

Good the nation essay example

[Environment](#), [Water](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [The People](#) \n \t
2. [Lifestyle](#) \n \t
3. [Customs and Courtesies](#) \n \t
4. [Useful Words and Phrases](#) \n \t
5. [Reference](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

The Republic of Ireland, more commonly referred to as Ireland occupies five-sixths of the island of Ireland, the second largest island of the British Isles. Its demography, history, geography and culture are unique (see Appendix 1 for scale map).

Ireland, which is to the far west of Europe, is also west of the island of Great Britain. The Republic covers 70, 280 of the island’s total area of 84, 431 square kilometres. The climate is temperate maritime, modified by the North Atlantic Current which contributes to its mildwinters and cool summers.

Because of the high precipitation, the climate is consistently humid which is favourable for local flora. Ireland is famous for its beautiful scenery and is popularly called the ‘ emerald island.’

Ireland’s history can be examined in the context of several notable eras; all propelling the nation towards the one it now is. Early Christian era: Christianity took over the indigenous pagan religion by 600 AD, after the arrival of Christian missionaries such as Saint Patrick. Irish Christian scholars mastered Latin, Greek and Christian theology in monastery studies, while the

skill of manuscript illumination, metalworking and sculpture thrived; producing remarkable creations including the Book of Kells, ornate jewellery and carved stone crosses that are still visible.

Viking era: Vikings from Scandinavia invaded then gradually settled into Irish society between 8th and 9th century. Although the Vikings founded Dublin, the capital city in 988 their influence faded after their defeat by Brian Boru, High King of Ireland in 1014. Norman era: The Normans who arrived in the 12th century built walled towns, castles and churches and helped increase agriculture and commerce.

Plantation and Penal Laws era: King Henry VIII of Ireland instituted an official English policy of ‘plantation’ which led to the arrival of thousands of English and Scottish Protestant settlers. Sectarian conflict became a recurring phenomenon in Irish history and the 17th century was a bloody one, culminating in the imposition of the harsh regime of Penal laws which disempowered the Catholics.

There were several political uprisings, wars and dissents in earlier Irish history that led to the independence of Ireland from Britain, geographic and political division of the territory and notable loss of life. However, the separated Irish states were rejoined as the Republic of Ireland in 1937 and considerable stability returned in 1998. Despite economic recession in the 1980s which contributed to mass emigration to the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia, economic reforms contributed to one of the strongest economic growth rates in the world; Ireland then became a country of mass immigration- a period known as the Celtic Tiger.

The Republic of Ireland which has a population of roughly 4.6 million, is a

parliamentary democracy. County Councils are the principal form of local government. The National Parliament is headed by an elected president and consists of two houses: The House of Representatives or ‘Dáil Éireann’ and the Senate or ‘Seanad Éireann.’ The executive power of the state is in the government which is comprised of the prime minister and the cabinet.

Notably, since the 1930s, the Government has been led by either the Fianna Fáil or the Fine Gael party, both ‘centre-right’ parties.

Irish social services are above average. Education is compulsory for children in Ireland from the ages of six to 16 or until students have completed three years of second-level education. Although state-funded education is available at all levels, parents have the option of choosing a private/self-funded education. Similarly, Ireland has a comprehensive, government funded public healthcare system for approximately a third of the population; the remainder pays a minimal charge at public health facilities.

Transportation in Ireland is fairly reliable. There is a national bus service and in Dublin, an Area Rapid Transit and various taxi services. There are also tour operators in most major cities and various rental car companies.

Although

the Constitution of Ireland does not contain a specific right to either water or sanitation the constitutional rights to bodily integrity and dignity, respectively, could be interpreted as a right to water and sanitation, “given that access to both is essential to sustain human health and life” (Scannel, 2011). In Ireland, 81.6% of drinking water originates from surface water (rivers and lakes) while the remainder originates from groundwater and springs. Water is treated as per public health standards.

The People

The Irish culture is very distinct. The Irish are believed to be naturally courteous and welcoming of tourists. They place a high value on hard work and a less stressful lifestyle that allows time for friends and family. The Irish are not very physically demonstrative and are uncomfortable with public displays of affection, as well as loud and aggressive behaviour. They have a relaxed attitude to time are not traditionally punctual.

Nine public holidays are celebrated each year: New Year's Day (1 January); St. Patrick's Day (17 March); Easter Monday; the first Monday in May, June, August; the last Monday in October; Christmas Day (25 December) and St. Stephen's Day (26 December).

New Year's Day, Easter Monday and Christmas Day are celebrated in many countries, however Sts. Patrick's and Stephen's Day are distinctly Irish. St Patrick is the Patron Saint of Ireland so some celebratory activities are old Irish traditions directly related to celebrating the Patron Saint while others are recent customs; these include wearing shamrocks pinned to the breast of outer coats, attending church and spending the rest of the day with family. The wearing of green, drinking green beer and parades are actually North American translations of St. Patrick celebrations and these elements are not typical of true Irish celebrations. Notably, the North American Halloween tradition actually originated in Ireland.

