

“The Sniper” by Liam O’Flaherty
Suggested Lesson Procedure
Total Time: ~120 Minutes

1) Before Reading (~20 Minutes)

Tell students they will be doing a pre-reading strategy called Story Impressions.

(Story Impressions is a research-supported, evidence-based pre-reading strategy, and it is widely used in literacy instruction because it activates background knowledge and improves engagement, comprehension, and text structure awareness.)

Students will look at words from the story and use them to predict what might happen. Have students write a one-paragraph story using all the words in the order they’re listed. If time allows, ask a few volunteers to read their paragraph aloud.

2) Vocabulary (~20 Minutes)

Review the author’s background and the historical context using the PowerPoint. Then introduce the vocabulary words and have students copy the definitions into their vocabulary charts.

3) Read the Story (~10 Minutes)

Read the short story together as a class.

4) Reading Comprehension Questions (~15 Minutes)

Complete the reading comprehension questions together as a class to ensure students understand the plot.

5) Literary Analysis (~40 Minutes)

Have students work in pairs to complete the literary analysis questions. Give them sufficient time to answer all items, and then either collect their work or review the answers as a class.

6) After Reading (~15 Minutes)

Have students complete the human qualities list, and conclude the activity with a brief whole-class discussion to share ideas.

Name:

Date:

Before Reading Story Impressions

Write a short story (one paragraph) using all of the words in the left-hand column, in order. If you aren't sure what the word means, try your best to use it anyway.

Words To Use	My Story
June ↓	
moon ↓	
barking ↓	
civil ↓	
sandwich ↓	
parapet ↓	
roof ↓	
blood ↓	
iodine ↓	
dressing ↓	
smoke ↓	
whiskey ↓	
quiet ↓	
skylight	

Name:

Date:

The Sniper Vocabulary Chart

Word	Part of Speech	Definition	Synonyms
ascetic	adjective		
fanatic	noun		
paroxysm	noun		
ruse	noun		
reel	verb		
remorse	noun		
oath	noun		

Name:

Date:

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Where is the sniper positioned at the beginning of the story?

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2. Why does the sniper hesitate before lighting his cigarette, and what happens when he does?

3. Who are the two people the sniper kills early in the story, and why does he shoot them?

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4. How does the interaction between the old woman reflect the complexity of the Irish Civil War?

5. How does the sniper realize he has been shot, and what steps does he take to treat his wound?

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6. What plan does the sniper use to trick the enemy sniper across the street?

7. What emotions overwhelm the sniper after the enemy falls from the rooftop?

PREVIEW

8. What shocking discovery does the sniper make at the end of the story?

Name:

Date:

Literary Analysis Questions

1. How does O'Flaherty create tension in the opening paragraphs?

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2. How does the author build suspense during the confrontation between the two snipers?

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3. How does the final revelation that the enemy sniper is his brother work symbolically within the story?

4. How does the setting of Dublin during the Irish Civil War shape the events, mood, and overall message of the story?

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5. How does the story reveal a human desire to understand others, even in moments of conflict?

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6. How might Liam O'Flaherty's own experiences with war and political conflict have influenced the themes and emotional impact of *The Sniper*?

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7. What do you think the author is trying to suggest about the cost of war?

8. How does the sniper's emotional transformation throughout the story reveal the psychological impact of violence on individuals?

9. The sniper only feels remorse once the danger is gone. Why do you think people sometimes suppress emotions until after a difficult moment has passed? Have you experienced this?

10. In your own words, what is an enemy? How does this story change the way you think about what an enemy is?

11. What if the sniper didn't cross the street? How would the story be different?



Name:

Date:

Human Qualities

Part 1: Choose 10 traits or behaviors that you believe define humanity or human behavior. (For example: *compassion*)

Trait #1	
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Trait #2	
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Trait #3	
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Trait #4	
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Trait #5	
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Trait #6	
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Trait #7	
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Trait #8	
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Trait #9	
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Trait #10	
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Part 2: Write a short explanation explaining which **two** traits matter the most to you *personally*. (At least 3 sentences)

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THE SNIPER

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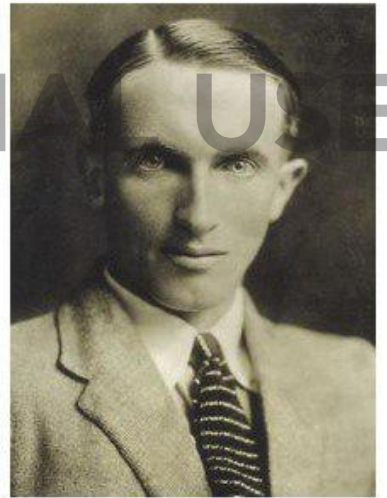
About the Author

Liam O'Flaherty was an Irish novelist and short story writer born on the Aran Islands. He grew up during a turbulent period in Irish history and personally witnessed the rise of rebellion, revolution, and civil conflict.

