



The Guns of Easter
Notes for Teachers
Themes to explore in plenary sessions

Plenary sessions can take place when all TSI groups working on the same novel are finished their vocabulary and comprehension work and can then work come together in a larger group to explore themes, literacy concepts and have fun with creative and artistic responses to the novel.

Themes:

Irish History:

- 'The Great Strike of 1913' (pg 12)
- Political leaders-Connolly, Pearse, Clarke (pg 54)
- The Declaration of Independence (pg 76)
- Different groups involved: Sinn Féin, Volunteers, Citizen's Army
- The role of martyrs in this rebellion
- The contentious enlisting of Irish men in the British army in World War 1.

Political and social belief systems:

- Nationalism (pg 11)
- Socialism
- Empire (colonialism-pg 21, 24, 134)
- Trade unionism (pg 11)
- English class system (pg 11)
- Republicanism (pg 76)
- Pacificism

Other themes to explore:

- Links between social conditions (poverty, hunger, slums) and political upheaval/rebellion
- Impact of war/rebellion on ordinary life: the chaos and confusion, food shortages, inflation, breakdown in law and order-looting, destruction, civilians, women and children, migration (Mr Meyer)
- Links to contemporary social and political upheaval- e.g. migration of Syrian people



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Themes for plenaries:

Further themes:

- Impact on soldiers of involvement in active service-risk of death, injury, trauma, adjusting to civilian life, risk for addiction
- Military strategies of the time -the kinds of weapons, armies, cavalry, navy,
- Use of symbols in rebellion-flags (pg 66), posters, references to statues e.g. Nelson's pillar (pg 67)

Literary Style and Technique

- Use of *simile* e.g. 'like four giant khaki-coloured snakes' (pg 128)
- Use of *irony* e.g. the mob who threatened Mr Meyer didn't like Germans 'because they had been told that Germans were cruel to defenceless people' (pg 34)
- Use of *personification* e.g. 'he was watching death having a party' pg (127)
- The technique of *building suspense* e.g. 'Then the crowd parted in several places and people appeared carrying large bundles' (pg 123)
- Use of language and dialogue to create historic effect e.g. the tramp's dialogue (pg 133-134)

Literary Connection (text to text)

Explore how the author 'borrows' a well known phrase from a classic English sonnet 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' (by John Keats) when he uses the phrase 'a silence in which no birds sang' (pg 143)

Literary Critique

- Excellent character portrayals e.g. evil Charlie Fox, the sympathetic sergeant, innocent and kindly Uncle Mick
- Powerful scene descriptions e.g. the looting, the killing of Billy Moran, the senseless violence at Mount Street
- Narrative plot and pacing



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(*Note page numbers based on 2014 publication)

Chapters 1-3

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
tenement pg 7		
relic pg 8		
gentry pg 8		
slums pg 10		
an heirloom pg 18		
khaki pg 22		
indignation pg 27		

Phrases:

the English class system pg 11

a cut above pg 16

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapters 4-6

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
defenceless pg 34		
blacklist pg 39		
hyprocrite pg 39		
despised pg 41		
pry pg 42		

Phrases

A pauper's grave pg 38

dress uniform pg 47

the soul of modesty pg 48

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapters 7-9

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
humbled pg 51		
the inevitable pg 52		
sarcasm pg 53		
triumph pg 54		
haughty pg 54		
rebellion pg 59		
fortifying pg 61		

Phrases

A detachment of the British cavalry pg 67

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 10

Word

Meaning

Part of Speech

errands pg 76		
barricades pg 76		
the declaration pg 76		
marauding pg 79		
unruly pg 80		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 11

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
the dregs pg 85		
merchandise pg 85		
assortment pg 86		
furtive pg 86		
faltering pg 88		
deceive pg 90		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapters 12-13

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
recess pg 92		
pondered pg 93		
dislodge pg 94		
artillery pg 94		
metallic pg 98		
masonry pg 100		
beckoned pg 101		

Phrase

Giving his sympathies away pg 100

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapters 14 - 15

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
gruff pg 104		
corporal pg 104		
haze pg 110		
gallows pg 113		
in pursuit pg 114		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 16

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
concussion pg 117		
insensitive pg 118		
civilians pg 119		
bombarding pg 120		
slaughterhouse pg 120		
curfew pg 121		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapters 17-18

Word

Meaning

Part of Speech

absentmindedly pg 124		
transfixed pg 125		
mesmerised pg 125		
ambush pg 126		
statistics pg 127		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 19

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
unkempt pg 132		
kindling pg 133		
waver pg 133		
gall pg 134		
skirmish pg 134		
stronghold pg 135		
addled 136		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 20

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
makeshift pg 139		
ramshackle pg 139		
dank pg 140		

Phrases

His fever had broken pg 138

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 21

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
stippled pg 143		
parlour pg 144		
pockmarked pg 145		
spellbound pg 145		
conceal pg 149		

Phrase

In a stupor pg 150

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 21-22

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
docker pg 152		
elated pg 153		
shroud pg 155		
edded (verb eddy) pg 155		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 23

Word

Meaning

Part of Speech

wain pg 157		
subdued pg 158		
awestruck pg 160		
cowering (verb cower) pg 162		
lurch pg 162		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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Chapter 24

Word	Meaning	Part of Speech
fend for pg 165		
enlist pg 166		

Our Coded Vocabulary:



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(*Note-Page numbers based on 2014 publication)

Chapters 1-3

Here (Literal)

- 1) Jimmy's family live in poor circumstances. Give some examples of how the author presents this.
- 2) Why were the old soldiers nicknamed the 'Gorgeous Wrecks'?

