



Táin 20: Our on-line óenach

Notes for teachers

- **Background information**
- **What's the Plan?**
- **Pack materials**
- **On-line resources**

Óenachs were seasonal gatherings, recorded in early medieval times, but dating back further.

Who called them?

They could only be called by important regional kings but all the lesser kings and chieftains, were quick to attend.

Where were they held?

They were held at royal sites. Many are lost in the landscape today but some are well known, including Cruachan and Emain Macha. (Navan Fort)

When were they held?

Lughnasagh (August) or Samhain (October / November) were favourite times.

What happened at them?

- Laws and treaties were announced, status issues were decided and legal cases heard.
- There were major opportunities for trading and bartering goods, cattle and horses.
- Games, and challenges between champions were held. It was a bit like the Olympic games. There was also a great deal of feasting, story-telling and music.

There were strict rules covering the Óenach time to prevent fights and arguments.

What's the plan?

My plans for themed sporting challenges were dashed by the lockdown in May but I want to try something new, an on-line children's inter-school Óenach.

We will have to forgo physical challenges, and chariot racing was never an option, but we can still have fun with the idea.

I am sending you a pack of simple games, creative ideas and challenges These can be shared with class members or, even better, with some of the other schools taking part in the project.

You can send your challenges to each other by email, Zoom etc, or upload challenges and creative writing to the dedicated Google Drive folder provided by the Heritage officer.

I am sending you a '[scary](#)' audio story, Conan Maol, just for Halloween.

Pack Materials

These are a mixture of creative writing and design ideas, ideal to share as challenges.

- [Boast about your 'super-skills'](#). (Based on the story of Fergus)
- Create the best ['bling'](#)
- Design [the most magnificent magical weapon](#).
- Create a [special action poem](#) (Rosc)
- Challenge an opponent to [a board game](#) of your own design.
- [Send a message](#) in the poet's secret language.
- [Praise your own latest exploit](#).
- Quest for [a gift to please Queen Medb](#)
- Make a [king's judgement](#).
- Enjoy a [Halloween story](#)
- Enjoy a [Halloween animated film](#).

More ideas for sharing can be found in this, easy to use, [project pack](#).

Each of the six topics contains an information page and an activity worksheet.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19peUTdu2cKz9dsKZQMnFkrVTJuc9E3y0/view?usp=sharing>

The link below opens a folder set up by the Heritage officer to store your creative work.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/134aEwRA3VRn0Wiid5MdgXuIUq5RHrgU?usp=sharing>

A bit more practical information.

We have almost reached the half-term break now, and nearly all the seven schools taking part in the online Táin 20 project are well underway. Zoom sessions are happening as well.

I want to get these Óenach challenges to you before the break as many of them represent simple and fun activities, ideal for the Halloween season, an important festival at the time of the stories. However, there is plenty of time for them in November, before Christmas takes over.

There are two Halloween stories available.

- [‘The Adventures of Nera’](#) is suitable for older children only. It is a bit gruesome. However, it is a great tale connected to the Tain. I suspect 5th and 6th might really enjoy it.
- The tale of [Conan Maol](#) will suit 2nd – 4th better and is quite funny.

NOTE: You may need to download audio files to play them.

The animated film, [‘The Cats of Cruachan’](#) is ideal for everyone.

Nollaig and I would like to create an on-line exhibition of work arising from the Táin 20 project and the Óenach sharing ideas should make this easier and more enjoyable. You can upload, poems, stories, pictures, challenges but not photos of yourselves, at least not without necessary permissions of course.

I am very happy to offer all Táin 20 schools a further Zoom session after half term to hear about the challenges you are taking, or giving and to offer support.

All the best
Chris Thompson

List of participating schools

Joseph's boyle BNS

sjbsboyle@gmail.com 086 8042551

Ballintleva NS

ballintlevans@gmail.com 09066 22491

Threen NS

thrnns56@gmail.com 09496 21330

Lismoil National School

lismoilschool@gmail.com 09066 23373

Feevagh NS

feevaghns@gmail.com 09066 22200

Scoil na nAingeal Naofa NS, Boyle

keenan.fiona@gmail.com 086 6064121

Lecarrow N.S.

tracy.kilgannon@gretb.ie 09066 61242

Lines from the Dinshenchas of Carmun, An early Óenach fair

*In the month of August, free from reproach
They would go there every third year:
they would hold seven races, for a glorious
prize,
Seven days in the week.*

*There they would speak in verbal battles
On the rights and taxes of the province
Debate every legal enactment hotly
Every third year it was put in order.*

*These are the óenach's great customs:
trumpets, harps, hollow-throated horns,
pipers, tireless timpanists,
poets and musicians.*

Penalties for neglecting the event resulted in
baldness and early grey hair.

The link below opens a folder set up by the Heritage officer to store your creative work.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/134aEwRA3VRn0Wiid5MdgXuIUq5RHrgU?usp=sharing>