

Examine how people express their culture and identity in everyday life.

ALSO

'Identity as a concept entails a variety of cultural factors including nationality, language and religion.'

Marking Scheme:

Number of aspects discussed:	3 @ 20 marks each	4 @ 15 marks each
<u>For each aspect:</u>		
Identifying aspect	4 marks	3 marks
Discussion	8 x SRPs	6 x SRPs

Overall Coherence 20 marks graded* 20 marks graded*

In this answer, I choose 3 aspects to discuss (1. Sport/Music, 2. Language and, 3. Religion). Overall coherence means how well your answer is structured (Introduction, main section, conclusion – well-structured and coherent) and do you keep to the point/ answer the question directly.

A cultural group can be classified as a group of people who share a common race, religion, language, or other characteristic. Nationality allows a group identity themselves through their shared common history and traditions. Therefore, this group can be identified by those particular customs and traditions. In this answer, I will examine Irish Culture and national identity through the lens of Sport and Music, Language and Religion.

Nationality is an important aspect of cultural identity. Nationality can be defined as the status of belonging to a particular nation; a sense of 'Irishness'. A nation is a community of people with a common identity. Irish nationality is indelibly linked to our shared customs and traditions. The affinity between the Irish people and sporting culture, for example, can be seen in the GAA (Gaelic football, Hurling, Camogie and handball). The GAA was established in 1884 and can argue as being one of the best amateur sporting organisations in the world. The GAA is at the heart of Irish society, usually through local clubs that were originally divided due to their Parish lands. These take a major role in the local Irish communities. There are over 2,300 official clubs on the Island of Ireland with another 300+ affiliated clubs worldwide. The GAA is an important social outlet for many people and the inter county and county championship matches provide intense interest and rivalry between parishes and inter county teams. This expression of Irish nationality can be seen no better than on All Ireland final days in Croke Park. Expatriates are also provided with a link to their national identity as they watch the 82,000 seater stadium filled each year. The Asian Gaelic games tournament has also been held since 1996 and more than 50 teams now take part, indicating the importance of the GAA as a cultural link to the Irish living abroad. Traditional Irish music and ballads of our history are also given huge respect in the Irish society and is heard on Irish mainstream radio as well as those dedicated to the Irish language and culture such as Radio Na Gaeltacht and TG4. Its popularity is worldwide with groups such as the Dubliners, the Wolftones, the Cheiftans and Planxty etc. playing all over the world. There are many major traditional music events such as the Fleadh Ceoil na

hÉireann, which is a major celebration of Irish culture and is attended by thousands annually. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is the most important event in the traditional music calendar, where the award of All-Ireland champion can be achieved (2017 it took place in Ennis, Co Clare on the 13th -21st of August with over 450,000 attending). In Irish dancing jigs, reels and hornpipes are synonymous with Irish culture and tradition and are symbols of nationality. Irish dance or Irish dancing is a group of traditional dance forms originating in Ireland, encompassing dancing both solo and in groups, and dancing for social, competitive and performance purposes. Irish dance in its current form developed from various influences such as French quadrilles and English country dancing throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Solo Irish dance includes the most well-known form of Irish dance, Irish step dance, which was popularised from 1994 onwards by dance shows such as Riverdance, and which is practised competitively across the Irish diaspora. Other forms of solo Irish dance include sean-nós dance and Ceili dance, practised both competitively and socially, and performed by groups of two to sixteen people, and often uses traditional or codified dances and formations.

Religion is also a strong cultural force, with city's displaying major buildings of significance where people worship, to allow the practice of the population worshipping in their daily lives and feast and holidays that the people celebrate. In Ireland Catholicism has played a big role in the population's cultural identity. The majority of the Irish population are baptised catholic. In Ireland's early years Catholicism was seen as important cultural identifier in resisting British rule on the Island. Many Irish men were sent to France and Spain to be educated and then serve at Mass rocks around the country when the catholic faith was outlawed. It gave the people a sense of identity and solidarity against their ruler and persecutor. Mass attendance was very high with the establishment of the free state and twice in the 20th Century in Ireland over 1million came to celebrate mass in the Phoenix Park; The 1932 Eucharistic Congress and to meet John Paul the 2nd in 1979. Originally, the 1937 Constitution of Ireland gave the Catholic Church a "special position" as the church of the majority. As with other predominantly Catholic European states, the Irish state underwent a period of legal secularisation in the late twentieth century. In 1972, the article of the Constitution naming specific religious groups, including the Catholic Church, was deleted by the fifth amendment of the constitution in a referendum. Today the Catholic Church has gone through many institutional scandals (child sex abuse and cover ups and institutionalisation of a portion of the population through the Magdalen laundries) over the past 100 years resulting in the daily and weekly mass attendances being diminished significantly in recent decades. But while the church as a dominate force over the population has diminished and Rome rule has a much weaker voice in Irish society, there is still a large majority who consider themselves catholic roots – the 2017 census showered that the percentage of the population who identified as Catholic on the census has fallen sharply from 84.2 per cent in 2011 to 78.3 per cent in 2016. Religious expressions of Irish culture in everyday life include; Getting your throat blessed on St Blaise day, the celebration of St Bridgid on the 1st of February and of St Patrick on 17th of March. Also climbing Croagh Patrick is Irelands holy mountain and it is tradition to climb it bare foot on Reek Sunday, the last Sunday of July. Finally Knock Shrine, located in co. Mayo is Ireland's National Marian Shrine where over 1.5 million pilgrims visit each year.

In relation to language as a cultural indicator, Irish was originally seen used as an act of defiance in plantation Ireland but in 1925 the Free State government set up the Commission for Irish Speaking Districts (Coimisiún na Gaeltacht). It established the

boundaries for the Gaeltacht based on the numbers of people speaking the language; which were Fíor (true) who had over 80% speaking Irish and Breac (Partial) who had 25%-79% speaking Irish. Thus the cultural distinctiveness of this unique language became embedded in our country. Today the Gaeltacht region has a population of about 92,000 of which 60% or more of the residents are fluent in Irish and use the language in the community or at home. Donegal is the largest Gaeltacht in Ireland. An Daingean (Dingle) in Co Kerry is the largest Gaeltacht Town. Irish has 3 main regional dialects; Munster, Connacht and Donegal each having its own local characteristic and accents. The greatest threat to the Gaeltacht today is that the diminishing Irish speaking population of these areas are going to be swallowed up by the influx of in-migration of the English speaking population, and the influence of English speaking media such as social media and the internet, TV, music and film. Encouraging Irish speakers to remain in the Gaeltacht is vital to the survival of the language. The government recognises this by providing extra financial support to Gaeltacht families. These include grants paid to the families in the Gaeltacht who can satisfy the Department that Irish is their usual spoken language, and grants paid to families who facilitate the learning of Irish by accommodation of the students of Irish who attend the Gaeltacht to learn Irish in the Irish Colleges. Other supports for the continuation of the distinct cultural region include TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltacht who use Irish in their TV and radio programs and the GAA who promote the use of Irish in all their sporting and social activities. Government initiatives include Foras na Gaeilge who promote the use of Irish across Ireland and the Irish Language Act which ensures the provision of public services and documents through Irish e.g. drivers licences etc.

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