

Was The Great Irish Famine an Act of Nature?

PART TWO

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Diverting Resources During the Great Irish Famine

BACKGROUND

The British government was sharply criticized for its *laissez-faire* economic policy during the famine and particularly that it allowed food to be exported while Ireland starved. There was also food left in Ireland that was diverted to other use, including the production of alcohol.

The American traveler and famine worker Asenath Nicholson strongly criticized the diversion of grain that could have been used for food to produce alcohol in Ireland during the famine. According to Elizabeth Malcolm's *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free' Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (1986), in 1847, with the price of grain sky high, the production of legal spirits fell 25 percent—from about eight million gallons to about six million gallons.

(Note: This activity can be used in conjunction with *Food Exports During the Great Irish Famine*.)

RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Malcolm, Elizabeth. *'Ireland Sober, Ireland Free' Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth Century Ireland*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986.

Nicholson, Asenath. *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*. ed. Maureen Murphy. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1998.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Research materials related to Learning Experience #2.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Analyze data to determine the rationale and appropriateness of diverting resources during the Great Irish Famine.

Prepare a group presentation stating a point of view about individual responsibility for community health and welfare.

STANDARDS

SS 1: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

SS 4: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Explore different experiences, beliefs, motives, and traditions of people living in their neighborhoods, communities and state.

Identify historical problems, pose analytical questions of hypotheses, research analytical questions or test hypotheses, formulate conclusions or generalizations, raise new questions or issues for further investigation.

Know some ways individuals and groups attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce resources.

Explain how people's wants exceed their limited resources and that this condition defines scarcity.

Know that scarcity requires individuals to make choices and that these choices involve costs.

Understand how societies organize their economies to answer three fundamental questions: What goods and services shall be produced and in what quantities? How shall goods and services be produced? For whom shall goods and services be produced?

Investigate how production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods and services are economic decisions with which all societies and nations must deal.

Make distinctions about the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas.

Select a focus, organization, and point of view for oral and written presentations.

Support interpretations and decisions about relative significance of information with explicit statement, evidence, and appropriate argument.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . analytical thinking
- . draw conclusions
- . ask and answer logical questions
- . identify premises and rationale for points of view
- . participate in interpersonal and group activities
- . communicate results of research and projects
- . set up hypotheses and alternative courses of action
- . interpret information and data
- . make generalizations
- . identify patterns and themes

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

Math/Economics

PATTERNS TO ORGANIZE INFORMATION

Scarcity and Interdependence

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Ask students if they have had experiences where scarce resources are allocated. If there is a water shortage during the summer, students and their families might be restricted by how often they water their lawns or gardens. Their parents will remember when there was a short-term oil shortage when people were limited to when they could buy gasoline.

In Ireland during the Great Irish Famine, there was a debate about diverting food to other use. One

diversion was the legal production of alcohol. The government policy was not to interfere with the free market economy. Alcohol also produced revenue for the government. For others, this diversion of grain to alcohol represented a loss of a potential food source.

The question of diverting grain to alcohol came at an important moment in social history. Father Theobald Mathew, who was to do so much for famine relief in Cork, was leading a campaign to encourage temperance. Many of the Quakers who worked with the Central Relief Committee were strong temperance people. The question of the diversion of alcohol was more than an economic policy decision for them. Government economic policy would have an impact on Father Mathew's campaign.

2. Ask students to discuss in small groups: You are a member of the Relief Commission for Ireland and you have to recommend a policy about food resources diverted to other use. What is your recommendation? Would you restrict, ration or choose not to regulate such diversions? Write and present your recommendation.
3. Ask students to calculate what the restriction on the legal production of alcohol would have contributed to the food supply in Ireland in 1847. How much grain does it require to produce one gallon of 80 proof spirits? How much grain does it require to produce 6,000,000 gallons of spirits? How many servings of grain-based cereal could have been produced if grain had been diverted from spirits to food?
4. Students can research rationing during World War II, and if possible, interview people who lived during World War II when the United States rationed critical supplies: meat, butter, sugar, fuel oil and gasoline and diverted them to the war effort. During the oil crisis of the 1970s fuel was in short supply and there were some restrictions about when and how much fuel one could purchase. Sometimes water use for lawns and gardens is restricted when there is a shortage. Ask students to write a short essay expressing their point of view, after discussing the question in a small group. What is the responsibility of government when there are shortages? What is the responsibility of citizens when critical supplies are rationed?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Prepare a short presentation responding to the following questions as if they were issuing the "proclamation" as the National Famine Committee: "The shelves of Food Pantries are empty in this country, and many families will go without food until we can fill the shelves with donations. Every family is required to select 10 items and donate it immediately, or they will be fined. We justify this because..."

TEACHER REFLECTION

This question asks students to consider whether in a time of critical shortages the common good takes precedence over individual choices and comforts. What does being a member of a community ask of us?

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

For younger students:

Ask students to discuss the importance of saving water, recycling, and donating food to Food Pantries. Are individuals responsible for the health of others?

Lady Wilde and “The Famine Year”

BACKGROUND

Lady Jane Francesca Wilde (1826-1896) wrote under the pen-name of “Speranza” (hope) in the Irish nationalist paper *The Nation*. She was also a well-known folklorist. Her son was the celebrated novelist, poet, and playwright Oscar Wilde. “The Famine Years,” first titled “The Stricken Land,” was published in *The Nation* in 1847, the worst year of the famine. It is a poem that has shaped the way people think about the famine. Lady Wilde accuses the British of genocide, their victims being the Irish poor.

In this activity the students will be analyzing the poem “The Famine Year.” Poems like Lady Wilde’s “The Famine Year” and her emigration poem “The Exodus” stirred the Irish in America as well as in Ireland.

*A million a decade – of human wrecks
Corses lying in fever sheds –
Corses huddled on foundering decks
And shrouded dead on their rocky beds;
Nerve and muscle, and heart and brain,
Lost to Ireland – lost in vain*

It was the kind of poetry that encouraged those who founded the Fenian Brotherhood in 1865, a secret nationalist organization dedicated to ending British rule in Ireland; it planned to provide aid and trained officers for the Irish and Irish-Americans who fought in the American Civil War. (The Fenians staged two unsuccessful attempts to invade Canada in 1866.)

Lady Wilde warns that the British and their landlords will be answerable for the famine at the last judgement. Note that *corses* is not a typographical error, but Wilde means the word *corpses*. It is a powerful metaphor for a poem in a nationalist paper that suggests that the Irish dead will rise again to bear witness to famine suffering and to charge their murderers.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

The Famine Year

ADDITIONAL READING

Lee, Joseph. “The Famine as History,” in Cormac O’Gráda, *Famine 150 Commemorative Lecture Series*. Dublin: Teagasc/UCD, 1997.

Melville, Joy. *Mother of Oscar: The Life of Jane Francesca Wilde*. London: Allison and Busby, 1999.

