

## A bag from 100 years ago



Let's begin by spending some time looking closely at this object for a few moments.

Take your time.

What do you see?

Describe what you can see.

What is the first thing that you noticed?

What is your eye drawn to?

Is it something new or something old? How do we know that?

What tells us that's the case?

What might this object have been used for?

Did you ever have something like this when you were younger?

What did you put into it?

Let's look even more closely now.

What details can you see?

What materials do you think the object is made from?

If you were talking to a friend or someone in your family, how would you describe this object to them?

How does this object make you feel?

This object belongs to the collection at Kilmainham Gaol Museum. What do you know about Kilmainham Gaol and Irish history in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? What well known Irish people are linked to the history of Kilmainham Gaol?

Does the link to Kilmainham Gaol give you a clue as to the type of person that owned this? It might be someone known or less well known. Any ideas who?

There are some letters stamped on the bag, which give us a further hint as to who it belonged to. Do you see the initials 'C. DE. M.' above the buckle on the front? Underneath the handle is stamped with 'C. DE MARKIEVICZ' too.

This brown leather bag with its slightly frayed red fabric strap belonged to Countess Markievicz (1868-1927), and is said to have been used during the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. Constance de Markievicz was a commissioned officer in the Irish Citizen Army and she led a group to take over St Stephen's Green Park and the College of Surgeons, where she supposedly used this despatch bag. After six days they surrendered and she was imprisoned in Kilmainham Gaol.

Have you seen any old photographs of Countess Markievicz during her eventful life? Her accessory choices, including this bag, often reflected her passion for political activism.

How do you think Constance would have used her bag during the Easter Rising, and what might she have put into it?

If this bag could speak, what fascinating stories might it tell us?

## Guidance and suggestions for carers

For detailed information about this object and its owner please see <https://www.dublincastle.ie/100-years-of-women-in-politics-and-public-life-objects-in-focus/>

For information about the exhibition 100 Years of Women in Politics and Public Life, that this object was part of, please see [https://www.dublincastle.ie/event/102-years-of-women-in-politics-and-public-life/?instance\\_id=590](https://www.dublincastle.ie/event/102-years-of-women-in-politics-and-public-life/?instance_id=590)

For information about Kilmainham Gaol Museum please see <http://kilmainhamgaolmuseum.ie/>

### Things to look at and to consider in order to host a discussion about this object:

1. Have a **piece of leather** handy that can be touched and smelled. What words could be used to describe how this fabric feels? And how it smells? Where did this material come from originally, and how was it treated to become the way it is now?
2. Have a **bag** or a selection of bags to hand that can be opened and closed. Explore all of the different textures and materials (the zip, clasps, buckles, fasteners, buttons, rivets, studs, straps, handles, seams, stitching etc.). Be curious about any pockets, flaps and compartments – what types of things could be stored in each area of the bag(s)?
3. What different types of bags could someone use for a range of **occasions** and what could each hold? For example: going to a fancy party, going shopping, going on holidays, going to school, going to work, going to the gym.



By Mary Dowling