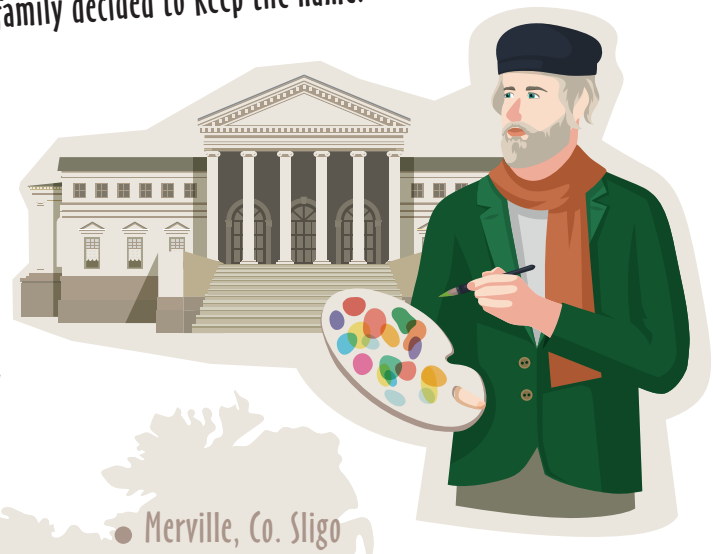
MUSEUM LOCATION
Creating and Designing/ Storytelling Galleries

HERITAGE

The Butler Yeats family were an Anglo-Irish family that lived between Ireland and England during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were descended from a man called Jervis Yeats, who was a soldier, linen-merchant, and well-known painter from the early 18th century. His grandchild, Benjamin Yeats, married a woman called Mary Butler. The Butlers were said to be descended from the brother of a high ranking nobleman, the 8th Earl of Ormond, so the family decided to keep the name.

JOHN (FATHER)

John Butler Yeats originally trained to be a lawyer. However, he abandoned this career path to be an artist instead, moving his family to London in 1867 to pursue his dream. He became very successful, painting the portraits of influential people in both Irish literature and politics.

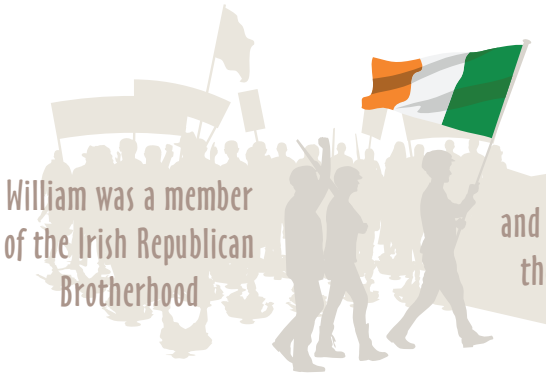


Merville, Co. Sligo

SUSAN (MOTHER)

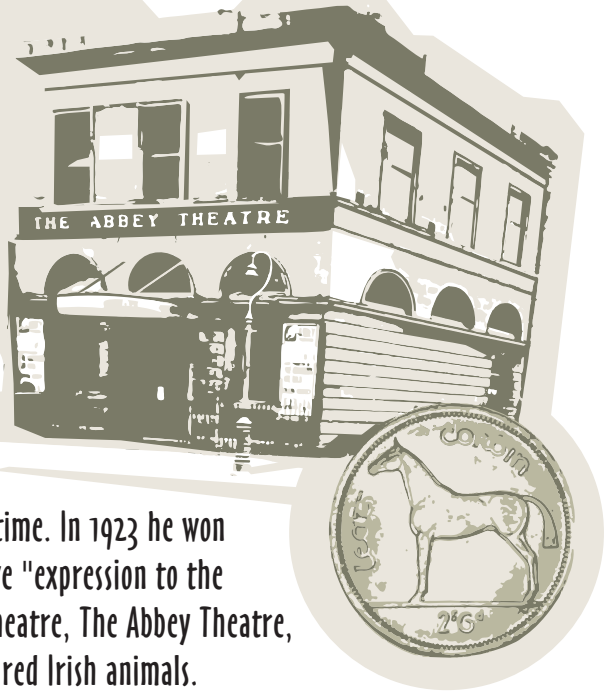
Susan Mary Pollexfen came from a wealthy family, who owned a milling and shipping business in the coastal town of Merville, Co. Sligo. John said that by marrying her, the family were given the language of the sea cliffs, and the children spent a lot of time there growing up. When in London, she would entertainment the family with old Irish stories and folktales from the area.

