

Activity 2: Investigating Games

Your class will learn about games and pastimes in the tenements. Using different pieces of evidence, they will investigate games in tenement times, and use their skills as historians to gather new evidence of games in the past and the present for their own museum.



Georgian townhouse to
tenement dwellings



Task 1: Investigating Games

(1st - 2nd class, and a starting point for 3rd - 6th class)

What were games like in the past? Here are some examples of evidence that give you clues about play and games in the tenements:

Oral histories

Oral histories are recordings of people talking about something they remember. In these recordings, children from the Hardwicke Street Community Centre in Dublin ask Peter Brannigan, who grew up in 14 Henrietta Street, about what play was like in the tenements when he was a child:

- [“What did you used to play?”](#)
- [“What were the toys like?”](#)
- [“What time did you have to stop playing and come inside?”](#)

Oral histories can be videos as well. Use this link to listen to people who grew up in Henrietta Street talk about memories of their childhood:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0p5aTTsBuk>

Tenement songs and rhymes

Songs and rhymes were popular with children in the tenements. Here are some recordings of children today singing some songs from tenement times:

- [A Sailor Went to Sea Sea Sea](#)
- [Bluebells Cockle Shells...](#)
- [One Two Three My Mother Caught a Flea...](#)



14 Henrietta Street Playroom (photo by Ste Murray)

Toys

Many children in the tenements made their own toys. This skill often stayed with them for life. Here is a trolley made by a man called Leo, who grew up in a tenement on Wood Quay, on the south side of the River Liffey.



A tenement trolley made from memory. Photographer: Ros Kavanagh

Think about these different pieces of evidence and answer the questions below:

- What do they tell us about games, play, and growing up in tenement times?
- What are the similarities and differences between then and now?
- (For 5th-6th class) Which of these are primary and which are secondary sources? Why do you think that?

Task 2: Playing Piggy Beds

Piggy Beds was a favourite street game for children in the tenements.
Learn how to play it below.

You will need:

- An empty tin of shoe polish or empty drinks can
- Chalk
- A flat outdoor surface

1. Make your piggy

Take an empty tin of shoe polish, or a drinks can, fill it with gravel or sand, and stamp on the top of it to make it a disc.

2. Draw the beds

Find an even surface outside, away from any traffic or dangers, and chalk out a grid that looks like this:



4	5
3	6
2	7
1	8

3. Play

- Toss your piggy into square number one.
- Stand on one foot, and hop into the square.
- Kick your piggy with the foot you're standing on into square number 2 - if it lands on the line, or goes outside the lines, you're out.
- Hop into the next square. You're only allowed one hop per square, and one kick per square
- Keep going round the grid, and see if you can get all the way round without putting your other foot down.
- Square number 4 and 7 are 'rest beds' - you can put your foot down here and have a rest
- Keep going all the way round and back to square number 1. Jump out and start again - throw the piggy into square number 2 and start again.

Task 3: My Museum of Games Then and Now

- Build your own Museum of Games by collecting evidence from the past and present:
 - **Photos**
 - **Objects**
 - **Stories:** talk to someone older than you.
What did they play as a child?
What games do they remember?
Can they teach you any?
 - **Your own stories:** what games do you play?
Can you write, draw, or paint instructions to add to your museum?
 - **Make a list** below of what you will put in your museum:

A large empty rectangular box with a decorative border, intended for students to draw or write their museum collection. The box is outlined with a double-line border and has small square decorative elements at the corners. At the bottom center of the box, there is a small, empty rectangular box, likely for a title or caption.