

# FAMILY



‘Children have a right to be with their family or those who care for them best’

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

## Article 41 of Bunreacht na hÉireann

- 1 The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.
- 2 The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and State.

## THE GLOBAL FAMILY

Who Am I? The answers to this question are endlessly varied – many choose to answer by stating what nationality they are, others may state their ethnicity or give details about the culture or group of people in which their family originated. For the children, researching their background can become a world journey as they may find great-grandparent(s) or other ancestors born in different countries. The teacher and pupils might invite parents and/or representatives of some or all of the different ethnic groups (including Travellers) from the locality to the school to discuss family structures in their cultures with the children, parents and staff.



## THE MEMORY BOX

### FAMILY

#### FAMILIES



One of the Encyclopaedia Britannica definitions of family states it is 'the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their own or adopted children; also: any of various social units differing from but regarded as equivalent to the traditional family...' It also defines a nuclear family as 'noun: a family group that consists only of father, mother, and children', and an extended family as 'noun: a family that includes in one household near relatives in addition to a nuclear family.'

For further definitions see [www.britannica.com/dictionary](http://www.britannica.com/dictionary)

**THINK ABOUT DIFFERENT FAMILIES.** Some families foster or adopt children; in some cases a grandparent might be the sole carer for his/her grandchildren; two adult siblings might live together and share the same house all their lives; one parent might work abroad and be apart from the family for long periods.

**Note to teachers:** Family units represented in your school/class might consist of other non-traditional groupings such as re-constituted families with children from previous parental partnerships, gay and lesbian parents and single-parent families. Consult your school's RSE or other ethical policies before approaching this topic.

## IDEAS AND ISSUES TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS

#### Discovering more about your family:

##### FAMILY KEEPSAKES

- Did your parents or grandparents keep any school records, certificates from training courses or other such reports? If you get the chance to see any of these, they will probably be very different to your school reports – look carefully at the subjects they studied or the training/probationary hours they received, and say how they compare with your own situation.
- Did anyone in your family keep a scrapbook or album of a special event or about their favourite singer or film-star? You might compare famous stars of years ago with your favourite performers – and you can check out the styles of clothes and hairstyles your relatives wore too!
- Do your parents or grandparents have any pay-slips or papers to show how much they earned in their first jobs? Do they have any old photographs of themselves or their colleagues at work? Were your parents, grandparents, other relatives older than you when they first went to work?

#### Discovering more about your family:

##### FAMILY TREE

- Your family tree is a map of your family; it shows how you are related, or joined, to the other people in your family, in the same way that branches and twigs are joined to the tree-trunk. Family trees can show your relationship to a step-family – your step-mother or father, their parents and other children (your step-siblings), grandparents, uncles,

aunts, cousins. It will sometimes also show when these people were born, married/separated/divorced or if they died.

- In J K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* Sirius Black shows Harry the family tree in Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place. It was an ancient tapestry, and the family tree had been embroidered with gold thread. But Sirius himself doesn't appear on the tapestry – instead there is 'a small, round, charred hole in the tapestry, rather like a cigarette burn'. He tells Harry that his mother had 'blasted' him off the tapestry after he'd run away from home. And as they examine the tapestry closely they see that other family members have been removed too because they did something of which the family disapproved.

#### Your place in the family: A TALENT TREE

- Draw your family tree, but, instead of listing your family and ancestors, see if you can plot out from whom you inherited talents or interests, beliefs or attitudes.
- **Note to teachers:** It should be stressed that this activity is more about influence than genetics so as to avoid causing distress for people who are adopted or do not live with blood relatives.
- Make a family collage. Cut out photographs or draw small pictures of those people you count as family, whether adopted or blood relations. Glue or paste the photos to a poster board or onto strong card. If some members of the family now live abroad, you might place their photo or drawing in a representation of that country.