Hidden (Inferential)

- 3) Jimmy's mother tells her brother that 'dreams make bad dinners' (pg 14). Discuss what she might have meant by this.
- 4) Why was Jimmy's mother 'horrified' when his father enlisted in the army? How did Jimmy himself feel about it?
- 5) On page 19 Jimmy refers to 'the unwritten rules'. Explain what he meant by this.

Head (Evaluative)

- 6) Find out how a pawnshop works and explain for your group?
- 7) Why do you think Jimmy felt guilty when he thought about what happened to the old soldier in the parade?



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Chapters 4-6

Here (Literal)

- 1) How did 'the thinking game' work?
- 2) In what ways is a war 'good for work' (pg 39)?
- 3) What were uncle Mick's hopes that probably caused him to join the Citizen's Army?

Hidden (Inferential)

- 4) The pawnbroker Mr Meyer had lived in six countries throughout his life. Why had he moved around so much?
- 5) One of the most shameful possible experiences for poor people of the time is described by Uncle Mick on page 38. Explain what this was.
- 6) What were Jimmy's feelings about rich people (pg 47).

Head (Evaluative)

- 7) Why do you think 'joining up' was such a conflict for Paddy Doyle (pg 38)?
- 8) Jimmy's mother explains that his father was 'too much of a trade union man' (pg 39). How is this a problem for his father now?



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Chapters 7-9

Here (Literal)

- 1) How had uncle Mick 'ruined' Jimmy's life?
- 2) How does the author show that Jimmy got so much respect for his story about the Fairyhouse outing?

Hidden (Inferential)

- 3) The leaders of the procession were 'surrounded by a light that came from inside them' (pg 54). What might these three men have been feeling that Easter Monday morning?
- 4) What was the dreadful thing for Jimmy's family about the post office being taken over?
- 5) What act turned Jimmy into a 'rebel'?

Head (Evaluative)

- 6) Why might people suspect that the Kaiser of Germany would give money to the Irish Volunteers?
- 7) What do your group understand by a 'rebellion'? How is a rebellion different to a war such as World War I? List any other kinds of wars or conflicts your group know about and explain their meaning to each other?



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Chapters 10 & 11

Here (Literal)

- 1) What were the looters doing?
- 2) Why were people lying in the streets early on the morning after the looting?

Hidden (Inferential)

- 3) Why was Tommy Doyle wild with excitement (pg 78)?
- 4) Why do you think the faces of the looters had 'almost a crazy look' (pg 81)?
- 5) Why was the young volunteer so upset by the sight of the looters?

Head (Evaluative)

- 6) What is the real importance of the 'poster' the rebels put up?
- 7) The unreal street scenes were becoming more and more like visions from Jimmy's dreams. Have you had any experience of a new or unusual situation feeling more like a dream than reality?
- 8) Jimmy made a difficult decision about the picnic basket? What do you think you would have done? What is the consensus of your group?



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Chapters 12-15

Here (Literal)

- 1) What has happened to the men on Stephen's Green where Jimmy last saw his uncle Mick?
- 2) When Jimmy crossed the bridge, he tried not to look suspicious. How did he do this?
- 3) How did Jimmy feel having tea with the soldiers (pg 103)?

Hidden (Inferential)

- 4) Discuss why the volunteer 'didn't run in a straight line, but zigzagged after every few yards' (pg 95)?
- 5) Explain how Jimmy's innocent ideas about soldiers changed in chapter 14 (pg 103)?
- 6) Why did the soldier shoot Billy Moran (pg 109)? Describe the effect this had on Jimmy?
- 7) Why did Jimmy help Charlie Fox? What does this tell us about Jimmy's character?

Head (Evaluative)

- 8) The British soldiers that Jimmy met had Northern Irish accents. Discuss with your group why the author might include this character trait. Are there other things that confuse Jimmy about the two 'sides' in the rebellion?
- 9) In chapter 15 the soldiers shoot a child (Billy Moran), and many other civilians die in this rebellion. Explain why these things happen in war.



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Chapters 16-19

For the following four Chapters each TSI group comes up with its own questions. (See *TSI: A Collaborative Approach to Literacy Learning* pgs 11,21 and 22 for more on inquiry - led questioning)

- Ask a question that will help you to understand the book better or that you are curious about (Use 'I wonder' if you like).
- Take turns - everybody ask one of each question type-*here, hidden and head.*
- Record everybody's questions first.
- All questions are then discussed and answered, if possible, by everyone in the group.

Here (Literal)

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Hidden (Inferential)

- 4)
- 5)
- 6)

Head (Evaluative)

- 7)
- 8)
- 9)



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Chapters 20-24

Here (Literal)

- 1) How did Jimmy show his appreciation to the tramp?
- 2) How did Jimmy manage the soldier's mocking?
- 3) How did Jimmy's mother respond when he arrived home?

Hidden (Inferential)

- 4) What do you think happened to the volunteers in the post office?
- 5) How does the soldier Jimmy Martin reveal he is not really fighting for a 'cause' in chapter 23?
- 6) Jimmy helps his mother to win 'the war that for her was the only real one'. What was this war?

Head (Evaluative)

- 7) In Chapter 22 the sergeant calls Jimmy 'our heroic wee Dubliner'. How is Jimmy's heroism different to the soldier's and the volunteer's heroism?
- 8) Jimmy now understands why Ella behaved the way she did, from what he heard from Mrs. Breen. Have you had this experience where you understood someone's behaviour in a new way? Discuss with your group.
- 9) Discuss the main challenges soldiers experience in their lives. What does your group know about some of the impacts of war on soldiers?