A Level History
Unit 18:
The Partition of Ireland (1905-23):
Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant
Campaign of 1912
The Partition of Ireland (1905-23): Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant Campaign of 1912

Overview and Rationale

This Unit is offered to support the teaching of History at A2 in relation to the partition of Ireland. It examines one particularly significant phase of the Unionist movement to resist Home Rule: the Ulster Covenant Campaign of 1912, and incorporates source material, including evaluations from historians of the period, and extracts from newspapers showing how the Campaign was reported in both the nationalist and the unionist press. It includes information on the leaders and on the course of the campaign, and also offers some background information on the Biblical and Scottish origins of the concept of covenant, in order to explain why what appeared to be a political campaign had such strong religious resonances. The Unit has relevance to the Partition of Ireland (1900-25) module in the current GCE History specifications, and will continue to be relevant to the Partition of Ireland (1905-23) module in the new draft History specifications, intended for first teaching in 2016.

The Context: Home Rule Hopes Revived

In 1910 the UK general election returned a hung parliament. The Liberals under H.H. Asquith were the largest party by only two seats. They needed to make deals in order to govern effectively, and entered into an agreement with the Irish Parliamentary Party, led by John Redmond, who promised support to Asquith if he would introduce a third Home Rule Bill. After the passing of the Parliament Act in 1911 the House of Lords, which had killed the second Home Rule Bill in 1893, would not have a veto, but could only delay the passing of the Bill by two years. The stage appeared set for Home Rule in Ireland to become a reality and on 11 April 1912 the third Home Rule Bill was introduced at Westminster. Resistance to the passing of the Bill developed and grew in strength in Ulster and among Unionist supporters in Great Britain. There were rallies, speeches, demonstrations; a great body of anti-Home Rule material was produced in the form of pamphlets, articles, postcards, posters and cartoons, and within Ulster men began drilling and eventually arming in preparation for opposing Home Rule by force. According to Gordon Lucy, in the view of Ulster unionists ‘the Liberal Administration was acting outside the Constitution by attempting to deprive Ireland of her place under the Westminster Parliament. Thus they had a right, indeed a duty, to resist …’

It would be useful to have a few images of the anti-Home Rule post-cards or posters here.

The Central Figures:

**Sir Edward Carson (1854-1935)**

Carson was a Dublin lawyer and southern liberal unionist M.P. with a formidable reputation for argument, and oratorical skills that could powerfully sway an audience. He became leader of the Irish Unionist Alliance and was invited by James Craig to lead the Ulster Unionists in their fight against Home Rule. According to the historian Jonathan Bardon, ‘He agreed to lead Ulster loyalists in the belief that if he could prevent Home Rule being applied to Ulster then Home Rule could not be applied to the rest of Ireland, for Redmond would never accept a divided island.’

Alan Parkinson, author of a recent study of the third Home Rule crisis, offers the following assessment of Carson’s motivation: ‘He was a traditional Irish unionist and fervently believed that, by exploiting the high levels of resistance in Ulster, he would succeed in derailing Home Rule legislation for the whole of Ireland.’ Carson’s primary purpose, then, was not to see Ireland partitioned, and to create an Ulster that was part of a separate jurisdiction from the rest of country, but to maintain the Union of Britain and Ireland.

**Sir James Craig (1871-1940)**

Craig was first a stockbroker, then a soldier – a veteran of the Boer War – and from 1906, M.P. for East Down. He was a hard-working and effective MP who had impressive leadership and organisational skills, but he did not have Carson’s charisma as a public speaker. If Carson’s concern was to keep Ireland within the Union, Craig was more concerned to protect Ulster from rule by a Dublin parliament where Catholics would predominate and, he believed, govern to Ulster’s disadvantage with regard to the province’s industrial development and to the religious liberty of the Protestant majority population. In this respect he was the latest in a long line of political and religious thinkers, such as Reverend Henry Cooke, who had opposed Daniel O’Connell’s repeal campaign in the 1840s, on the twin basis of Ulster’s prosperity and of her religious freedom under the Union.

