November 20

Universal Children’s Day

But why spend only one day thinking about children’s rights?
In 2014, after Russia had invaded the Crimea region in Ukraine, I did a class with students answering their questions about it and outlining what was happening, using my phone to show videos and photos (it was a small class). As the class was winding up, my phone buzzed with a news alert announcing the next development. It was the most current class I’d ever taught.

I enjoy when students ask about events which are taking place in the world today, but I don’t get a lot of time to discuss these things with them when we have a whole curriculum to get through. So I’ve put this together for CSPE classes and I figure that it might be handy for other teachers and students elsewhere - if nothing else, it might answer a few questions. There’ll be new issues every week, seeing as there are always new issues in the world each week!

All photos are from Wikimedia Commons unless otherwise credited. Photo of Mary Robinson on page 11 is from the MRCJF. All outside sources are cited and linked. If you spot any errors, please contact me at historyjk.blogspot.ie.
Gerry Adams has urged the government to strongly reconsider its decision not to purchase revolutionary leader Padraig Pearse’s final letter of surrender, written at the end of the Easter Rising in 1916.

Adams has written to Heather Humphreys, Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, urging both the Taoiseach and herself to seek out the mechanisms by which the letter may be purchased by the State. The government has said that the letter would “not be the best use of taxpayer’s money”.

The letter could leave Ireland following an auction set to take place next month, with a guide price for the document set between €1 million and €1.5 million.

The auctioneer, Stuart Cole, told TheJournal.ie that there was considerable American interest in purchasing Pearse’s letter, and that one potential buyer had already sought an export license for document. Cole also pointed out that he had spent several months in contact with the government and the National Library, but could not persuade them to purchase the letter.

A spokesperson for the Department of Arts told TheJournal.ie that, following consultation with a number of “national cultural institutions”, it was the “shared view that the amount being sought for this one letter, in the order of €1.5 million, would not be the best use of taxpayer’s money.”

Adams, however, strongly criticised this stance. The Sinn Féin leader said: “It is a quite frankly bizarre decision, particularly so in the centenary year of the 1916 Rising, for an Irish government to again pass up the opportunity to acquire a document of such historical import and significance. Everyone appreciates that State funds are not unlimited, but equally citizens will be perplexed at the continuing policy of the government of placing a price tag on our heritage and our history.”
WE WERE ALL CHILDREN ONCE
Sunday 20 November was **Universal Children’s Day.** This day was first established by the **United Nations** in 1954, and is dedicated to raising awareness about the welfare of children all over the world.

Twice since then (in 1959 and 1989) the UN has adopted declarations and conventions on children’s rights - which are designed to protect children everywhere.

Sadly, even today the world fails to adequately protect all of its children, which is particularly sad if you consider that we’ve all been children, and we’ve all experienced the same need for safety and security.

### 1959: THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

This declaration was first adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, and although the League didn’t survive World War II, the new United Nations adopted it once again thirty-five years later. The document outlines some important basic rights that children everywhere must have - the right to be fed, to be sheltered, to be helped and to be allowed to develop.

**Read it here:** [http://uni.cf/2gC9JOA](http://uni.cf/2gC9JOA)

In 1989, the Declaration was replaced by a larger and more comprehensive document.

Turn over the page to find out more about the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.**
There are 54 articles in total in the **UNCRC**. Some of them govern the conditions under which the Convention comes into force in different countries, but most are dedicated to a particular right to which every child in the world is entitled. Some of them are laid out here, but to see the whole thing, look up [http://bit.ly/2gfcp0H](http://bit.ly/2gfcp0H)

**ARTICLE 1**

Defines a child as any person under the age of **18**.

**ARTICLE 2**

All of the rights in the Convention apply to **all** children, and the State has an obligation to uphold these rights.

**ARTICLE 7**

All children have the right to a **name** and **nationality**, and to know and be cared by his or her **parents**.
ARTICLE 12
Every child has the right to express an opinion and to have it taken into account in accordance with their age.

ARTICLES 13, 14 & 15
Each of these articles describe children’s freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion and association.

ARTICLES 19 - 23
These articles all concern protection - protection from abuse and protection for all children being adopted, who are refugees or who are disabled.

ARTICLE 27
This article outlines the rights of every child to be able to grow up free from poverty, with assistance from the State when needed.

ARTICLES 28 & 29
These articles concern every child’s right to an education, fostering their development and preparing them for adult life.

ARTICLES 32 - 40
These articles address safety from drug abuse, sexual exploitation, trafficking and torture. They also address the right of children to respect of their rights if accused of a crime.
CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN 2016

All across the world as you read this, children are encountering difficulties. Whether here at home or on the other side of the world, all children need people to stand up for them.

The following news stories were gathered by googling news about children in the week coming up to Universal Children’s Day.

