



Exploring Junior Cycle Prescribed Film *Older Than Ireland* directed by Alex Fegan

Older Than Ireland directed by Alex Fegan is a documentary film included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2025, 2026, and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2028, 2029, and 2030).



Image courtesy of
IMDb

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Older Than Ireland* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before You Read... (Teacher Guidance)

Pre-reading Activities - Discussion Starters:

1. Activate Prior Knowledge – Living History

Ask students:

- What do you know about life in Ireland 100 years ago (e.g., 1920s)?
- What might someone 100 years old have seen in their lifetime?
- Encourage brainstorming about political, social, technological and cultural change.

2. Vocabulary Preview

Teach or refresh key terms

(e.g., centenarian, nostalgia, archive, memory, cultural change).

Students create a vocabulary wall or glossary.

3. Anticipation Guide

Students respond to statements before watching (agree/disagree):

- “People who are older always have wisdom to share.”
- “History is only found in books.”
- “First-hand life stories help us understand the past better.”

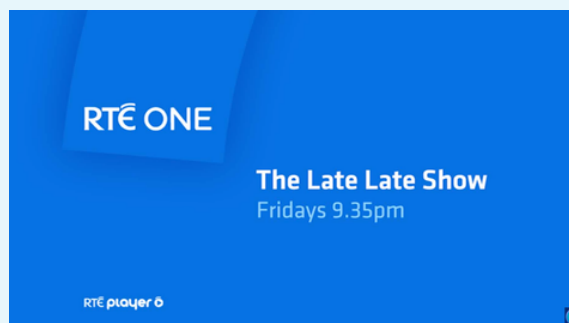
Discuss predictions.



Extract

Click on the images to access a trailer for the documentary as well as an interview with some of the cast.

Trailer
courtesy of
Snackbox
Films



Interview
courtesy of
RTÉ ONE

Points to consider when exploring trailers in the classroom;

- Be clear about why you're showing the trailer or documentary.
- Identify specific learning outcomes (e.g., understanding interview technique, practicing critical thinking).
- Encourage active viewing by providing questions, note taking and pauses for clarification.
- Trailers often include complex vocabulary, historical references, or social commentary. Introduce essential terms or context so students aren't lost during viewing.
- Accessibility & Inclusivity; ensure subtitles/closed captions are available for students with hearing difficulties or who benefit from text support.

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format,
as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. Exploring the Trailer (Class Viewing)

Students watch the trailer and jot down:

1. Who are the people featured?
2. What do you think the film is about?
3. Which emotions or ideas does the trailer make you feel or question?

Class Discussion Prompts

- "What do you think you will learn from the full documentary?"
- "Why might the filmmaker choose to show many different voices rather than one narrator?"

2. Interview Clip Analysis (Note-Taking while Viewing)

Have students note:

- One memorable quote from each centenarian.
- What topics they talk about (e.g., childhood, changes, humour).
- How they communicate: tone, gestures, humour, hesitation.

Follow-Up Questions

- "What do you learn about the person's character from how they speak?"
- "How does the interview format reveal personality differently compared to the documentary itself?"



3. Language & Identity - Short Written Response

Prompt:

“Choose one quote or moment from the interview clip that reveals something important about the person speaking. Explain what it reveals and why it matters to you.”

Criteria for students to include:

- Quote (or paraphrase) from the clip.
- Explanation of meaning and tone.
- Personal or cultural reflection on why it stood out.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the documentary. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Personal Narrative Task

Ask students to write a short personal reflection about an important memory from their life.

Include:

- Sensory details.
- What the memory reveals about who you are.
- Why it matters to you.

Extension: Compare your narrative with one from the documentary.

2. Theme Exploration – Identity and Change

In groups, students explore themes such as:

- What makes a life meaningful?
- How do personal stories reflect Irish culture and history?

Use prompts like:

- “What surprised you most about the centenarians’ experiences?”
- “How did Ireland itself change according to these testimonies?”

Students prepare a short presentation or poster.

3. Speaking and Listening Opportunity

Debate Topic:

“Older people today have more valuable life lessons to share than younger people.”

Students prepare arguments and engage in a structured class debate.

4. Connecting to Broader Context

Ask students to research and bring in a historical event mentioned by a speaker (e.g., early Irish Free State years) and explain its significance in a brief report or infographic.

5. Creative Response

Students could create a “living history” timeline based on the film and their own lives, including key dates, images, quotes and commentary.