**Thomas Sinclair (1838-1914)**

Sinclair was brilliantly clever, educated at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution (Inst.), and at Queen’s College Belfast (later QUB). He could have followed an academic career but went into the family business, eventually becoming president of the Ulster Chamber of Commerce. He was a committed Presbyterian layman, a Sunday School teacher, an enthusiastic supporter of Christian missions and very proud of his descent from Scottish Covenanters, a strict and devout faction within the Church of Scotland, many of whom had migrated to Ulster during the seventeenth century to escape persecution. Sinclair had taken a leading role in opposing the first two Home Rule Bills. As Chairman of the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association he had organised the Ulster Convention of June 1882, a huge event which attracted some 12,000 Unionist delegates in a mass protest against Home Rule, and

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which also positively affirmed the strength of their commitment to the Union. Sinclair himself addressed the Convention, emphasising the unity of the very diverse interest groups represented in his audience. He said:

‘A conviction of common duty in the presence of a common danger has healed divisions that formerly embittered many of our social relationships, and has united in common defence of their common birthright as British citizens men who through all their previous lives had never stood on the same platform. We are here as Radicals and Tories, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, Orangemen and Roman Catholics, land owners and land occupiers, masters and men, but with threatened disaster at our gates we speak and act as one man.’

He also addressed and refuted the charge that opposition to Home Rule had been organised to promote, or prop up, a Protestant Ascendancy: ‘I speak as the representative of thousands of delegates to this Convention who, like myself, are Liberals born and bred, who have in their veins the blood of Scottish Covenanters and English Puritans, and the best part of whose political lives have been spent in resisting and pulling down ascendancy in every form.’

When Home Rule re-appeared on the Government agenda in the 1900s, the Ulster Unionist Council was formed, and Sinclair was a member of its standing committee. In January 1911 he played an active role in reviving the unionist clubs, which had originally been formed in 1893 to oppose the second Home Rule Bill. The clubs extended their membership and began drilling and training. Eventually they formed the basis for the UVF.

Sinclair possessed considerable skills as a writer and employed them in defence of the Union. He was a member of a commission which drafted the constitution for a provisional government of Ulster, intended to be established in the event of Home Rule becoming a reality. It was Sinclair who principally authored the text of Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant:

**Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant**

BEING CONVINCED in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V., humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant, throughout this our time of threatened calamity, to stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children, our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. And in the event of such a Parliament being forced upon us, we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognise its authority. In sure confidence that God will defend the right, we hereto subscribe our names. And further, we individually declare that we have not already signed this Covenant.

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Questions to consider:

1. What are identified as the certain, detrimental effects of Home Rule?
2. Which words and phrases indicate a sense of deep foreboding on the part of Unionists?
3. To what and to whom do the signatories express a positive loyalty?
4. What do they value about their position within the United Kingdom?
5. Which phrases have been chosen to suggest that resistance to Home Rule is a religious, not simply a political, duty?
6. How do you interpret the following, in particular the reference to using all means necessary?: We ‘pledge ourselves …to stand by one another … and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy …’

The Women’s Declaration

The Solemn League and Covenant was signed only by men as the campaign took place in the era before women were given the vote. However, women took an active role in canvassing for signatures, and a Women’s Declaration was also drafted. In the end, slightly more women signed the Declaration (228,991) than men signed the Covenant (218,206). The historian Myrtle Hill has said that although many of the women canvassers would have been supporters of full women’s suffrage, they saw defence of the Union as the priority at the time of the Home Rule crisis.  

An Ulster Unionist Women’s Council was formed in 1911 and soon had over 40,000 members. Gordon Lucy interprets the role Ulster women played during the Covenant Campaign as a very positive development on the road to the full emancipation of women:

‘… the Ulster Crisis was to allow a noticeable shift in the role of women and secured for them a relatively advanced position … The conventions of the time might demand a separate women’s Declaration, but women were eager to show that they could not only match but outstrip the efforts of the men. … Two of the most impressive features of the Covenant campaign, were the breadth of Unionist support across the classes and the high profile of women.’