A FOCUS ON... The Butler Yeats Family



William was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood

and was later appointed to the first Senate in 1922



WILLIAM (OLDEST CHILD)

William began writing poetry at just 17 years old. He was always interested in politics – he was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and later went on to be appointed to the first Irish Senate in 1922. Spearheading the Irish Literary Revival, his writing championed ancient Irish myths, while also capturing the Ireland of his time. In 1923 he won the Nobel Prize in Literature, with the panel saying that his poetry gave "expression to the spirit of a whole nation". He also co-founded Ireland's first national theatre, The Abbey Theatre, and was on the commission to create the first Irish coins, which featured Irish animals.

ELIZABETH/ LOLLY (CHILD)

Lolly was a teacher for young children, and taught herself how to paint and use watercolours, publishing two books on the matter. She went on to be a very talented printmaker, co-owning and running a printing press with her sister Lily and publishing books by new Irish writers. They exclusively employed women, educating them in their Irish culture and heritage.

SUSAN/ LILY (CHILD)

Lily was the only child of the family born in Sligo. She was a talented embroiderer, trained by the daughter of William Morris, the founder of the famous Art & Craft movement in Britain, and her work was displayed at many fairs. She made everything from cushion and book covers to altar cloths.

Jack B Yeats

JACK (YOUNGEST CHILD)

Jack spent most of his youth in Sligo. A painter, he depicted Irish subjects such as races, ships and circuses, alongside universal themes such as loneliness. He produced some of his most important work after the Irish War of Independence, and in 1924 he won the first Olympic medal for the Irish Free State for his painting The Liffey Swim. Like his brother, Jack was also a writer – he published a number of novels and plays, and a collection of short stories for children about pirates and life at sea.

THE BUTLER YEATS FAMILY quiz

1. Why did the family keep the name 'Butler'?

2. Which members of the family were painters?

3. Which theatre did William co-found?

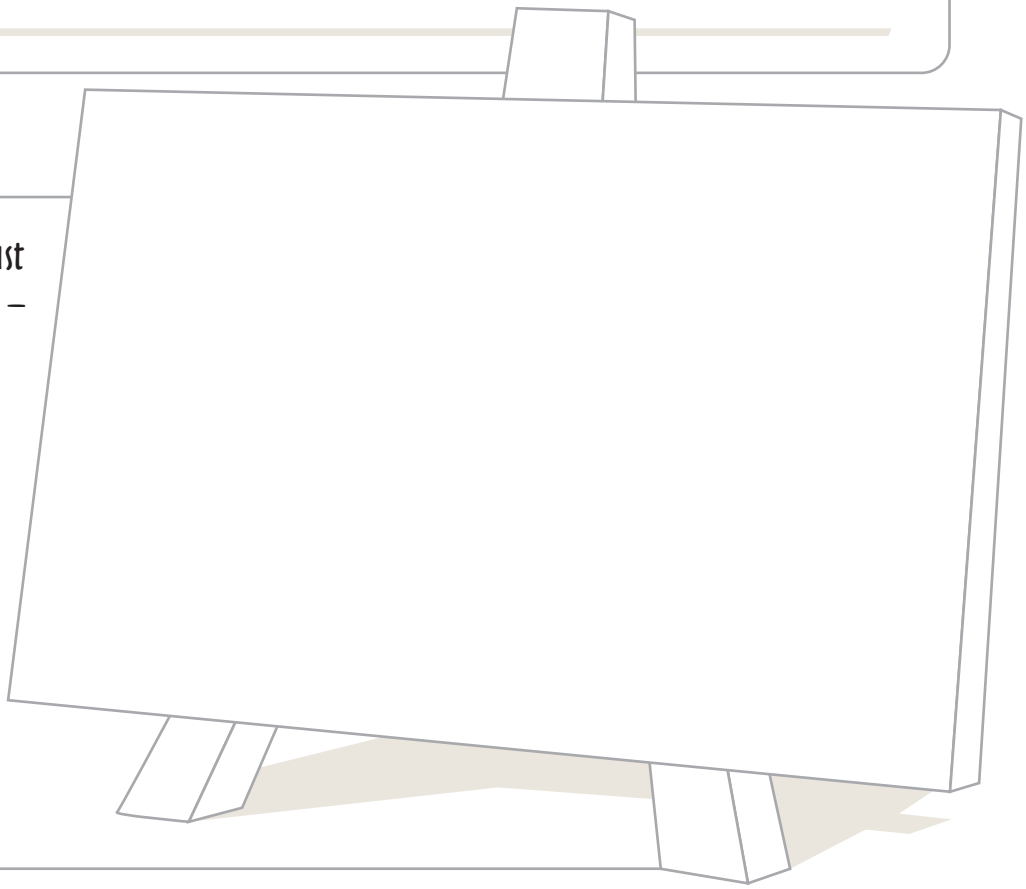
4. List three ways in which you think the Butler Yeats family history impacted their lives.

