EXPERIENCE

Glasnevin

IRELAND'S NATIONAL CEMETERY

The Shane MacThomáis
Essay Prize for Primary Schools

To honour the memory of our historian Shane MacThomáis, Experience Glasnevin are proud to continue engaging young people with history through our annual primary school essay competition.

Experience Glasnevin offers engaging educational experiences that are tailored to the age and interests of all learners. Pupils explore over 200 years of Irish history, which are told through the stories of people buried within the cemetery.

From poets and presidents, singers and sports stars, the ordinary and the extraordinary - the stories of those who shaped our nation's history are brought to life at Glasnevin.

Now we're asking your class to do the same!

Explore the story of Dublin's past in your own words

As Ireland's National Cemetery, Glasnevin plays a huge role in the history of Dublin itself. We're asking 5th and 6th class students across the country to write a short essay based on the title above telling us about their favourite historical Dublin figure or something about the history of the city itself.

Whether it's a person or an event from any part of Dublin's history, we'd love to hear what your pupils have to say. Pupils will be able to share in no more than 600 words their account of any topic from Dublin's illustrious history.

Have your pupils use the writing template included to write their essay or alternatively they are more than welcome to type their essay.

Background to the Competition

This memorial essay prize was instituted by Dublin Cemeteries Trust in 2024 to honour the memory of Shane MacThomáis (1967-2014). Shane was historian to the Trust and left a rich legacy. He played a key role in expanding public interest in Glasnevin Cemetery and also knowledge of it as an important national heritage site. Like his father, Eamonn MacThomáis, he was a well-known public historian of Dublin and its people. This essay prize is intended to encourage younger people to engage with these topics and foster an interest in the subjects to which Shane dedicated himself.

Whether it's a person or an event from any part of Dublin's history, we'd love to hear what your pupils have to say.

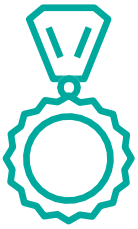
Competition Prizes

Exciting prizes to be won for the winning pupils and schools include:

1 x Overall winner:
The opportunity to have their essay displayed in the Experience Glasnevin Visitor Centre, a €250 voucher and a free class trip to Glasnevin for their school.

2 x Gold winners:
A €100 voucher and a free class trip to Glasnevin for their school.

4 x Silver winners:
A €50 voucher.



All seven finalists will receive a unique presentation medal.

The deadline for receipt of entry submissions is **27th April 2025.** This competition is open to all 5th and 6th class primary school students across the country.

Once completed, fill out our entry form on the last page for each pupil and
attach the handwritten or typed copy of their entry.
Send it to:
Education Team
Experience Glasnevin
Glasnevin Cemetery
Finglas Road
Glasnevin
Dublin 11

Or

Email it to:
education@dctrust.ie
with the subject – Primary School Essay Competition

For any queries, please contact the education team at education@dctrust.ie or on 018826598.

All seven finalists will receive a unique presentation medal.

Explore the story of Dublin's past in your own words

Shane MacThomáis

Shane MacThomáis was born in Dublin in 1967, the son of the broadcaster, author and republican Eamonn MacThomáis and his wife Rosaleen. Shane's interest in history was sparked from an early age, as was a love of books, and he followed in the footsteps of his father as a well-known historian of Dublin.

Following a period living in London in his 20s Shane returned home and devoted himself to making a career from his interest in history. He worked at a number of heritage sites including the James Joyce Centre and was an important figure in the development of the 1916 Walking Tour of Dublin, delivering many tours himself.

In mid-1990s he began working in Glasnevin Cemetery developing formal tours of the cemetery and promoting its heritage. In 2010 he was appointed as historian-in-residence to the newly established Visitor Centre.

Shane's work at Glasnevin was pivotal in bringing the cemetery, its history and the stories of those interred there to national and international attention. This work developing the profile of the cemetery came alongside the building of the Visitor Centre and a cemetery restoration programme; which had a transformative effect.

Amongst his many research and writing projects he published two books: "Glasnevin - Ireland's Necropolis" and "Dead Interesting". He also featured prominently in the Glasnevin Cemetery documentary "One Million Dubliners". Following his death Shane was described as "one of our great social historians" and his passing likened to the "burning of a library". Shane was a son, father, brother, colleague and a friend to many.