The Women’s Declaration

We, whose names are underwritten, women of Ulster, and loyal subjects of our gracious King, being firmly persuaded that Home Rule would be disastrous to our Country, desire to associate ourselves with the men of Ulster in their uncompromising opposition to the Home Rule Bill now before Parliament, whereby it is proposed to drive Ulster out of her cherished place in the

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6 In discussion at Queen’s University Belfast, 19 January 2015.
Constitution of the United Kingdom, and to place her under the domination and control of a Parliament in Ireland.

Praying that from this calamity God will save Ireland, we here to subscribe our names.

1. What similarities are there between the women’s Declaration and the men’s Covenant in its language, and in the ideas expressed?
2. How is the supportive role of the women emphasised?
3. What activity are the women to engage in while the men are offering ‘uncompromising opposition’? (See last sentence.)
4. Do you feel that men’s and women’s roles are stereotype in the Declaration, or does it simply reflect the perceptions of men and women that were widespread in 1912?

Origins of the Covenant

In order fully to appreciate the significance of Ulster Unionist resistance to Home Rule, which reached its zenith in the mass signings of the Covenant that took place on ‘Ulster Day’, 28th September 1912, we must consider the significance of the term ‘Covenant’ itself. The word has resonances that are Biblical, Scottish and historical.

Biblical:

In the Bible a covenant is an absolutely binding promise or agreement. God entered into covenants with individuals such as Noah and Abraham in Old Testament times, but the most important covenant of all was the ‘New Covenant’ in which God promised eternal salvation to men and women in return for their repentance from sin and trust in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. By calling their document a covenant, therefore, the pro-Union campaigners were giving it a religious aura, so that signing it seemed much more than a merely civic responsibility, or patriotic duty.

Scottish and Historical Resonances:

The National Covenant of 1638

Thomas Sinclair, who wrote the text of Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant, was acutely conscious of his descent from Scottish Presbyterians who had opposed attempts by King Charles I (1625-49) to impose changes on the Scottish church – the Kirk – during the seventeenth century. The changes included a new prayer book which used forms of worship and expressions that the Scots felt were too close to Catholic practices and beliefs. They also resented the imposition of such changes by a reigning monarch who was acting without consulting either Parliament or the governing body of the Kirk – the General Assembly. Many Covenanters, particularly later in the seventeenth century, in the so-called ‘killing times’ when Charles I’s son, Charles II (1660-85) was on the English throne, paid dearly for making such a stand. They were driven out of their homes and churches, sometimes murdered, and if captured were often tortured or executed. In order to escape such persecution many left Scotland for Ulster, and established or joined strong Presbyterian
communities there. In giving the name Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant to the
document, the Unionists were tapping into Ulster Protestants’ pride in the courage of their
ancestors who had resisted what they believed was injustice and tyranny, even to the point of
death.

The Solemn League and Covenant of 1643

In 1642 the Civil War between Parliament and King had broken out in England, and the
English Parliamentary leaders negotiated for the support of the Covenanters in Scotland.
Their alliance was sealed in the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. In return for their
assistance against Charles I, the Scots expected the Presbyterian forms and theology of the
Scottish church to be adopted in the church throughout the three kingdoms – Scotland,
Ireland and England. However, the English parliamentarians saw the Covenant as primarily a
military rather than a religious alliance and did not widely adopt Presbyterian beliefs and
practices. Significantly, though, many Presbyterians in Ulster supported and signed the
Covenant of 1642.

It was from Scottish settlers who often at great personal cost had resisted religious change
imposed by the government that Sinclair drew his heritage and the inspiration for Ulster’s
Solemn League and Covenant of 1912. Encoded in the use of the name ‘Solemn League and
Covenant’, is the idea of popular resistance to unjust state policy and to perceived attempts to
impose Catholicism on a Protestant people. Thus to many Unionists in Ulster the Covenanters
seemed iconic figures, representing principled, heroic defiance in the face of persecution and
attempted domination. However, to others, particularly Catholics, their image may have
seemed much more threatening, since they were associated with a Scottish church that had
vigorously tried to eradicate what its leaders called ‘popery’ in the earlier religious conflicts
of the sixteenth century.