   1.

   2.

   3.

5. Family history isn't just about what people do – places can be very important too. Jack painted many scenes from his childhood. Imagine you are Jack, and draw a scene from your everyday life on the canvas.



Answers: 1) They were descended from a nobleman's family; 2) John and Jack; 3) The Abbey Theatre

ACTIVITY... Become a family history detective

Genealogy is a lot like detective work. You have to gather a lot of different information from various sources in order to piece together a picture of your family's history. Put on your detective hat and try your hand at this ancient art by taking part in the below detective tasks – who knows what you might discover!

STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR SUSPECTS
DESIGN YOUR FAMILY TREE

Detectives begin with facts and what they know, so start by trying to trace as many relatives as you can – first by using your own memory, and then by asking your family for help.

1. Starting with you and working backwards, write down a list of all the family members you know of. All you need is their name and date/year of birth.
2. Then, being as creative as possible, draw a tree big enough for all your family to fit on!
3. Cut out all the family names and dates you collected, and starting with you at the bottom of the trunk, stick all your family on to the tree.

TIPS

- **At each stage ask yourself or other family members these questions:**
  - Who were their parents?
  - Did they have any siblings?
  - Did they have any children?
- If you're not sure of specific dates, ask an adult for help with putting in estimated dates.
- If you're not sure of full names, you can leave first names blank or write 'Unknown'.
- Make your tree unique to you – for example, you could cut out drawings of flowers or fruits to write your family names on. You could also draw a specific type of tree that means something special to your family, such as a Christmas tree, or a Japanese Cherry Blossom tree.

STEP 2: THE INTERROGATION ROOM
CONDUCT AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

So we've discovered who our family is, but we don't know much about them, or how our family might have impacted us and our own identity. Detectives often unearth important clues by speaking to witnesses – or in this case, family members. For this activity, get your notepad ready, and choose an older member of your family to bring in for questioning!

Before you begin, devise 10 questions you want to ask your family member. We have some sample questions below to help guide you, but you are welcome to come up with a selection of your own unique questions if you want to dig deeper. Remember to write down everything you can – there could be an important clue afoot!

QUESTIONS

What were you like at my age? What hobbies or interests did you have - what did you do for fun?

Recount a funny story from your childhood.

Do you know of any stories from your grandparents?

What kind of house did you live in as a child? Did the family always live in the same place, and if not, where did they move to/ from?

