

LESSON 2

Benefits of Trade Union Membership



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Subjects: History

English

Strands: Politics, Conflict and Society.

Oral Language

Strand Units/Elements: Ireland, Europe and the World, 1960 to present.

Communicating, understanding, exploring and using.

Learning Objectives:

The child will be enabled to:

- develop an understanding of how and why workers join unions;
- compare a union and non-union environment and explain the differences;
- list the benefits of union membership.

Resources:

- PowerPoint Presentation 2 – *Benefits of Trade Union Membership*
- Case studies to display or copies to distribute to groups
- Whiteboard

Introduction:

Revisit and recap on the previous lesson. Refer to the vocabulary displayed on the classroom “Word Wall”.

Lead a discussion with pupils on the difference between a union and non-union work environment. Note their thoughts on the whiteboard.

Development:

In small groups, ask pupils to list the benefits that they envisage they might get as union members.

Use Powerpoint slide to summarise benefits.

Using the lists compiled, pupils will be asked to prioritise their points and explain the reasons behind their choice.

Each small group will be given an example of a case study and asked how a union could help the employee in each case.



Case study 1:

Muireann has been working part-time since June. She works from Tuesday to Saturday each week from 6 pm to 9 pm. The other staff who are all full-time had a day off when the shop was closed for the bank holiday in August. Muireann found out that they were paid for this public holiday and they told her that she should also be paid for that day. She asked her employer about this but the employer told her since she never worked on a Monday, she had no right to be paid for public holidays.

Case study 2:

Ciarán is working in a busy hotel. Business has improved over the last few months and the hotel has won various awards for the quality of their service. Ciarán is working long days – from 9am until 9pm. He often only gets 30 minutes for a break and by the end of the day he feels exhausted.

Case study 3:

Siobhán has been working in her office for the last 6 years. She has completed extra training during that time, and she does extra work and duties compared to when she first started. One of her fellow colleagues who began working at the same time has received a pay increase in recent months and a bonus at Christmas. However, Siobhán has not received any change in her pay.

Case study 4:

Deirdre is working in the “Wise Owl” bookshop for the last 8 years. The shop is being renovated at present and there is not much space to store books and supplies except for a room upstairs. Large, heavy boxes of books are kept upstairs. Deirdre struggles to lift/move the boxes up and down the stairs and has hurt her back on two occasions. She has told her boss about her injury, and she told her to “be careful”.

Case study 5:

Dónal started a new job before Christmas. He works in a small office with nine other full-time staff members. Dónal is very dedicated and hardworking. He arrives at work early each morning and his work is always very good. Dónal tries his best to be friendly with all his co-workers but his boss is always very unkind to Dónal. Dónal has tried to speak with his boss to improve the situation but recently found out that his boss has been saying unkind things about him to other people in the office. He finds the situation very upsetting and has not been sleeping well lately.

Case study 6:

Bláthnaid has requested a day off to attend her cousin’s wedding. She asked amongst her fellow workers who explained that they had previously taken leave to attend weddings of both friends and relatives. She asked her manager for the day off six months in advance of the date as she knew this may be a busy time. Her boss told her that she could not have the day off even though nobody else had applied for leave on this Friday. Two days beforehand a colleague purchased tickets for a concert, asked for time off on that day and was granted the leave. Bláthnaid is very annoyed about this.



Extension activity/obair bhaile

Pupils could write a letter to an Official in a trade union of their choice. They may include questions such as:

- What is their occupation/place of work?
- What type of workers do they represent?
- What are the main issues that they support union members with at work?
- Why is the work of trade unions important?

Conclusion:

Game: Union matching - link unions to corresponding acronyms. Explain that there are different unions for different occupations/sectors. Most use acronyms and have their own logos (see slides 4 and 5).

INTO – Irish National Teachers' Organisation

ASTI – Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

TUI – Teachers' Union of Ireland

SIPTU - Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union

INMO – Irish Nurses' and Midwives' Organisation

NUJ – National Union of Journalists

FSU – Financial Services Union

CWU – Communications Workers Union

Assessment:

- Teacher Observation.
- Comprehension Questions.
- Work samples.

Suggested Linkage and Integration:

- **English** – Oral Language – Debate.

Reading comprehension: look out for articles in national newspapers pertaining to trade union matters.

Writing: questionnaire

- **Gaeilge:** Scéal – “Mo Lá Oibre”



Drámaíocht – Ag Siopadóireacht

- **Mathematics** – Time (problem solving – hours of working day)

Money (calculating daily/weekly earnings)

- **SPHE** – Myself and the Wider World, Media Education
- **Drama** – thought-tracking/hot-seating
- **Visual Arts** – workers' rights poster