Unionist Objections to Home Rule

The commitment made by signatories of the Covenant to resist Home Rule by whatever
means necessary was a remarkable one. It demonstrates an enormous groundswell of feeling
against the actions of the sovereign government. But what exactly was the nature of the
Unionist objection to Home Rule? The Reverend Henry Cooke had expressed opposition to
the Repeal of the Act of Union in a speech following Daniel O’Connell’s visit to Belfast in
1841 in which he had stated:

… throned above our fair town, and looking serenely from out mountain’s brow, I
behold the genii of Protestantism and Liberty, sitting inseparable in their power, while
the genius of Industry which nightly reclines at their feet, starts with every morning in
renovated might ... Yes, Mr O’Connell, we will guard the Union as we will guard out
liberties, and advance and secure the prosperity of our country. Were you to succeed in
effecting Repeal, we know our liberties were strangled forever. (Tremendous cheers) …
Look at Belfast and be a Repealer – if you can.\(^8\)

\(^8\) *The Repealer Repulsed*, (Belfast: McComb, 1841), p. 110.
In 1912 the Unionists showed they continued to feel that Home Rule would establish a Catholic ascendancy, which would be deeply harmful both to Protestant freedom and to the thriving economy of Ulster, evidenced in the success of the shipyards, the ropeworks, the engineering foundries and the textile industries.

According to Jonathan Bardon, ‘Catholicism was regarded as an oppressive backward religion and the fear that Home Rule would result in Rome rule was genuine. Protestants visualised a Dublin government putting education entirely in the hands of the Church and forcing their children to attend Catholic schools and reserving public employment exclusively for Catholics.’

Certain decrees of the church around this time appeared to confirm fears of an assumed Catholic superiority that the hierarchy wished to impose on all. Not least was the Ne Temere decree of Pope Pius X in 1907 which instructed that Catholics who married Protestants should bring up their children as Catholics, and thus appeared to discount the opinion and conscience of the Protestant partner.

The Ulster Covenant Campaign

Edward Carson announced the details of the Covenant text on the steps of James Craig’s home, Craigavon, on 19 September 1912. The campaign itself ran its course over eleven meetings, held during September. The meetings culminated in the Ulster Day demonstration staged at the Ulster Hall in Belfast on Saturday 28 September, 1912. This was also the day on which people in their hundreds of thousands at venues throughout the province signed the Covenant, or the accompanying Women’s Declaration. Craig organised the campaign and Carson addressed the meetings, calling on unionist people to oppose Home Rule but to maintain order and discipline. The first meeting was held in Enniskillen and was attended by some 40,000 Unionist Club members. Further meetings were held in centres such as Lisburn, Londonderry, Coleraine and Portadown. Carson was accompanied on his speaking tour by the leading English Tory M.P., F.E. Smith, who heartily endorsed the Unionist position.

Gordon Lucy’s description of the Coleraine event gives something of the flavour and vigour of the campaign and Carson’s impact as a speaker and motivator:

On 21 September the Covenant campaign was taken to Coleraine. Accompanied by bands with flags waving in the breeze, Carson and Smith marched the town ablaze with red, white and blue flags and bunting. At the Demonstration, in the grounds of the Manor House, Carson told the gathered thousands that the Covenant Campaign was no ordinary campaign:

It is the soul of a nation fighting against injustice … It is the protest of men that no gold can buy, the protest of men who will not allow themselves to be sold.

The climactic demonstration was the Ulster Hall rally, which followed the signing of the Covenant in Belfast by Carson and the Unionist leaders.