Miller, Kerby. *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Morash, Christopher, ed., *The Hungry Voice: the Poetry of the Irish Famine*. Forward by Terence Brown. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Art supplies

Samples of political cartoons

Background poem on board as students begin the activity

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Describe the use of poetry to capture current events and related emotions.

Explain the multiple meanings of “The Famine Year.”

Describe figurative language.

Explain the historical context of the poem “The Famine Year.”

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

SS 3: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

ELA 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

ELA 3: Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Arts 1: Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts. (Visual Arts)

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Explore narrative accounts of important events from world history to learn about different accounts of the past to begin to understand how interpretations and perspectives develop.

Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.

Identify significant literary elements (including metaphor, symbolism, foreshadowing, dialect, rhyme, meter, irony, climax) and use those elements to interpret the work.

Recognize different levels of meaning.

Read aloud with expression, conveying the meaning and mood of a work.

Produce literary interpretations that explicate the multiple layers of meaning.

Use the elements and principles of art to communicate specific meanings to others in their art work.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . analytical thinking
- . probe ideas and assumptions
- . reflective thinking
- . draw conclusions
- . view information from a variety of perspectives
- . interpret information
- . identify patterns and themes

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Distribute the handout *The Famine Year*, written in 1847, the worst year of the Great Irish Famine. Ask students to read it to themselves, underlining words they think capture the emotion of the poem. Then read the poem aloud, asking them to listen to the entire flow of the poem as a whole. Ask students:
What accusations are made by Wilde in the poem?
How does she use figurative language for a more powerful effect?
What images are especially vivid?
2. Wilde's poem alludes to the opinion that the famine was some sort of Divine judgment on the Irish. Ask students:
While Wilde does not dismiss the idea of a judgment, what different view about responsibility and accountability does she have to offer?
Why might some people believe the famine was punishment or a judgment of the Irish?
3. This poem was anthologized for generations in Irish school books. Ask students:
How might this poem have influenced students?
Can you think of some poems in American texts that have shaped the way students look at the past?
How do you think poems are selected for anthologies? Are poems selected to show multiple views of history?
4. Students may want to capture aspects of the poem with a political cartoon illustration.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Identify one word or phrase in the poem "The Famine Year" and write an interpretation of what Lady Wilde was trying to say. Comment on whether she was successful in getting her meaning across. How can popular poetry tell us about historical events? What can it tell us that we cannot learn from other sources?

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity was used in a field test with students who were so interested in information about other famines that they asked that it be the topic of longer papers that they would be writing for the marking period. The district has a large population of students of Indian heritage, so this was an opportunity for them to study the Bengali famine of the 1940s and learn something of their own past.

Teachers may want to use this activity with *Viewing the Famine as a Judgment on the People of Ireland*.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

For younger students:

Select 3 key words in the poem and describe how they capture the meaning of the poem.

For advanced students:

Write a poem about a current event in the style of Lady Wilde.

Find out more about another famine: Netherlands (1840s), Finland (1860s), Stalin's Ukraine famine (1930s), Indian famines (1940s), Chinese famines during the Great Leap Forward (1960s), Biafra (1970s), Bangladesh (1970s), Ethiopia (1970s and 1980), Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda (1990s). Discuss one of those famines in terms of the images of Wilde's poem.

Identify an audience in the 1800s that might hear the poem read aloud. Read the poem as if they are present, then comment on their possible reactions. For example, how would a rural family respond? How would government officials respond? What would be the reactions of the Fenian Brotherhood?

Illustrate Wilde's poem. How should students represent famine? What images would they choose?

The Famine Year

Lady Wilde

Weary men, what reap ye?—Golden corn for the stranger.
What sow ye?—Human corpses that wait for the avenger.
Fainting forms, hunger-stricken, what see ye in the offing?
Stately ships to bear our food away, amid the stranger's scoffing.
There's a proud array of soldiers—what do they round your door?
They guard our master's granaries from the thin hands of the poor.
Pale mothers, wherefore weeping? Would to God that we were dead;
Our children swoon before us, and we cannot give them bread.

Little children, tears are strange upon your infant faces,
God meant you but to smile within your mother's soft embraces.
Oh, we know not what is smiling, and we know not what is dying;
But we're hungry, very hungry, and we cannot stop our crying.
And some of us grow cold and white—we know not what it means;
But, as they lie beside us we tremble in our dreams.
There's a gaunt crowd on the highway—are ye come to pray to man,
With hollow eyes that cannot weep, and for words your faces wan?

No; the blood is dead within our veins—we care not now for life;
Let us die hid in the ditches, far from children and from wife!
We cannot stay and listen to their raving famished cries—
Bread! Bread! Bread! And none to still their agonies.
We left our infants playing with their dead mother's hand;
We left our maidens maddened by the fever's scorching brand;
Better, maiden, thou wert strangled in thy own dark-twisted tresses
Better, infant, thou wert smothered in thy mother's first caresses.

We are fainting in our misery, but God will hear our groan:
Yet, if fellow-men desert us, will He hearken from His throne?
Accursed are we in our own land, yet toil we still and toil;
But the stranger reaps our harvest—the alien owns our soil.
O Christ! how have we sinned, that on our native plains
We perish homeless, naked, starved, with branded brow like Cain's?
Dying, dying wearily, with a torture sure and slow
Dying as a dog would die, by the wayside as we go.

One by one they're falling round us, their pale faces to the sky;
We've no strength left to dig them graves—there let them lie.
The wild bird, if he's stricken, is mourned by the others,
But we—we die in Christian land, we die amid our brothers,
In a land which God has given us, like a wild beast in his cave,
Without a tear, a prayer, a shroud, a coffin, or a grave.
Ha! but think ye the contortions on each livid face ye see,
Will not be read on judgement-day by eyes of Deity?

We are wretches, famished, scorned, human tools to build your pride,
But God will yet take vengeance for the souls for whom Christ died.
Now in your hour of pleasure—bask ye in the world's caress;
But our whitening bones against ye will rise as witnesses,
From the cabins and the ditches in their charred, uncoffined masses,
For the Angel of the Trumpet will know them as he passes.
A ghastly spectral army, before the great God we'll stand,
And arraign ye as our murderers, the spoilers of our land!

Lady Wilde

The Great Irish Famine: An Act of Genocide?

BACKGROUND

The Irish nationalist John Mitchel said of the Great Irish Famine, “The Almighty indeed sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine.” That statement has represented the feelings of many Irish and Irish-Americans about British culpability for famine deaths and dispossession.

This activity is designed for students to investigate the definition of genocide and to debate whether the Great Irish Famine was an act of genocide. It is a subject that is challenging, and should be explored by students who are building investigative skills and developing the ability to weigh varying points of view and draw rational conclusions. Their conclusions should be based on extensive research from multiple sources that may not agree.

The activity may take between three and five class periods, depending upon the time available to complete the Learning Experiences described below. Teachers can select the learning experiences that seem appropriate for the class, always looking at British policy during the Great Irish Famine and comparing it with twentieth century events that resulted in the high mortality of groups of people. The activity is also meant to encourage responsible class discussions about genocide in the form of a *democratic dialogue*.

