

0. THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN - Story Preface

1. WHO WAS WOLFE TONE?

2. ENGLAND TAKES OVER

3. IRISH CATHOLICS DENIED THE VOTE

4. THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN

5. THE PLAN FOR IRISH FREEDOM

6. STEP ONE FAILS

7. STRIKE TWO

8. WOLFE TONE IS BETRAYED

9. CORNWALLIS GETS HIS REVENGE

10. A TRIAL WITHOUT JUSTICE

11. NO HOPE

12. ATTEMPTS TO SAVE TONE

13. A FINAL ACT OF DEFIANCE

14. IRELAND DECLARES FREEDOM

15. THE EFFECTS TODAY, ANGELA'S ASHES

16. MORE COOL LINKS

Centuries before radio and television disseminated news, political cartoons and pamphlets were the vehicles which aroused passion among citizens. Wolfe Tone wrote *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* which endeared him to the Catholic population. In the pamphlet, Tone argued Ireland should be:

*Free from Britain
and
Free from religious oppression*

To achieve that goal, Tone and two other Irish Protestants ([James Napper Tandy](#) and [Thomas Russell](#)) co-founded the Society of United Irishmen in 1791. Tone and his colleagues wanted to downplay religious differences, since England was effectively *using* those differences to control the country. As Tone said later, he wanted

To break the connection with England...and to assert the independence of my country - these were my objects. To...substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter - these were my means.

George III, who was still king of England in 1791, was no more interested in Irish independence than he had been interested in American freedom. Besides, the "catechism" United Irishmen were teaching was threatening to English interests:

*What have you got in your hand?
A green bough.*

*Where did it first grow?
In America.*

*Where did it bud?
In France.*

*Where are you going to plant it?
In the crown of Great Britain.*

It wasn't long before Britain banned the [United Irishmen](#) and exiled Wolfe Tone.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-SOCIETY-OF-UNITED-IRISHMEN-Irish-Patriot-Wolfe-Tone>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-SOCIETY-OF-UNITED-IRISHMEN-Irish-Patriot-Wolfe-Tone>

Media Stream



James Napper Tandy

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/James-Napper-Tandy>



Thomas Russell

Image online, courtesy the [Down County Museum](#) website.

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Flag of the United Irishmen

Image online, courtesy [Ask About Ireland](#).

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The flag of the United Irishmen.

"Éire go Brách"
means
"Ireland Forever"