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Ulster Day

Saturday 28 September began with church services throughout Ulster. After the service in Belfast, Carson and the other Unionist leaders walked from the Ulster Hall to the City Hall, behind a flag which it was claimed had been flown at the Battle of the Boyne – a rather dubious claim which provoked derision in some sections of the nationalist press. Marshals in bowler hats, carrying walking sticks, and wearing red white and blue striped arm bands, provided a disciplined escort. Crowds respectfully observed the walk, and in the entrance hall first Carson, then the other leaders signed the covenant, which was laid out on a round table draped with a union jack. A silver pen and ink stand had been provided. After this, the crowds were admitted in batches to add their signatures. There were similar ceremonies throughout Ulster, and in total 218,206 men signed, with 228,991 women signing the Declaration. Provision was also made in centres in Dublin and Great Britain for Unionists to sign the documents.

The Ulster Hall Rally

If the signing of the Covenant had been accomplished with a high degree of theatricality, the Covenant rally took the form of a solemn service of worship and supplication. Prayers were offered which invoked God’s protection and deliverance. The hymn, ‘O God our help in ages past’ was sung, expressing trust in God’s guardianship during deeply troubled times. A former Presbyterian moderator preached a sermon urging the people to ‘Keep that which is committed to thy trust’, a text from 1 Timothy 6:20. The whole programme explicitly endorsed the view that Ulster, and the Protestant faith, stood in grave danger from the government’s plans for Home Rule.

On the evening of 28th September Carson left for the Belfast docks where he boarded the Patriotic, a ship bound for Liverpool, to continue his campaign in Britain.  

Contemporary Sources: Reporting of the Campaign in the Irish News and the Northern Whig

These two newspapers, the former nationalist, the latter unionist reported the campaign and the Ulster Day Rally. It is interesting to observe the differences in the tone of the journalism.

The Northern Whig

The paper highlighted Protestant concern over perceived Catholic intolerance, alleging the unwillingness of Irish nationalist politicians to challenge it:

It is rather interesting to note that while one section of the Radical Press is trying to make light of the Papal decrees another section is beseeching Mr Redmond and his friends to repudiate them. The leader of the Nationalist party will do nothing of the sort. He was coaxed … to denounce the Ne Temere decree, but the denunciation has never been uttered. Mr

11 An excellent account of Ulster Day, its atmosphere and Carson’s dynamic role and presence throughout may be found in A.F. Parkinson, Friends in High Places: Ulster’s resistance to Irish Home Rule, 1912-14 (Belfast: the Ulster Historical Foundation, 2012), pp. 128-42.
Redmond … dare not condemn any action of the Roman Church … Irish Protestants refuse to entrust their liberties to a party which is so completely under the thumb of an intolerant Church.

NW, 4 January, 1912.

An article published shortly before the beginning of the Covenant campaign drew on the historical and Scottish origins of the covenant idea and also expressed the determination of Unionists to oppose Home Rule:

In the whole Empire there are no more loyal people than the people of Ulster. Their resistance is directed against the attempt to drive them out of their citizenship. … If we seek a historic parallel for the situation in Ulster we must go to Scotland in the days that immediately preceded the signing of the National Covenant. An attempt was then made to prevent the Scottish people from exercising religious freedom, and in the hour of danger they solemnly and religiously bound themselves to stand together and resist the attacks of the Papacy … The Government … if they persist on their foolish course will find to their cost that the men of Ulster are as inflexible as were their Scottish ancestors … A Roman Catholic Parliament will never be allowed to exercise its rule over the Protestants of Ulster.

NW, 3 September, 1912

A sense of betrayal by the British Government, as well as suspicion of Nationalist motives is clear from a further article of the same date:

Now we have a picture of the rulers of the greatest empire the world has ever seen engaged in the apparently congenial labour of shattering the ties which bind Ireland to the mother country. … If the Northern province were of poor repute, of doubtful prosperity, and afforded a small basis for Nationalist taxation no Home Ruler would care a jot for Ulster’s fate.

NW, 3 September, 1912

On 20 September, 1912 the NW printed the full text of the Ulster Covenant and of the Women’s Declaration, along with an account of the Lisburn meeting and Carson’s ‘triumphal entry’ into the town.