The goal of a *democratic dialogue* is to promote community examination of complex issues rather than to have winners and losers. Emphasis is placed on supporting opinions with evidence, helping team members prepare for presentations, and listening and responding to ideas presented by students on the other team. During the dialogue, each student has an opportunity to present before anyone gets a second turn to speak. Although *democratic dialogue* does not follow the standardized Lincoln-Douglas Debate format, it does allow for students to formulate a strong case, presenting opinions backed by supportive documentation. It also allows for students to question those opinions, encouraging a focused dialogue about a complicated issue. (See the handout describing demographic dialogue.)

The word *genocide* is a recent one; it was a term coined by Raphael Lemkin in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944). He took the Greek word *genos* (tribe or race) and added the Latin *cide* (killer or destroyer) to form the word *genocide*, “the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group.” In his book *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (1995), Alain Destexhe wrote, “The specificity of genocide does not arise from the extent of the killings, nor their savagery or resulting infamy, but solely from the intention: the destruction of a group.” That destruction which is a collective act, not a series of individual incidents, requires intention as well as careful and detailed organization.

Historian Mary E. Daly, commenting about applying current literary theory to the famine, reminds us to use caution when applying present concepts and values to past events. Students should be encouraged to consider the social, political, economic, and historical factors that contributed to decisions before and during the Great Irish Famine. Students should be reminded that it is often difficult to apply interpretations of current events to past history and should be approached cautiously.

It is important for students to realize that the study of genocide is particularly sensitive, not only because of the graphic nature of the content, but because it is critical that they gather thorough information before drawing conclusions about the cause of massive starvation and death. Students will have to do extensive research in order to determine whether genocide had occurred in Ireland, and they may not agree with each other.

(**Note:** Teachers should review the Objectives and Performance Indicators before implementing this activity.)

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Promoting Student Dialogues on Genocide

Document packet: Was British policy in Ireland During the Great Irish Famine an Example of Genocide?

Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1951

The Nuremberg Racial Laws, Germany 1935

An Historian Discusses Turkey's Attack on the Armenians during the era of World War I

An Enslaved African Describes the Middle Passage, 1789

Native American Population of Central Mexico

Civil War in Rwanda, 1994

Contemporaries Describe the Great Irish Famine, 1845-1846

Estimated Population in Ireland, 1841-1871

The Ejectment

Excerpt from an Editorial in the *London Times*, 1846

The British Lion and the Irish Monkey

Debating British Policy during the Great Irish Famine

Overseas Migration from Ireland 1843-1855

John Mitchel, Irish Nationalist, in the Last Conquest of Ireland, 1860

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daly, Mary E. *The Famine in Ireland*. Dublin: Dublin Historical Association: 1986.

“Review Article: Historians and the Famine: a beleaguered species?” *Irish Historical Studies*, XXX, 120 (November 1997), pp. 591-601.

Destexhe, Alain. *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. London: Pluto Press, 1995.

Donnelly, James S. Jr. “The Administration of Relief 1847-51,” W.E. Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland V*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 316-331.

Gourevitch, Philip. *We Wish To Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda*. New York: Picador, 1999.

Kinealy, Christine. *A Death-Dealing Famine*. London: Pluto Press, 1997.

Lemkin, Raphael. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. 1944

Murphy, Dervla. *Visiting Rwanda*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998.

O’Gráda, Cormac. *Black ‘47 and Beyond*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

The Great Irish Famine. Dublin: Gil and Macmillan, 1989.

Singer, Alan and Michael Pezone. “Empowering Immigrant Students through Democratic Dialogue,” *Social Education*, 61, 2 (February 1997), pp. 75-77.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Conduct extensive research on genocide, using print, media, electronic, and primary sources

Critically analyze data about three events which resulted in deaths of massive numbers of a particular people and determine whether those events meet the definition of an act of genocide.

Analyze the competing interpretations of the Great Irish Famine in the context of definition of the term genocide.

Understand the similarities of characteristics of genocide

Appreciate the importance of collecting and weighing information from a variety of sources before drawing conclusions, particularly about sensitive historical debates

Debate the question of whether the Great Irish Famine was *genocide*, based on past knowledge and current research using the *democratic dialogue* technique

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Understand the development and connectedness of Western civilization and other civilizations and cultures in many areas of the world and over time.

Analyze changing and competing interpretations of issues, events, and developments in world history.

Explain the importance of analyzing narratives drawn from different times and places to understand historical events.

Analyze evidence critically and demonstrate an understanding of how circumstances of time and place influence perspective.

Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.

Analyze different interpretation of important events, issues, or developments in world history by studying the social, political, and economic context in which they were developed; by testing data source for reliability and validity, credibility, authority, authenticity, and completeness; and by detecting bias, distortion of the facts, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.

Synthesize information from diverse sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information.

Make distinctions about the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas.

Understand that within any group there are many different points of view depending on the particular interests and values of the individual, and recognize those differences in perspective in texts and presentations.

Present orally and in writing well-developed analysis of ideas, and texts, explaining the rationale for their positions and analyzing their positions from a variety of perspectives.

Make precise determinations about the perspective of a particular writer or speaker by recognizing the relative weight s/he places on particular arguments and criteria.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . acquire and organize information
- . analytical thinking
- . evaluate and connect evidence
- . reflective thinking
- . inquire, question, probe
- . think rationally about content
- . consult and interpret databases

Promoting Student Dialogues on Genocide

Jennifer Palacio, Long Beach High School, Long Beach, NY

**Michael Pezone, Law Government and Community Service Magnet High School,
Queens, NY**

Michael Pezone and Jennifer Palacio are members of the Hofstra Social Studies Educators and New Teachers Network. They developed the democratic dialogue format in their classrooms.

The goal of a democratic dialogue is to promote community examination of complex issues, rather than to have winners and losers. A premium is placed on supporting opinions with evidence, helping team members prepare for their presentations, and on listening to and responding to ideas presented by students on the other team. During the dialogue, each student has an opportunity to present before anyone gets a second turn to speak.

This dialogue project takes between three and five lessons. On day 1, students examine the United Nations definition of genocide and select historical examples of genocides. At the end of the period students select their teams. On day 2/3 student teams are divided into work groups that further examine primary source documents in the packet and prepare opening and closing statement. The next day is the dialogue. After opening round statements teams caucus to prepare rebuttals. Following rebuttals teams update concluding statements. After the concluding statements, the class discusses what students learned from the dialogue and each other.

Was British Policy in Ireland During the Irish Famine an Example of Genocide?

Some historians and political activists have argued that British policy in Ireland during the Great Irish Famine was an example of genocide. They believe it should be classified and studied alongside other atrocities in world history, such as Nazi efforts to exterminate European Jews during World War II (the Holocaust), Turkish attacks on Armenians during the era of World War I, the Atlantic Slave Trade and its impact on Africa, the destruction of native civilizations following the Colombian encounter, and the mass slaughter of members of the Tutsi tribe during 1994 civil war in Rwanda.