> ***"Shane has the ability and wit to make all of this come alive....***
>
> ***He is a master of the tale well told, and he has that rare ability to transmit his enthusiasm to his listeners."***
>
> ***Dr. Peter Harbison,***
>
> ***Foreward to Dead Interesting - Stories from the Graveyards of Dublin, Shane MacThomáis, 2012***

Entry Form

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School Name	
School Roll Number	
Teacher Name	
Teacher Email	

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Note to Teachers: Please provide only one entry per student

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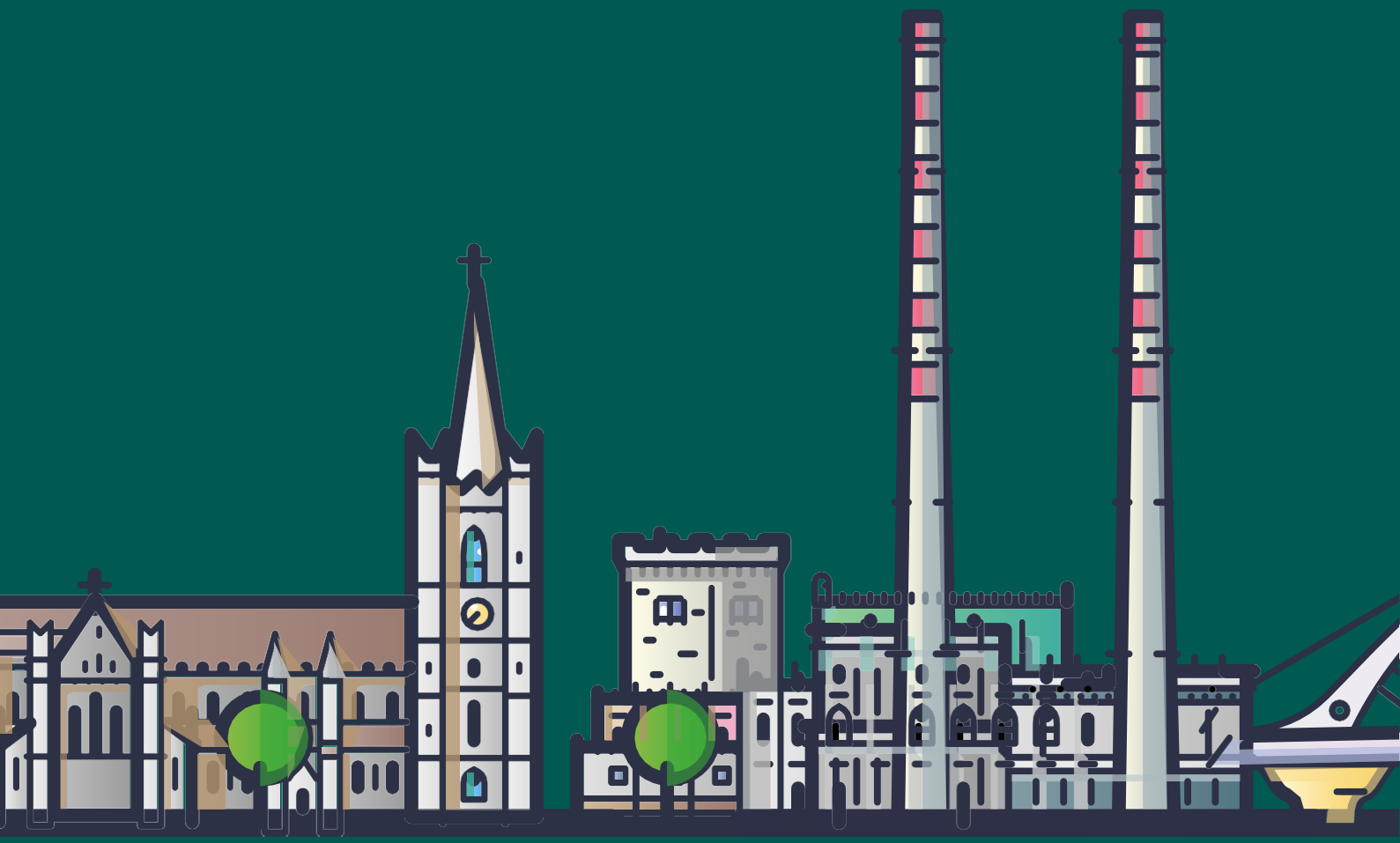

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