On 23 September the NW published a list of churches where special services would be held on Ulster Day, with details of places, including church halls, Orange halls and courthouses where the Covenant could be signed.

As Ulster Day approached a sense of excitement concerning the event and its likely significance was expressed, and the distribution of copies of the Covenant for signing was enthusiastically reported:

Considering that the document was only approved by the delegates of the Unionist Council at noon on Monday there has certainly been no time lost in preparing and sending out copies of a document which will certainly become historic. Bound up in books of ten, the books
contain each space for a hundred names. Something like 6,000 of these books have been despatched …

NW, 26 September, 1912.

The reports of the Ulster Day rally focused on the ‘scenes of unparalleled enthusiasm’ at the Ulster Hall and the ‘rousing reception’ received by Edward Carson in particular:

The scene outside the hall will never be forgotten. From four o’clock in the afternoon until the commencement of the proceedings those who were not fortunate enough to obtain tickets for the meeting in the hall secured favourable positions outside … The specially erected platform was beautifully adorned with Union Jacks, while the front of the hall was spanned with electric lamps forming the mottoes ‘We will not have Home Rule’ and ‘Ulster will fight’ … Simultaneously with the audience inside the vast crowd on the street joined in singing the National Anthem … Each of the speakers received a rousing reception and there was a scene of unparalleled enthusiasm when Sir Edward Carson rose to address the immense audience.’

NW, 28 September, 1912.

The Irish News

Unsurprisingly, reports about the Covenant campaign and resistance to Home Rule are reported with rather a different tone in the nationalist press.

A satirical poem, substantially written in Scots, defiantly asserted that ‘Old Ireland will prosper / Contented an’ free, / with Home Rule …’ IN, 10 January 1912.

The first meeting of Carson’s campaign, in Enniskillen, is described as ‘the first act of Carson’s Ulster comedy’, while the speeches are characterised as an ‘outpouring of conventional Orange oratory’. Carson is depicted as an ‘expounder of treason’, presumably because his movement was encouraging opposition to British government policy, while the writer also portrays the event as an anti-climax: ‘There is no disguising the fact that an attendance of at least 50,000 was expected, and there was keen disappointment on the part of the local Unionist leaders that the numbers fell so far short of that total … It was altogether a half-hearted, disconsolate assemblage …’

IN, 19 September, 1912.

On the eve of Ulster Day, the Irish News carried a half-page advertisement for an Irish brand of porridge oats which satirically subverted the dignity and seriousness of the Covenant Document, employing similar language and, interestingly, professing loyalty to the King:

The Covenant

Being convinced, firmly and deeply, that the use in porridge of inferior quality imported oats would be disastrous to the physical well-being, health, happiness, and, therefore, the
prosperity of Ireland, our beloved country, not to mention the destruction it would bring on one of our oldest industries, we, men and women of Ireland, subjects of His Most Gracious Majesty King George V … hereby pledge ourselves not to accept, support, encourage, or in any way countenance any oatmeal other than White’s Wafer Oatmeal … In furtherance of this, our solemn pledge, we promise to use all fair means that may be found necessary …

The Men and Women of All Ireland.

IN, 27 September, 1912.

The actual proceedings of Ulster Day were labelled a ‘screaming farce’, presided over by ‘King Carson’ who was portrayed as attempting ‘to rally the forces of bigotry and ascendancy’. An article reported in detail what was claimed as ‘Belfast’s Genuine Covenant’, a signed list of nationalist subscribers to the Home Rule Fund who had sent donations to West Belfast M.P., Joe Devlin. Devlin is styled as ‘the only Parliamentary representative of Democracy in this City’. The Unionist leaders are defined as ‘leaders of reaction and ascendancy’ who are ‘pledging themselves in vague and misty terms to a futile policy of resistance to the demands put forward decade after decade by the overwhelming majority of the people and by the people’s representatives.’

There was also a report of a speech made in Perth by the Lord Advocate, a Mr Ure, who challenged the Ulster Covenant movement as essentially undemocratic: ‘If the minority … sought to dictate to a majority the particular form of government under which they should live, that was a claim which could not be listened to without the destruction of free representative self-government.’