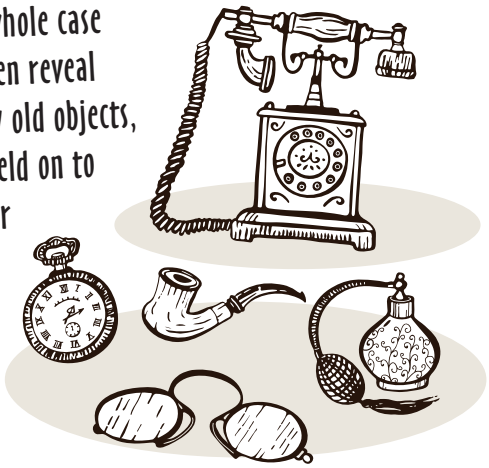
Did a relative teach you any skills that became a big part of your life story, for example, carpentry, playing an instrument, sewing, knitting, or farming?

What jobs did your parents have?

Tell me about something that happened to you that really impacted you.

Tell me about an historical event that happened during your lifetime that you remember vividly.

STEP 3: FORENSICS OBJECT ANALYSIS



Did you know that objects can be valuable sources of evidence? Sometimes a whole case is held together by an object found at the scene of the crime. Objects can often reveal clues about what occurred in the past, and objects in your home, particularly old objects, can reveal a lot about your family history and identity. Perhaps your aunt held on to a coat button that belonged to a sibling who died young, or your grandfather has a medal from a war, sport or competition that he took part in.

For this task, find an object or document at home that relates to your family's history and identity. Then fill out the fact file below. If you can't find anything at all, you can pick an object from your life that holds great meaning to you, and share its story instead.

FACT FILE

What object have you chosen?

Who did/ does it belong to?

Where did it come from?

What is special about it?

Sketch a picture of the object below, or include a photograph of it. If it is a photograph or document, use a scan or copy so as not to use the original.

Congratulations!
You are now a fully-fledged Family History Detective!

Want to explore further? Check out family history website Twile.com, where you can create your own digital family tree for free! You can eveninvite family members to contribute their own life experiences. And join us at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum and the Irish Family History Centre for one of our upcoming workshops, to take part in more fun family detective activities together!

GENEALOGY TODAY / RESOURCES

Want to discover more? There are many great organisations out there that help fledgling Family History Detectives, just like you! Delve deeper into your investigation by availing of the below resources.

Guide to Genealogy (Science & Nature)

by National Geographic Kids

This fascinating guide is the ultimate how-to for newbie genealogists. Exploring up to date resources, step-by-step guides, advancements and methods in a fun magazine format, there's a plethora of activities to try, including how to make a genealogy board game!

Family Tree Magazine

The adult 'Family Tree' magazine also has a fantastic kid's website that is jam-packed full of games and activity suggestions to take your genealogical research further, including downloadable family tree templates.

https://www.familytreemagazine.com/kids-genealogy/

Historopedia; The Story of Ireland from Then Until Now

by John and Fatti Burke

Genealogy isn't just about discovering who your relatives were, it's also exploring what they experienced. Uncover more about your Irish ancestors life no matter where they were from in this unique and vibrant introduction to Irish history for all ages.

Irish Family History Centre

Sometimes we all need a helping hand, and the staff at the Irish Family History Centre are experts in what they do. Book a consultation for one-to-one assistance, or leaf through their databases, which provide access to lots of different resources to help you get on your way.

https://www.irishfamilyhistorycentre.com/

National Library of Ireland

For Family History Detectives who wish to explore records and archives further, The National Library has a fantastic range of online resources, downloadable guides and even a genealogy advisory service to avail of.

https://www.nli.ie/en/family-history-introduction.aspx

Twile

Want to take your family tree further? Create a digital timeline of everything that's ever happened in your family with this website. Pull together all of your family history, memories, photos and stories in the same place, and invite family members all around the world to take part.

https://twile.com/

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum immerses you in the fascinating stories of the Irish people and honours the intrinsic connection between Ireland and its diaspora – no matter how many generations or oceans separate us!

But who are you? And what is your story? Whether you're just a little curious, or a fully-fledged family historian, we have something for you at the Irish Family History Centre located on-site, where our expert Genealogists can help you unearth your Irish roots.

Head to epicchq.com to discover more.