Attached are a series of primary source documents, including a definition of genocide, a document that describes events that have been called examples of genocide and documents that describe the Great Irish Famine in Ireland and British policy during the famine.

Part I: Defining Genocide

Document A) Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1951

According to this United Nations treaty, signed by the United States, genocide consists of “any of the following act committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, such as: a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Part II: Documents from Events Described as Examples of Genocide

Document B) The Nuremberg Racial Laws, Germany, 1935

A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot occupy public office.

Jews are prohibited from displaying the Reich and national flag.

Any marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are herewith forbidden. Marriages entered into despite this law are invalid.

Extramarital relations between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are herewith forbidden.

Source: R. Greaves et al, *Civilizations of the World* (NY: Harper & Row, 1990)

Document C) A Historian Discusses Turkey’s Attack on the Armenians during the Era of World War I

“On the night of 24 April, some 1,000 prominent Armenians were arrested in the capital and secretly murdered, leaving the others numbed by terror. The remaining males in each village were summoned by the town crier to report immediately, led out of town, and slain. Women, children and a few infirm males previously exempted were bidden by the crier to prepare themselves for deportation. They were driven into the desert by soldiers, staggering along until they dropped from drought, starvation, the lash, or their festering wounds. Women might elect or be selected to become wives of

Muslims; thus gaining exemption but also requiring them to part with their children. Toynbee (a British historian), assessing all the evidence, estimated that two thirds of the 1,800,000 Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1914 were annihilated or deported to the desert.

Source: H. Fein. *Accounting for Genocide*. New York: Free Press, 1978.

Document D) An Enslaved African describes the middle passage, 1789

I was soon put down under the decks (of the slave ship). I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat. I now wished for the last friend, death to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely.

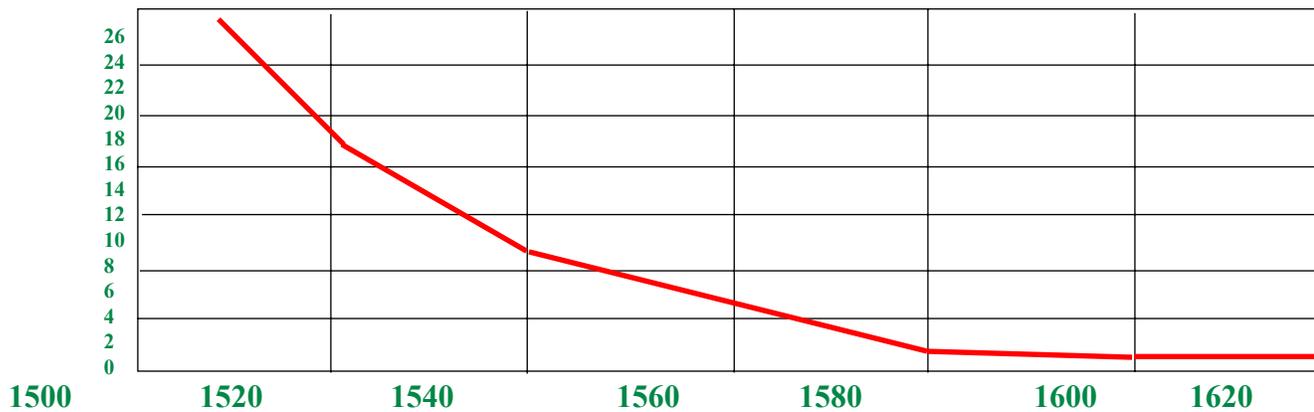
The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, almost suffocated us. The air soon became unfit for respiration and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. The shrieks of the women and the groans of the dying rendered it a scene of horror almost inconceivable.

I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost continually on deck. I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions; some of who were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death.

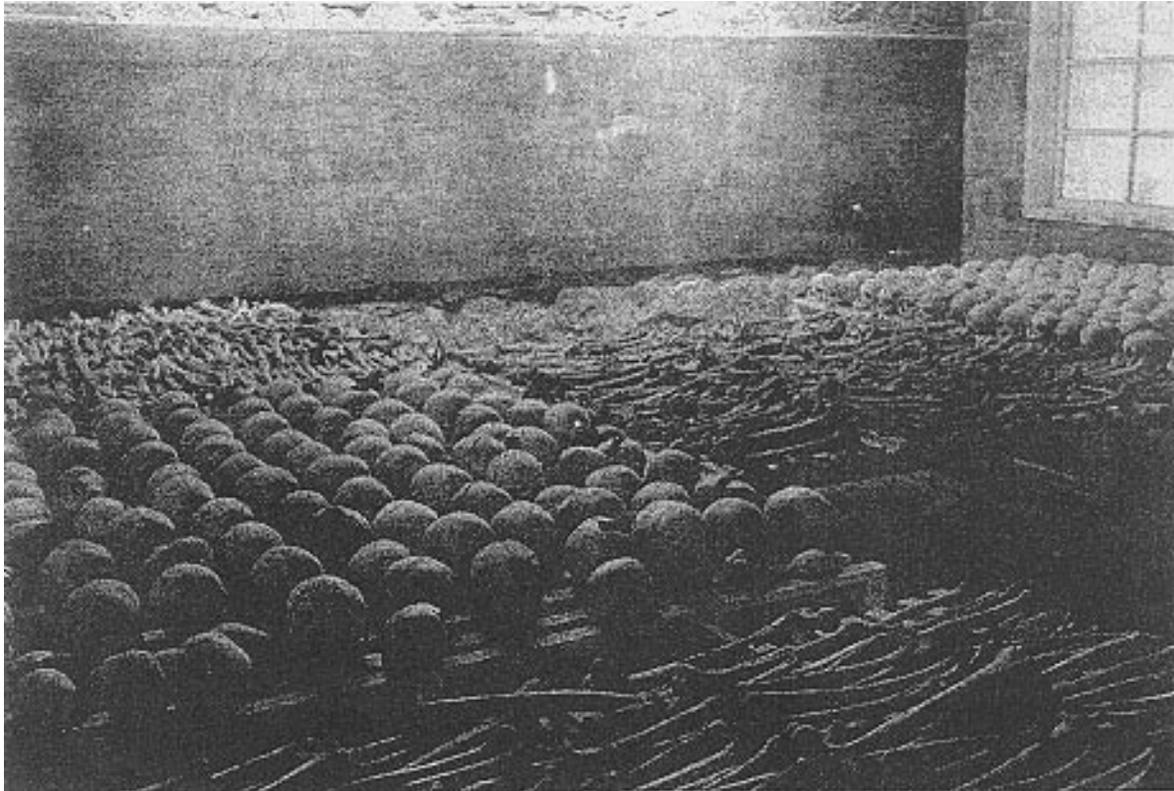
One day, two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together, preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made it through the nettings and jumped into the sea. I believe many more would very soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew.