During World War I, he joined the Irish Guards. He served on the Western Front until he was wounded in 1917 and later discharged in 1918 after suffering from shell shock.

O'Flaherty experienced the violence and division of the Irish Civil War firsthand, and themes of war, psychological conflict, and human suffering appear in much of his writing.

His works also explore how political conflict tears communities apart, as well as the harsh realities of rural life.



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The Irish Civil War (1922–1923)

“The Sniper” is set during the Irish Civil War, a brutal conflict that followed Ireland’s fight for independence from Britain.

After the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, Ireland split into two groups:

1. Pro-Treaty forces (Free Staters)

Supported the creation of the Irish Free State

2. Anti-Treaty forces (Republicans)

Opposed the treaty because it required an oath to the British crown and did not create a fully independent republic



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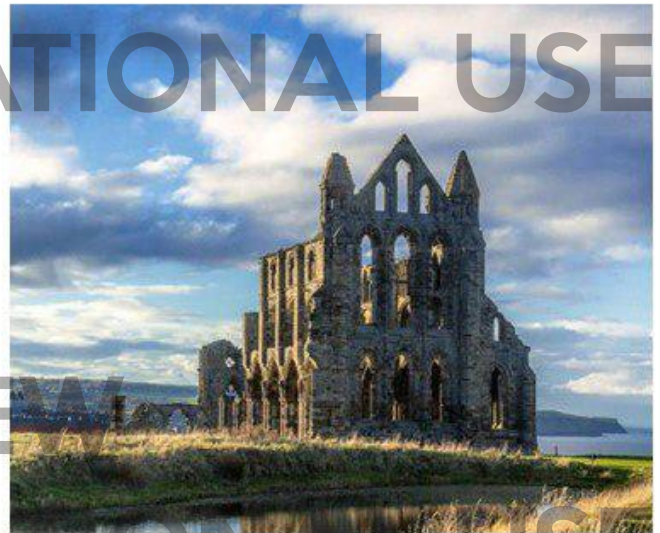
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The Irish Civil War (1922–1923)

- This disagreement divided the country, breaking apart friend groups, neighborhoods, and even families.
- Urban warfare unfolded in cities like Dublin, where combat took place in populated areas filled with civilians.
- Sniper battles were fought across the rooftops as opposing sides tried to control the cities from above.
- The conflict resulted in an estimated 2,000 to 4,000 deaths.
- In the end, the Pro-Treaty forces defeated the Anti-Treaty forces, who ultimately laid down their arms in May 1923.



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ascetic PREVIEW

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Part of Speech: adjective

Definition: describes someone practicing strict self-discipline; avoiding comfort or pleasure

Synonyms: austere, disciplined

Sentence: Maya chose an ascetic routine focused only on her nursing career, exercising, and worship.



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fanatic

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: A person with extreme enthusiasm or devotion to a belief or cause

Synonyms: extremist, radical

Sentence: Ever since Tom discovered gardening, he has become a total fanatic, spending every weekend tending to his plants and testing soil samples.



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paroxysm

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: A sudden, intense burst of emotion or physical sensation

Synonyms: outburst, surge

Sentence: When the comedian delivered the punchline, the audience erupted in a paroxysm of laughter that echoed through the theater.



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ruse

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: A clever trick or strategy meant to deceive someone

Synonyms: ploy, scheme

Sentence: To fool her husband on Valentine's Day, Kayla planned a clever ruse involving a fake "errand" that secretly led to the surprise.



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reel

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: verb

Definition: To stagger, lose balance, or move unsteadily as if about to fall

Synonyms: wobble, falter

Sentence: Jason felt himself reel after spinning around too quickly playing with his children.



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remorse

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: A deep feeling of guilt or regret for something you have done

Synonyms: guilt, shame

Sentence:

After snapping at her friend, Lily felt a wave of remorse and apologized immediately.



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oath

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: a serious promise or formal pledge, often made publicly or ceremoniously (or legally)

Synonyms: vow, sworn statement

Sentence:

During the ceremony, Jalen took an oath to faithfully serve his community in his new position on the city council.



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