Northern Ireland – Ulster / the 6 counties

- Northern Ireland occupies about one-sixth of the island of Ireland and is separated on the east from Scotland, another part of the United Kingdom, by the narrow **North Channel**, which is at one point only 13 miles (21 km) wide.

- The **Irish Sea** separates Northern Ireland from England and Wales on the east and southeast, respectively, and the Atlantic Ocean lies to the north. The southern and western borders are with the republic of Ireland.

The capital is Belfast.

Other large cities are: Londonderry / Derry

Armagh

Giant's Causeway

- **Giant's Causeway,** promontory of basalt columns along 4 miles (6 km) of the northern coast of Northern Ireland. It lies some 25 miles (40 km) northeast of Londonderry. There are approximately 40,000 of these stone pillars, each typically with five to seven irregular sides, jutting out of the cliff faces as if they were steps creeping into the sea.

- Deriving its name from local folklore, it is fabled to be the work of giants, particularly of Finn MacCumhaill (MacCool), who built it as part of a causeway to the Scottish island of Staffa (which has similar rock formations) for motives of either love or war.

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/233107/Giants-Causeway

Titanic: Built in Belfast

- When RMS Titanic sailed away on her maiden voyage on April 10th, 1912, she was hailed as 'the new wonder of the world'. A remarkable feat of engineering, she was the largest and most luxuriously appointed ship ever seen and, despite her tragic sinking five days later, she remains a source of enduring pride in the city where she was built - Belfast.

http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/titanic/
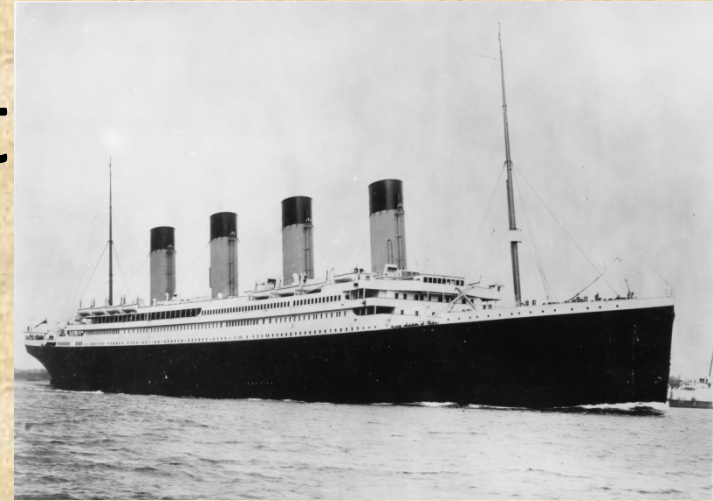
Stormont

- **Stormont,** eastern suburb of Belfast, seat of the government of Northern Ireland. Located on an estate of 300 acres (120 hectares), it includes the Parliament Buildings and Stormont House, which once served as the official residence of the prime minister of Northern Ireland. The Parliament Buildings (1928–32) was built in the Greek classical style and has four main floors.

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/567653/Stormont

Since 1999 it has been home to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

A very brief history of Northern Ireland

- In the early 12th century, **the Normans**, having conquered England, moved into Ireland, marking their progress with fortifications. But centuries passed before the Norman successors, the English, could consolidate their conquest. Home to some of Ireland's most powerful chieftains, Ulster fought hardest and held out longest.

- Four centuries on the English finally had the upper hand. In 1607, the cream of the native noblemen sailed to France, never to return, this became known as **"the Flight of the Earls"**.

- England quickly set about turning an unruly land into a settled province, through the **Plantation of Ulster**. Settlers from overcrowded England, and in particular, the Scottish lowlands were brought over. Soldiers and gentry received lands for their service to the Crown, but most of the new arrivals were poor labourers and artisans. Lord Chichester founded Belfast in 1613.

- Since the Reformation, England had been a Protestant nation. But Northern Ireland's native people were Catholic. Religion, along with land dispossession, rights and sovereignty issues, became a source of conflict and uprisings.

  In 1690, the 'Planters' celebrated when the Protestant King William of Orange ousted Catholic King James from the British throne, defeating him in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne.

http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/A-Rich-History-A2021

Belfast

- By the end of the 19th century, **Belfast was one of the leading industrial centres of the United Kingdom**, and the largest, most prosperous city on the island. Belfast's most imposing architecture dates from this period; the magnificent **Belfast City Hall** exudes civic affluence and pride.

- But it was the White Star liners built by Belfast's shipworkers that epitomise this golden age. The world's most impressive oceangoing vessels, they were the height of luxury and technology.

- In 1909, when work began on the **Titanic**, Belfast was one of the world's greatest ports and Harland & Wolff were shipbuilders to the world. The skills of their work force were recognised throughout the British Empire and the Titanic was the last word in luxury and technological innovation. RMS Titanic was a magnificent spectacle with 5 miles of decks, squash courts and a swimming pool. The crowning achievement was the world's most famous and ill fated ship when she sank in 1912.

http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/A-Rich-History-A2021

1922 – Northern Ireland and Ireland

- The British Government was under growing pressure to bring **home rule**, and in time, independence to Ireland. Tensions mounted as a large proportion of Northern Ireland's population wished to stay within the British Union. Impending conflict was shelved with the outbreak of World War One. Northern Ireland, indeed Ireland as a whole, sent thousands of young men to the battlefields of France.