Source: G. Vassa. *The Life of Olaudah Equiano*, reprinted in H. Gates, ed. *The Classic Slave Narratives*. New York: New American Library, 1987.

Document E) Native American Population of Central Mexico (in millions)



Source: B. Beers. *World History: Patterns of Civilization*. NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991, pp. 360.



Document F) Civil War in Rwanda. 1994

In Nyarubuye, 10,000 Tutsi were killed by Hutu in 1994's bloodletting, and the skulls of many who died in a classroom are still displayed.

Source: Guillaume Bonn. Reprinted with permission of Contact Press Images.

Part III: Documents from the Great Irish Famine

Document G) Contemporaries Describe the Great Irish Famine 1845 – 1846

Letter from Father Theobald Matthew to Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Charles Trevelyan, August 7, 1846
“Divine Providence, in its inscrutable ways, has again poured out upon us the vial of its wrath. A blast ... has passed over the land, and the hopes of the poor potato cultivators are totally blighted, and the food of a whole nation has perished ... In many places the wretched people were seated on the fences of their decaying gardens, wringing their hands and wailing bitterly the destruction that had left them foodless.”

An Article in *The Spectator*, October. 15, 1845

“Ireland is threatened with a thing that is read of in history and in distant countries, but scarcely in our own land and time—a famine. Whole fields of the root have rotted in the ground, and many a family sees its sole provision for the year destroyed.”

Source: P. Gray. *The Irish Famine*. New York: Abrams, 1995.

Document H) Estimated Population of Ireland, 1841 – 1871

1841	8,175,000
1851	6,552,000
1861	5,799,000
1871	4,412,000

Source: Helen Litton. *The Irish Famine* Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1994. pp. 8.

Document I) Ejectment (Eviction)



'The ejectment'. (*The Illustrated London News*, 16 Dec. 1848.)

Source: Noel Kissane. **The Irish Famine: A Documentary History.**
Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995, pp.141.
Used with permission of the author and the National Library of Ireland.

Document I.) Debating British Policy During the Great Irish Famine

Charles Trevelyan, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, defended British policy in Ireland during the Great Irish Famine.

“That indirect permanent advantages will accrue to Ireland from the scarcity, and the measure taken for its relief, I entertain no doubt... Besides the greatest improvement of all which could take place in Ireland would be to teach the people to depend upon themselves for developing the resources of the country.”

“For several centuries we were in a state of open warfare with the native Irish, who were treated as foreign enemies, and were not admitted to the privileges and civilizing influences of English law, even when they most desired it. Now, thank God, we are in a different position; and although many waves of disturbance must pass over us before that troubled sea can entirely subside, and time must be allowed for morbid (bad) habits to give place to a more healthy action, England and Ireland are, with one great exception, the subject to equal laws; and so far as the maladies of Ireland are traceable to political causes, nearly every practical remedy has been applied. The deep and inveterate root of social evil remained, and this has been laid bare by direct stroke of an all-wise and all merciful Providence. God grant that the generation to which this great opportunity has been offered may rightly perform its part, and that we may not relax our efforts until Ireland fully participates in the social health and physical prosperity of Great Britain.”

Isaac Butt, a leading Irish Conservative, demanded more British aid for the poor.

“Can we wonder if the Irish people believe that the lives of those who have perished have been sacrificed by a deliberate compact to the gains of English merchants and if this belief has created among all classes a feeling of deep dissatisfaction, not only with the ministry but with English rule. What can be more absurd, what can be more wicked, than for men professing attachment to an imperial Constitution to answer claims now put forward for state assistance to the unprecedented necessities of Ireland, by talking of Ireland being a drain upon the English treasury? If Cornwall (England) had been visited with the scenes that have desolated Cork (Ireland), would similar arguments been used? Would men have stood up and denied that Cornwall was entitled to have the whole country share the extraordinary loss?”

Source: “The Famine in the Land,” *Dublin University Magazine*, XXIX, April 1847.

Document J) Excerpt From an Editorial in The London Times, 1846

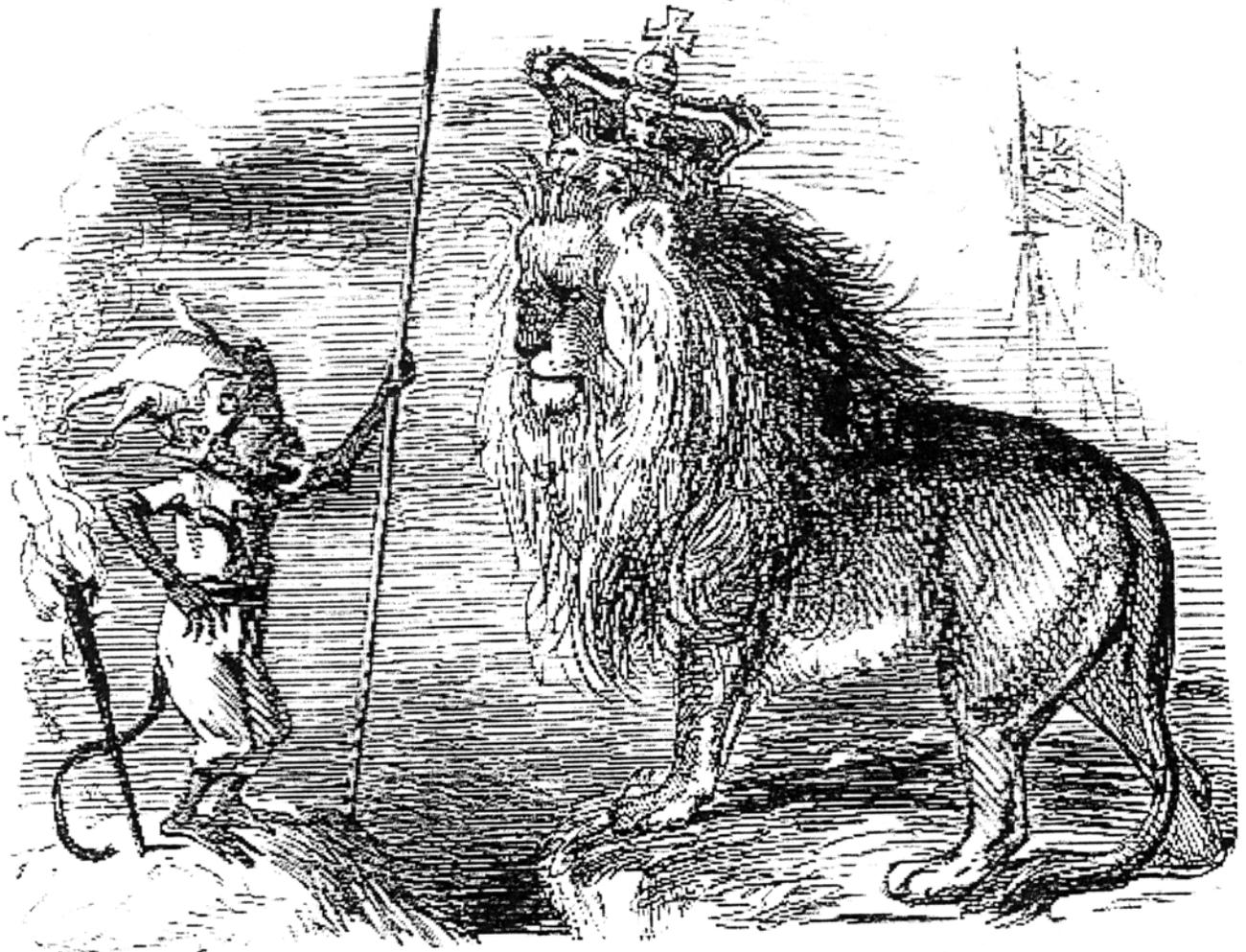
“The (Irish) people have made up their minds to report the worst and believe the worst. Human agency is now denounced as instrumental in adding to the calamity (disaster) inflicted by Heaven. It is no longer submission to Providence, but a murmur (complaint) against the Government ... The Government provided work for a people who love it or not. It made this the absolute condition of relief. The Government was required to ward off starvation, not to pamper indolence (laziness). Alas! the Irish peasant has tasted of famine and found that it was good ... There are ingredients in the Irish character which must be modified and corrected before either individuals or Government can hope to raise the general conditions of the people ... For our own part, we regard the potato blight as a blessing.”