IN, 28 September, 1912.

The Impact of the Ulster Covenant Campaign

Once again, Unionists, as in Henry Cooke’s grand conservative demonstration of 1841, and in the Ulster Convention of 1892 had demonstrated that they could inaugurate ‘monster meetings’ and control public space in Belfast by force of numbers. Alan F. Parkinson identifies the following impacts:12

1. The Covenant fortnight had an important effect in binding the loyalist community together in opposition to Home Rule.
2. It prompted opponents of Unionism to start considering compromise proposals, such as an opt out of Home Rule for the province of Ulster.
3. It emphasised the difference between Ulster and the other provinces of Ireland, ‘to the detriment of the position of Irish unionists’ in other parts of the island where Unionists were clearly in a minority.
4. It provided an iconic moment which inspired future Unionist leaders to resist any attempt to establish Home Rule or a united Ireland.

12 Parkinson, Friends in High Places, pp. 150-51.
Practice for the Sources Question: Consider the three sources below and try to answer the following question -

Consult all the sources and your knowledge of this period. How useful are these sources as evidence for an historian studying the significance of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant Campaign of 1912?

Guidance for Source Analysis
See the CCEA booklets Planning for Success-Examination Advice (for AS and for A2 level candidates) for detailed guidance on responding to questions of this type. In brief remember to:

- Make a judgement giving reasons for your conclusion
- Deal with the key features of the sources, including content, tone and language. Remember DAMMACTO – date, author, motive, mode (i.e. speech, poster etc), audience, content, tone and omissions
- Deal with the sources as fully as you can
- Look at the weaknesses of the sources – discuss limitations which affect their value, in particular, omissions
- Look carefully at the dates of the sources and include contextual knowledge in your evaluation
- Pay attention to any information included with the sources about authorship, genre, publication details.

Source A
I shall never forget it if I were to live another 50 years. I went out thinking to get into the City Hall, but I could not get near it. I got wedged in a crowd in front of the Reform Club and I just had to stay there. Everywhere I looked there were seas of faces and Union Jacks. But I was well repaid for the crush. For about 4 o’clock Sir Edwards Carson, followed by other gentlemen, came out on the balcony and spoke to the crowds who were assembled … I looked on the old Orange flag that went before King William at the Boyne. I could not help crying I was so overcome with emotion.

Newsletter, 12 October 2012
Letter from female correspondent written at the end of Ulster day, forwarded to the paper.¹³

Source B
King Carson’s generals, colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, sergeants, lance corporals and privates ‘concentrated’ on Bedford Street last night and enjoyed themselves in the usual fashion. They had messages from Mr Balfour, Mr Bonar Law, and Mr Austen Chamberlain. Mr Balfour … expressed his solemn conviction that the English people would never consent to the passing of a Home Rule Bill. But they have done so twice, if not thrice. The English people have an awkward knack of doing things displeasing to the genial Mr Balfour. They chased him out of office in 1906 …

Irish News, 28 September 2012

¹³ Quoted, Parkinson, p. 136.
From a report on the pre-Covenant Day demonstration in Bedford Street, outside the Ulster Hall, which attracted 25,000 people.

**Source C**
After the Great War, Ulster did receive special treatment but ironically the terms of the Government of Ireland Act (1920) foisted Home Rule on the one part of Ireland which abhorred constitutional experiment. … Despite this imposed and unwelcome settlement, Craig and his colleagues set about the formidable task of creating and moulding the destiny of the new State. Again they benefited from the organisational abilities of those men who had led the Covenant campaign before the war. The State that was thus born was born of a sense of victory. Ulster had faced not only the combined and powerful forces of Irish Nationalism and English Liberalism … but had also run the very risk of its ultimate extinction as part of the United Kingdom. Against these overwhelming odds, the grim determination and resolution, the inspired leadership, the unshakeable unity and disciplined organisation of Unionism had ensured the state’s future. Ulster remained British.