Irish Constitution supports freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion; consequently there is no official state religion. In the 1991 census, 92 percent of the population in Irish was Roman Catholic. Folk/cultural beliefs also thrive, as shown by the holy wells and many other

holy and healing places.

Ireland's two official languages are Irish (Gaelic) and English. Irish is a Celtic (Indo-European) language which evolved from the language brought by the Celtic migrations between the sixth and the second century B. C. E. The later Tudor and Stuart conquests and plantations (between 1534 and 1610), the Cromwellian settlement of 1654, the Williamite war (1689–1691) and the enactment of the Penal Laws (1695) began the lengthy process of submerging the language. At the start of the twentieth century, English overtook Irish as the vernacular. By 1991, in the few areas that Irish remained the vernacular, only 56, 469 Irish speakers remained. However, Irish is taught in most primary and secondary schools and is still a part of government, education, literary, sports, and cultural communications.

Lifestyle

In its recent annual assessment of the Irish economy, the International Monetary Fund outlines Ireland's emergence from the deep economic recession of 2008 and 2009. Economic growth is expected to be 3. 5% in 2015. Although unemployment fell from 15% to 10%, it is still far above the pre-crisis level of 4. 5%.

Ireland has more than 3, 000 miles of coastline and the Irish lifestyle includes aquatic recreational activities such as: fishing, sailing, water-skiing, surfing, canoeing, wind-surfing, diving, and cruising. Other popular pastimes are equestrian sports, rugby and golfing. Rugby is another sport they play Matchmaking was a common practice until early 20th century.

Customary Irish food include potatoes, usually eaten as mash, chips, boiled or roasted; Irish stew consisting of meat, potatoes, onions and carrots; bacon

and cabbage; Fry which consists of sausages, bacon, tomato, mushrooms, egg, black and white pudding with soda bread and Colcannon which is made of potatoes, cabbage and leeks.

Modern Irish lifestyle shows an evolution in dating and marriage customs. Previously, brides-to-be often wore a “ Claddagh” ring; the design of which has been a part of Irish tradition for over 300 years. Usually on the day of the wedding, the groom was invited to the bride’s family home for a goose dinner which symbolized the start of the wedding ceremony. Good luck charms have also played an important role in Irish wedding customs and modern brides still continue to carry a horseshoe for good luck on their wedding day.

Overall, dating, engagement and marriage in Ireland has changed dramatically over the years. Marriages are seldom arranged in modern Ireland. Although the small town of Lisdoonvarna hosts an annual matchmaking festival, mainly for tourists, modern day Irish are free to meet and court whom they please. Most spouses are selected through the expected means of individual trial and error that have become the norm in Western European society. The demands of farm society and economy still place great pressure on rural men and women to marry, especially in some relatively poor rural districts where there is a high migration rate among

Although the nuclear family is the traditional family structure in Ireland, research conducted for ‘ Households and Family Structures in Ireland’ (2011) shows that one-in-three families in Ireland no longer conform to the traditional model of a married couple (both of whom are in their first marriage). Alternative family structures are dominated by never before

married, cohabiting couples and single mothers (never-married, divorced or separated) and along with first-time marriages, these family types account for 92% of families. Second relationships and step-families are rare in Ireland.

Immediate family is the main kin group in Ireland, however, extended families and close friends continue to play important roles in Irish life. Children generally adopt fathers' surnames, while first or Christian names are usually chosen to honour ancestors or in the Catholic tradition, saints. A number of persons continue to use the Irish form of their names which are pre-Christian and untranslatable into English. It is legal to communicate ones time in any of the two official languages and the national education system teaches students both.

Customs and Courtesies

General rules of social etiquette apply across ethnic, class, and religious barriers in Ireland. Loud, and boastful behaviour is discouraged.

Unacquainted people make eye contact in public spaces and often say “hello” in greeting. Besides formal introductions, greetings are usually vocal and unaccompanied by handshakes or kisses; public touching is also uncommon. Some dining customs are also different; for example, at a place setting, the small plate next to the big plate is for boiled potato peelings and hands are expected to be in one's lap when not holding utensils at the dinner table.

Ireland has its own cultural interpretations for specific gestures but it is important to note that a reverse 'v' for victory gesture is considered obscene. In terms of appearance, the Irish traditionally dress modestly and

conservatively and avoid flashy colours, styles, white pants, nylon running jackets, etcetera. Tweeds, wools and subdued colors are preferred and women wear pants in the workplace.

Useful Words and Phrases

When visiting Ireland, it may be useful to learn the following words and phrases: “ May the road rise up to meet you” which means “ may God remove obstacles in your journey through life;” “ sláinte” (pronounced “ slaan-sha”) is said during a toast and literally translates as “ health”- as in “ I drink to your health” and greetings of “ any craic?” and “ how’s the craic?” (pronounced “ crack”) can mean “ how are you?” A typical Irish response is “ divil a bit,” which means “ not much.”

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Appendix

Appendix 1. scale map of Ireland