Source: *The London Times*, September 22, 1846.

Document K) A political cartoon from Punch, a British Newspaper

<http://vassun.vassar.edu/~sttaylor/FAMINE/Punch/YI/IrishMonkey.html>

3



THE BRITISH LION AND THE IRISH MONKEY.

This cartoon, appearing April 8, 1848, was drawn by **John Leech**. The caption under the title reads:

Monkey (Mr. Mitchell). "One of us **MUST** be 'Put Down.'"

Mr. Mitchell is John Mitchell, editor of the militant newspaper "The United Irishman."

Document M) Overseas Migration from Ireland, 1842 to 1855

Year	Irish Immigrants	Year	Irish Immigrants
1842	89,000	1849	215,000
1843	37,500	1850	209,000
1844	53,500	1851	250,000
1845	75,000	1852	221,000
1846	106,000	1853	192,000
1847	214,000	1854	150,000
1848	179,000	1855	79,000

“The great tide of immigration flows steadily westward. The principal immigrants are Irish peasants and laborers. It is calculated that at least four of every five persons who leave the shores of the old country to try their fortunes in the new, are Irish. Since the fatal days of the potato famine and the cholera, the annual number of immigrants have gone on increasing, until they have become so great as to suggest the idea, and almost justify the belief, of a gradual depopulation of Ireland.”

Source: P. Gray. *The Irish Famine*. New York: Abrams, 1995.

Document N) John Mitchel, Irish Nationalist, in *The Last Conquest of Ireland, 1860*

“There began (in 1847) to be an eager desire in England to get rid of the Celts by immigration; for though they were perishing fast of hunger and typhus, they were not perishing fast enough ... No sack of Magdeburg, or ravage of the Palatinate even approached the horror and dislocation to the slaughters done in Ireland by mere official red tape and stationery, and the principles of political economy ... The Almighty sent then potato blight, but the English created the famine.

Source: John Mitchel. *The Last Conquest of Ireland*. Dublin, 1861.

Maria Edgeworth's Analysis of the Famine

BACKGROUND

Frances Beaufort Edgeworth, Richard Lovell Edgeworth's widow, was listed as the owner of Edgeworthstown estate in 1847. Her step-daughter, the author Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), had served as her father's assistant helping to run the estate. After Richard Lovell Edgeworth's death, Maria deferred to her half-brother, Lovell. When the estate suffered from his mismanagement, Maria resumed her post and managed Edgeworthstown as she had for her father.

Maria Edgeworth's novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800), an indictment of Ireland's irresponsible landowners, is considered the first regional novel in English. The novel influenced Sir Walter Scott. During the famine, Edgeworth used her international reputation to let the world know about the suffering in Ireland. She wrote the novel *Orlandino* (1847) for the benefit of the Irish Poor Relief Fund and she wrote to the government, to the Central Relief Committee (CRC) in Dublin and to friends abroad to urge them to aid the Irish by providing the means for employment. Clearly, her response to the Central Relief Committee Questionnaire would have been given a careful reading.

Edgeworth was the recipient of food consignments from abroad, including one from the children of Boston who knew her books and sent her flour and rice addressed simply "To Miss Edgeworth, for the poor" (Hare, II, 328).

The Central Relief Committee Questionnaire in the handout in this activity was returned by Maria Edgeworth to the Central Relief Committee, Dublin. Those applying for aid from the CRC were requested to provide information about the poor in their districts. Edgeworth responded on January 30, 1847. Respondents were directed to be brief and clear but were invited to make additional comments. (Ms 989 *Edgeworth Papers*, National Library of Ireland).

(Note: During the Great Irish Famine, some Irish received Indian corn as food. For further information on the impact of this unsuccessful food source, see the activity *Famine Foods: American Indian Corn*.)

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Maria Edgeworth's Questionnaire

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Kelleher, Margaret. "Philosophick Views?" Maria Edgeworth and the Great Famine," *Éire-Ireland*, 32, 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 41-62.

Hare, Augustus. *Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth*. 2 Vol. London: Arnold, 1894.

Kerr, Donal. *The Catholic Church and the Famine*. Blackrock, Co. Dublin: The Columba Press, 1996.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Optional pen and ink for writing letters

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Calculate answers to mathematics questions using the data provided in the handout, *Maria Edgeworth's Questionnaire*.

Determine conclusions that can be drawn after analyzing Maria Edgeworth's answers to the Questionnaire.

Using Edgeworth's data, write a persuasive letter to the British Prime Minister, Lord John Russell supporting the government's famine relief policy or arguing that it be changed.

Organize the *Maria Edgeworth's Questionnaire* responses into charts and graphs and compare them with other data about food availability and price.

Determine whether (in this instance) the British government's relief policies were adequate to satisfy the needs of the famine-stricken poor.

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

SS 4: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

ELA 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 3: Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

MST 3: Students will understand mathematics and become mathematically confident by communicating and reasoning mathematically, by applying mathematics in real-world settings, and by solving problems through the integrated study of number systems, geometry, algebra, data analysis, probability, and trigonometry.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.

Explain the literal meaning of a historical passage or primary source document, identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led up to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.

View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments in world history by analyzing their literature, diary accounts, letters, artifacts, art, music, architectural drawing, and other documents.

Understand how scarcity requires people and nations to make choices which involve costs and future considerations.

Recognize the criteria that one uses to analyze and evaluate anything, depending on one's point of view and purpose for the analysis.