Child refugees forced to work for nothing after leaving Calais


Child refugees sent from the demolished Calais “jungle” to supposedly safe welcome centres across France claim they have been pressed into **forced labour**.

Legal interviews with unaccompanied minors dispersed from the refugee camp to France’s official reception centres have uncovered allegations that children have been forced into **unpaid work** and ordered on to farms to pick apples for French supermarkets. Youngsters said they were too scared to refuse the work because they **feared it would harm their chances of claiming asylum** to the UK.

Of 33 teenage boys interviewed by the charity **Safe Passage UK**, a quarter also said they had not been given **clean clothes** since they arrived at the centres after the demolition of the notorious Calais camp nearly four weeks ago.

One of the teenage boys, based in a camp in northern France, said: “It is horrible. We worked all day picking apples and were left to eat the rotten ones. The rest went to be sold in France. We just want to be with our family in the UK.”

Another said they were each forced to pick 4kg of fruit every weekday afternoon, while staying at a French reception centre, and worked under the fear that refusing to do so would impair the chances of making it to the UK. He said: “We are scared not to do it in case it affects our asylum claims. What if they don’t let me live here and kick me out?”

In July, **Theresa May** vowed to make it a priority to rid the world of the “barbaric evil” of modern slavery, and said the forced labour of minors was one of its ugliest manifestations. On Wednesday Home Office minister Robert Goodwill told MPs that children in the welcome centres were “in a place of safety and being well looked after” and he had “not received any concerns about the facilities”.


Syria conflict: Children's hospital hit in deadly Aleppo strikes


A hospital, blood bank and ambulances are reported to have been hit as Syrian government aircraft and artillery bombarded rebel-held eastern Aleppo.

The staff of a children's hospital in the Shaar district were forced to take shelter in the basement.

Activists say at least 32 people, including children, have been killed in Aleppo over the past two days.

Activists confirmed the resumption of government air strikes, amid reports by state media of large troop deployments on several fronts ahead of a major ground assault... At least 21 people, including five children and an emergency worker, were killed, the group said. The Independent Doctors Association reported that a children's hospital it supported had been badly damaged.

It quoted the hospital's director, Dr Hatem, as saying he was trapped in the basement.

"The planes are up above. We can't get out. Maybe we can protect ourselves in this room," he added.

Rescue workers from the Syria Civil Defence, who are also known as the White Helmets, meanwhile confirmed a paramedic had been killed in Karam al-Beik.

"The helicopters won't stop for a single moment," spokesman Bebars Mishal told the Reuters news agency. "Right now, the bombing won't let up."
Putting children in shelters against international law


Placing homeless children in emergency accommodation is a breach of their rights under international law, according to a new child protection report.

The ninth report of the **Special Rapporteur on Child Protection**, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, focuses on a number of areas including housing rights, cyber protection, children’s digital rights, the operation of the child protection system, sex education for children and young people about consent, and children’s right to play.

The report said the fact **1,500 children** are living in emergency homeless accommodation in 2015 was “unacceptable”.

Dr Shannon also raised the issue of a child’s right to be forgotten online.

“The relevance for children of the ‘right to be forgotten’ should be acknowledged, children should be educated about the matter, and it should be understood that the age at which an individual posts information online should be considered a very important factor in decisions about whether to remove an individual’s personal information from sites.

“It must be ensured that children's access to information is not unreasonably restricted by blanket filters blocking websites which offer education and support. It is vital to take steps to combat cyber-bullying, including through education of parents. However, the importance of dialogue and support for children, rather than simply prohibitions on internet usage, should be part of this education,” he said.
On detention centres, Dr Shannon said the imposition of a sentence of detention should only be used as a “measure of last resort”.

He said, “imaginative community sanctions” should be used more to develop the skills and interests of each individual young offender, while simultaneously benefiting their local community.


“The ISPCC has long recommended that children should be placed in emergency accommodation for a short time only, and that this is not a permanent response to homelessness. The Special Rapporteur has stated that this temporary solution is in breach of international law, something the ISPCC has believed for quite some time. We need to remove it as an option permanently, by giving all homeless children the right to suitable temporary accommodation, advice and assistance,” she said.

Children’s Minister Katherine Zappone described the report as a “blueprint” for child protection in Ireland.

“The report of the Child Protection Rapporteur is always an important moment to focus on the need to bring a children’s lens to every area of Government policy,” she said. “The report covering 2015 is no different and I have brought its contents and recommendations to the attention of my cabinet colleagues. While progress has been made on many issues, there are others which require action. Each minister and department must take a lead for their own areas of responsibility.”
A recent survey of more than 2,000 members of the LGBT community in Ireland found that, despite the marriage referendum, only eight per cent of respondents feel schools are safe places and fully inclusive of gay or transgender students...