- Following the Irish War of Independence, a border was drawn up in 1922 to accommodate the Unionist population of the North. 6 of the 9 Ulster counties remained part of the Union, forming today's **Northern Ireland**, and the other 26 counties became the **Republic of Ireland**. Northern Ireland got its own local government and in 1933, imposing new government buildings at Stormont.

  But the boom years were over. The Depression, new manufacturing rivals and the Second World War saw to that. And in **1941, the Luftwaffe bombed Belfast**. The pilots overshot their targets, the city's aircraft factories and shipyards, destroying residential streets and mills. There were hundreds of people killed, thousands were made homeless, and fires were so intense, rescue crews had to come from Dublin.

- http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/A-Rich-History-A2021

Catholics in Northern Ireland

- Unionists ensured their political hold over Northern Ireland through the manipulation of electoral boundaries, which minimized the representation of Roman Catholics.

- Balancing these disadvantages for the Catholic minority was the industrial economy of the north, which had no parallel in the south. By the end of the 19th century, Belfast was Ireland's largest city, with a population of nearly 350,000 and with numerous jobs in the textile industries and in shipbuilding. Although Protestants were overrepresented, often unfairly, in skilled jobs and managerial positions, Belfast's economic magnet drew lower-class Catholics from the impoverished countryside. The city experienced sectarian violence, its housing was highly segregated (with Catholics generally occupying much of the poor housing stock), and religious intolerance was rampant—all of which worsened already difficult living conditions for Catholics—but its economic appeal endured even through the Great Depression of the 1930s and the doldrums of the 1960s and '70s.

- Several factors help to explain the relatively minor emigration of Roman Catholics from the north. Not only did they fear that they would be economically worse off in the south, but World War II brought a measure of economic revival, especially in ship and aircraft manufacture. Moreover, the social welfare provisions extended to Northern Ireland after the war by far exceeded the supports and protections available to individuals in the socially conservative south. Northern Catholics did not "vote with their feet," but neither did they accept the stark inequities in Northern Ireland.

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/419739/Northern-Ireland/44666/Home-Rule

Fragile peace

- By the mid-1960s the fragile stability of Northern Ireland had begun to erode. The **demographic majority that Protestants enjoyed** ensured that they were able to control the state institutions, and these powers were, more often than not, used in ways that disadvantaged the Catholic minority in the region, though the extent and even the existence of discrimination in Northern Ireland remained a matter of heated debate. An active civil rights movement—partly inspired by the achievements of African Americans in the civil rights movement in United States—emerged in the late 1960s, and incidents of communal violence increased.

- In 1969 the Provisional movement of the **Irish Republican Army (IRA)** emerged out of this communal disorder. The IRA acquired arms and explosives and initiated a campaign of bombings and shootings in order to protect Roman Catholics, destabilize Northern Ireland's institutions, weaken British resolve to maintain the union, and achieve Irish unity.

- In response to the violence, the authorities introduced **internment without trial in August 1971** (ended 1975).

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/419739/Northern-Ireland/44669/Disintegration-of-stability

The Troubles

- In Derry on **Jan. 30, 1972**, a day that became known as **Bloody Sunday**, a peaceful but illegal protest by Catholics against the British government's internment policy turned violent, with British troops opening fire and killing 13 Catholic demonstrators (a 14th died several months later). Bloody Sunday continued to be a matter of considerable controversy—in particular, the army's orders and the role of the IRA in the violence—and in the late 1990s the British government established a commission to determine the facts. In 2010 the Saville Report, the final pronouncement of that government inquiry, concluded that none of the victims had posed any threat to the soldiers and that their shooting was without justification.

- The bloodiest year of **the "Troubles"—as the sectarian violence** was popularly known—was 1972, when 467 people, including 321 civilians, were killed; approximately 275 people were killed each year in the period 1971–76. The violence diminished in the 1980s, when about 50 to 100 political murders and assassinations occurred each year. By the end of the 20th century, more than 3,600 people had been killed and 36,000 injured; of the deaths, more than 2,000 were the responsibility of republicans, 1,000 of loyalists, and more than 350 of security forces. In the last three decades of the 20th century, more than 1,000 members of the security forces also were killed.

- In March 1972 Conservative British Prime Minister Edward Heath suspended the constitution and parliament of Northern Ireland, which thereby ended Home Rule (which did not return until 1999) and restored **direct rule from London**.

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/419739/Northern-Ireland/44669/Disintegration-of-stability

- Frameworks for all-party peace talks—notably the **Downing Street Declaration (1993)**, issued by the British and Irish prime ministers, John Major and Albert Reynolds, respectively—were put forward. These guaranteed self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland, promised British government recognition of a unified Ireland if a majority of Northern Ireland's people agreed, and committed Ireland to abandoning its constitutional claim to Northern Ireland in the event of a political settlement.

- Both the IRA and the loyalist paramilitary groups announced the cessation of military activity in 1997

- The **Good Friday Agreement was signed in April 1998**. Under the terms of this accord, responsibility for most local matters was to be devolved to an elected assembly. There were institutional arrangements for cross-border cooperation on a range of issues between the governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland and for continued consultation between the British and Irish governments.

- In a jointly held referendum in Ireland and Northern Ireland on May 22, 1998—the first all-Ireland vote since 1918—the agreement was approved by 94 percent of voters in Ireland and 71 percent in Northern Ireland. However, the wide disparity between Catholic and Protestant support for the agreement in Northern Ireland (96 percent of Catholics but only 52 percent of Protestants voted in favour) indicated that efforts to resolve the sectarian conflict would be difficult.

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/419739/Northern-Ireland/256566/Power-sharing-agreements-and-the-establishment-of-a-fragile-peace