Present orally and in writing well-developed analysis of issues, ideas, and texts, explaining the rationale for their positions and analyzing their positions from a variety of perspectives in such forms as formal speeches, debates, thesis/support papers, literary critiques, and issues analysis.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . acquire and organize information
- . analytical thinking
- . evaluate and connect evidence
- . draw conclusions
- . ask and answer logical questions
- . work with others to solve problems

- . communicate results of research and projects
- . gather information
- . reflect upon content
- . identify premises and rationale for points of view
- . question arguments
- . take and defend positions

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

Mathematics

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Distribute the handout, *Maria Edgeworth's Questionnaire*. Ask students to study the questionnaire that was returned by Maria Edgeworth who applied for aid for her poor tenants living in the parish of Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. Ask students:

What was the buying power of Edgeworthstown workers who made between 8 and 10 pence per day?

If a laborer worked six days a week, what would be the weekly income of a worker earning 8 pence/day?

What would be the weekly income if the worker earned 10 pence/day? (There were 12 pence in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound. Express your answer in pounds/shillings/pence.)

2. Maria Edgeworth indicated that laborers making 8 to 10 pence per day did not make enough to feed themselves and their families. Ask students to use the list of provisions provided by Edgeworth (Questionnaire Answer #26) and the weekly output from the soup shop, to calculate what food sources an 8 pence/day and a 10 pence/day worker could purchase each week for a family of six people: worker, spouse, four children aged 16, 14, 8 and 4.
3. It is possible to get some sense of what the government considered appropriate famine rations by looking at the scale for famine relief supplies provided by the Swinford Union (Co. Mayo) in 1848 for the famine poor:

Adults over 15 years of age: 7 pounds of Indian meal/week

Children 9-15: 6 pounds of Indian meal/week

Children from 5-9: 5 pounds of Indian meal/week

Children under 5: 3 1/2 pounds of Indian meal/week

Using the Swinford scale, how many pounds of Indian meal would be authorized for the Edgeworthstown family? Convert the pound weight to stones and pounds (14 pounds = 1 stone).

According to Edgeworth's data, how much Indian meal could the Edgeworthstown laborer buy? Was it the same, more, or less than the amount of Indian meal authorized by the Swinford scale?

4. On the basis of your analysis of Maria Edgeworth's data, what is your conclusion about the buying power of an Edgeworthstown worker in 1847? Was enough support provided for the working poor so that laborers could purchase sufficient food with their weekly wages?

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

Write a letter to the British Prime Minister Lord John Russell. If it can be concluded that an Edgeworthstown laborer can provide adequate food from his/her weekly wages, write a letter in support of current government policies concerning wages and food prices using examples from your analysis. If it can be concluded that an Edgeworthstown laborer cannot purchase adequate food from his/her weekly wages, write a letter arguing that government policies be changed. Use examples from analysis of Edgeworth's data.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity can be done as a class exercise or in groups. Students might find it interesting to look at the prices in terms of today's prices and to calculate the prices in terms of the value of one pound today. In *The Catholic Church and the Famine*, Donal Kerr calculated that the value of one English pound in 1847 was worth approximately 1000 English pounds in 1996. (Now convert pound to dollars based on the conversion rate in January, 1996!)

The activity might be done after looking at the activity on *Pre-famine Model Landlords* which describes Maria Edgeworth's father, the reformer Richard Lovell Edgeworth.

Use Maria Edgeworth's response to the Central Relief Committee to write a newspaper article or a television special report on the Great Irish Famine in Co Longford from the point of view of an internationally known writer.

Maria Edgeworth's Questionnaire

Questionnaire returned by Maria Edgeworth of Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford, to the Central Relief Committee, Dublin. Those applying for aid from the CRC were requested to provide information about the poor in their districts. Edgeworth responded on January. 30, 1847. Respondents were directed to be brief and clear but were invited to make additional comments. (Ms 989 *Edgeworth Papers*, National Library of Ireland)

1. What is the name of the place on behalf of which assistance is sought?
Parish of Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford.
2. What is the extent of the district and the number of its inhabitants?
About 6 miles. Upwards of 5000.
3. How many are supposed to stand in need of public relief?
About 3000.
4. What proportion of able-bodied laborers are employed in the ordinary manner and at what rate of wages?
About 100 from 8 pence to 10 pence per day.
5. What proportion of able-bodied laborers are employed in public works?
About 400.
6. Are the earnings of the able-bodied laborers on public works or otherwise sufficient to preserve themselves and their families from want?
Certainly not at the present price of food.
7. Are there any manufacturers or is there other indoor productive employment for any considerable proportion of the population?
No.
8. Do the people derive any support from fishing and is there a harbor for fishing boats?
No.
9. Are farmers generally large or small? tillage (land cultivated) or grazing? held by tenants at will (with the landlord's permission) or on lease (a legal agreement giving a tenant occupancy for a fixed period of time)?
Small. Tillage. (Edgeworth did not respond to the question that asked whether tenants held land at will or on lease.)
10. Are the small farmers generally cultivating or about to cultivate their ground?
They are not, nor can they, as all their labor is going to procure provisions.
11. Is there any stock of potatoes stored, or remaining in the ground? Are there any reserved for seed? Are there any for sale? If so, at what price?
No.
12. Is it expected that any considerable quantity of potatoes will be planted in the coming season?
No.
13. What number of able-bodied laborers are supposed to be without employment?
Very few at present.

14. How many people are incapable of labor?
We can not altogether tell how many persons are incapable of labor—if widows, children and old persons are to be counted, above 500 in this district.
15. In what Poor Law Union does the place lie How far distant is the Poor House (workhouse)? What spare accommodation does it at present afford?
Longford (town). 7 miles. It is full.
16. How much per pound were the last poor rates (property taxes to support relief)? When were they struck? Have they generally been paid?
7 and 1/2 pence and 5 pence. The last has been only partially collected.
17. Has a relief committee under provision of the acts 9 and 10 Vic. chap. 107 been formed? If so, state how it is designated.
Details and names given. John Powell, Vicar of Edgeworthstown Church of Ireland, Secretary of the Relief Committee. Maria Edgeworth. Frances Edgeworth.
18. What amount of public subscription towards the relief of the distress of the present season has been raised? What amount has been contributed by the government? If assistance in money or materials have been received from any Relief Association or other public body, please state the particulars.
Public subscription: 186 pounds. Government: 92 pounds. The Irish Relief Committee have granted 20 pounds for a soup shop (soup kitchen).
19. How have the funds so obtained been applied?
In selling food at a reasonable rate to the poor since September last.
20. Are there any considerable absentee proprietors of landed or other property within the district? What amount of subscription have been received from them?
Two. C.J. Edgeworth subscribed 25 pounds. (C.J. Edgeworth has a resident agent.) William Tuite subscribed 19 pounds.
21. Are there many resident proprietors or large farmers and have they generally subscribed to the Relief Fund?
One resident proprietor. A few large farmers. They have subscribed to the Relief Fund.
22. Are there any other Relief Associations within the district than that above mentioned? Is so, what funds have they raised? What relief measures are in operation by them and who are the managers?
No.
23. Are the families of the poor visited before relief is afforded, or is it proposed to carry out such a system?
All the families have been visited.
24. What is the state of the district with regard to sickness, especially fever?
There is a great deal of sickness and some fever.
25. What is the nearest place where provisions are stored in quantity?
Longford. Seven miles distant.
26. Are there stacks of provisions in the hands of retail dealers in the place? State prices.
**Present retail prices:
 Bread, 4 lb. loaf: 1 shilling
 Wheat flour/stone (14 lbs): 4 shillings
 Oatmeal/stone: 3 shillings, 6 pence
 Indian meal/stone: 3 shillings**

Beef/pound: three shillings, 5 pence
Mutton/pound: three shillings, 6 pence

27. Has a soup shop been established? If so, what number of gallons are made daily? Is it distributed without cost? If it is sold, what is the price?