Studies suggest that at least 29,000 Irish second-level students are LGBT. Most are not out. But homophobic bullying affects all young people. They don’t have to actually be LGBT to be on the receiving end, they just have to be perceived as gay or a little bit outside gender norms.

The Department of Education acknowledged that this form of bullying had “been found to be prevalent, with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour”. In 2013, it told schools they needed to publish explicit, written policies on tackling bullying, including homophobic and transphobic bullying, ideally on the school’s website.

Three years on, the programme for government is committed to renewing the action plan on bullying and plans are afoot. Most schools do seem to have implemented progressive and proactive anti-bullying policies, at least on paper. The department is funding a number of anti-bullying initiatives at primary and post-primary level, primarily through LGBT youth group BeLonGTo and the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (Glen) Ultimately it’s up to schools to develop their own programme and some – say campaigners – simply act as though LGBT people don’t exist.

“There are many very good schools. One, run by nuns, is a good model that doesn’t tolerate any kind of bullying or exclusion, including of LGBT students,” says Moninne Griffith, director of BeLonGTo.

“We have seen significant and positive change. Teachers are engaging with this and they want to support and welcome young LGBT people. And young people are more supportive of their LGBT classmates and friends than ever before. What is missing is an understanding of the damage bullying can do.”
Despite progress, hundreds of children still die of measles every day


A United Nations-backed report issued today has revealed that despite a 79 per cent worldwide decrease in measles deaths between 2000 and 2015, nearly **400 children** still die from the disease every day.

“Making measles history is not mission impossible,” said Robin Nandy, chief of immunization at the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in a joint news release on the report, which was authored and released by UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“We have **the tools and the knowledge** to do it; what we lack is the political will to reach every single child, no matter how far. Without this commitment, children will continue to die from a disease that is easy and cheap to prevent,” Mr. Nandy added.

According to the report, mass measles vaccination campaigns and a global increase in routine measles vaccination coverage saved an estimated 20.3 million young lives between 2000 and 2015. But progress has been uneven. In 2015, about 20 million infants missed their measles shots and an estimated 134,000 children died from the disease. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan account for half of the unvaccinated infants and 75 per cent of the measles deaths.
Earlier this year, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising. Events were held in schools across the country to commemorate the moment when Pádraig Pearse stood outside the GPO in Dublin and read aloud the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. The Proclamation guarantees freedom to every Irish person, with a line devoted to cherishing all the children of the nation equally. Some argue that this line is metaphorical, that it refers to every Irish person as a “child” of Ireland no matter what their age. But even if it was meant that way - so what? If a country can’t cherish its children, how can it look towards its own future?

Perhaps your teacher and class would like to have a discussion - has Ireland successfully cherished its children? Is it even close? What about children all over the world? We’ve seen that the UNCRC affords the same fundamental rights to every single child in the world. It is estimated that there are approximately 2 million children in the world today. Half of those children live in poverty, with UNICEF estimating that 22,000 children die every day as a result of poverty.

You might ask yourself - what can we do? The first thing to do in any situation is to be informed. If you know the facts, you can then find out what’s being done, and whether you can take part.

On the page opposite are contacts for groups which help children in Ireland. Remember though - you don’t always need to look outwards to be able to do something for people - always be kind to yourself, and to those around you.

We were all children once, and while you’ll grow up in the future, hopefully you, and your classmates, will be able to look back at your childhood as a time of happy memories.
Childline
Childline is a 24 hour, ISPCC-supported helpline for children and young people.
Call 1800 66 66 66
Visit www.childline.ie
Text “Talk” to 50101

BeLonG To
BeLonG To supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in Ireland.
Call 01 670 6223
(Monday - Friday from 9am - 1pm & 2pm - 5pm)
Visit www.belongto.org

SpunOut.ie
SpunOut.ie is Ireland’s youth information site created by young people, for young people.
Visit spunout.ie

Bodywhys
Bodywhys provides support, awareness and understanding of eating disorders and advocates for the rights and healthcare needs of people affected by eating disorders.
Call 01 283 4963
Visit www.bodywhys.ie

Positive Options
Positive Options was set up to help people affected by crisis pregnancies.
Text “List” to 50444
Visit www.positiveoptions.ie

Drugs and Alcohol Helpline
Provides helpline and email support, information, guidance & referral to anyone with a question or concern related to drugs and alcohol. Confidential and free.
Freephone 1800 459 459
“What’s Going On?” is a newsletter intended for Junior Cycle students containing information on current events in Ireland and around the world.

It’s designed to be used in a cross-curricular fashion, and is free to teachers of any subject for use in their classrooms.

At the very least, hopefully it will help to explain a few things when students look at the world around them and wonder what, indeed, is going on.

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