Yes. 30 gallons. Three times/week. 1 penny per quart.

28. Would an increased supply and distribution of soup in the opinion of the applicants contribute essentially to the relief of the existing distress? If so, are there facilities for obtaining requisite materials? What additional means are wanted?

If bread could be given without increasing the prices.

29. Can the applicants refer to any person in Dublin to whom they are known, or any who possess sufficient knowledge to enable them to furnish additional information respecting the place or district there mentioned?

Details of reference.

Signed:

John Powell, Vicar of Edgeworthstown, Secretary of the Relief Committee, Maria Edgeworth, Edgeworthstown, Frances Edgeworth, Edgeworthstown. January 30, 1847

Additional Observations: The want of shoes is great and affects health and the power to labor, especially in draining work.

Source: MS 989 *Edgeworth Papers*, National Library of Ireland. Correspondence of Maria Edgeworth and Central Relief Committee in Dublin relating to distress in the Edgeworthstown area, 1847-8. Reprinted with permission of the National Library of Ireland.

The Irish Poor Law

BACKGROUND

The British Poor Law system did not use a system of *outdoor relief* for the poor, meaning that individuals and families could not live in their own home but had to be institutionalized in local workhouses in order to receive assistance.

In 1838, the English Poor Law was extended to Ireland. The country was divided into 130 districts or unions. Each union was required to build a workhouse (poorhouse) which was supported by rates (taxes) paid by the local land owners. Those who paid the Poor Law Rates were eligible for election as Poor Law Guardians, the people who made the policy decisions about how to provide relief for the poor. They were responsible to the Poor Law commission for the administration of their union workhouse.

The Irish Poor Law system offered no *outdoor relief*. Anyone who needed shelter or food had to go to the workhouse. People who owned more than one-quarter of an acre of land were not eligible for relief, so they had to give up their lands and their homes if they needed assistance. Only the most desperate were willing to go to the workhouse. (For more information on the workhouses, see the activities *Afraid of the Workhouse* and *The Irish Workhouse System*.)

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Birds-Eye View of an Irish Workhouse

Interior of an Irish Workhouses

Callan Workhouse, 1999

Dormitories, Callan Workhouse, 1999

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Kissane, Noel. "The Workhouse," *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995. pp. 89-105.

O'Connor, John. *The Workhouse of Ireland: The Fate of Ireland's Poor*. Minneapolis: Irish Books and Media, 1995.

Swords, Liam. *In Their Own Words: The Famine in North Connacht, 1845-1849*. Blackrock: The Columba Press, 1999.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Pamphlets and brochures from government social services agencies

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Describe the provisions of the Irish Poor Law of 1838 and consider what the kind of structures a government builds for the poor says about its attitude toward the poor.

Analyze conditions in institutions and draw conclusions.

Make recommendations for designing workhouses that respect dignity.

STANDARDS

ELA1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas,

eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

SS 4: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.

Analyze evidence critically and demonstrate an understanding of how circumstances of time and place influence perspective.

Analyze the roles and contributions of individuals and groups to social, political, economic, cultural, and religious practices and activities.

View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments in world history by analyzing their architectural drawings and other documents.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . analytical thinking
- . probe ideas and assumptions
- . view information from a variety of perspectives
- . set up alternative courses of action
- . interpret information
- . conceptualize
- . consult and interpret primary sources

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Health

Family and Consumer Science

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Share the handouts and then read aloud:

Father Timlin, the parish priest of Ballina, Co. Mayo, writing on January 24, 1848 to the Archbishop of Dublin to thank him for his check for famine relief, described his parishioners destroying their homes in order to be eligible for admission to the Ballina workhouse:

At no time in the past two years has Mayo witnessed such distress. The workhouse is overcrowded and the procedure by which people are admitted so strict and vexatious [harassing] that many perish of hunger. To gain admittance they must give up their cabins and patches of land. They are obliged to level their cabins which leaves them homeless and they make do with shelter in the ditches and die of hunger and exposure. I see this every hour of the day and with no prospect of redress (Swords 279)

Beginning in 1839, the workhouses were built according to a common plan designed by the English architect George Wilkinson which featured limestone construction, steep gables, diamond-paned windows too small to let in much light or provide ventilation and too high to the inmates to have a view of the outside world, narrow stone stairs and wards with bare walls and floors. The wards had clay floors and were heated by open turf fires. Inmates slept on straw mattresses on low sleeping platforms of wooden laths. The workhouse complex was surrounded by a high stone wall.

Samuel and Anna Hall's *Ireland, its Scenery & Character* (1842), an account of their travels through Ireland before the Great Irish Famine, included a description and drawings of the Wilkinson model. Ask students to examine the drawings and photographs of remains of workhouse in Callan, Co. Kilkenny. (The Callan Workhouse was built on the Wilkinson model in 1841; it was designed to accommodate 600 inmates.)

2. Point out that the yards were segregated by age and gender. In order to qualify for relief the whole family had to enter the workhouse together. The only exception to the rule was the provision to allow orphans and deserted children to be admitted unaccompanied by their parents. Upon entry, the families were classified and segregated. Fathers and grown sons went to the male quarters; mothers and grown daughters went to the female quarters. Children stayed with their mothers until the age of two when they were sent to the children's wards.

Ask students to write down their impressions of the design of the workhouse.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

What does Wilkinson's design for the poorhouse suggest about the government's attitude toward the poor? Pretend you are a concerned citizen in Ireland in the mid 1800s. Write to the local Poor Law Guardians of the Callan Workhouse and recommend at least three things to improve the quality of life for poorhouse inmates. Include drawings of aspects of the workhouse that you would change.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity asks students to consider how governments assist their elderly, their disabled, and their poor, especially their dependent children. What kind of systems protect the dignity of their recipients? Does the way an institution is designed reflect the attitude toward its residents or users? What kinds of things make the design of an institution more friendly? Can organizations afford to create institutions that are comfortable, safe, and like a home away from home?

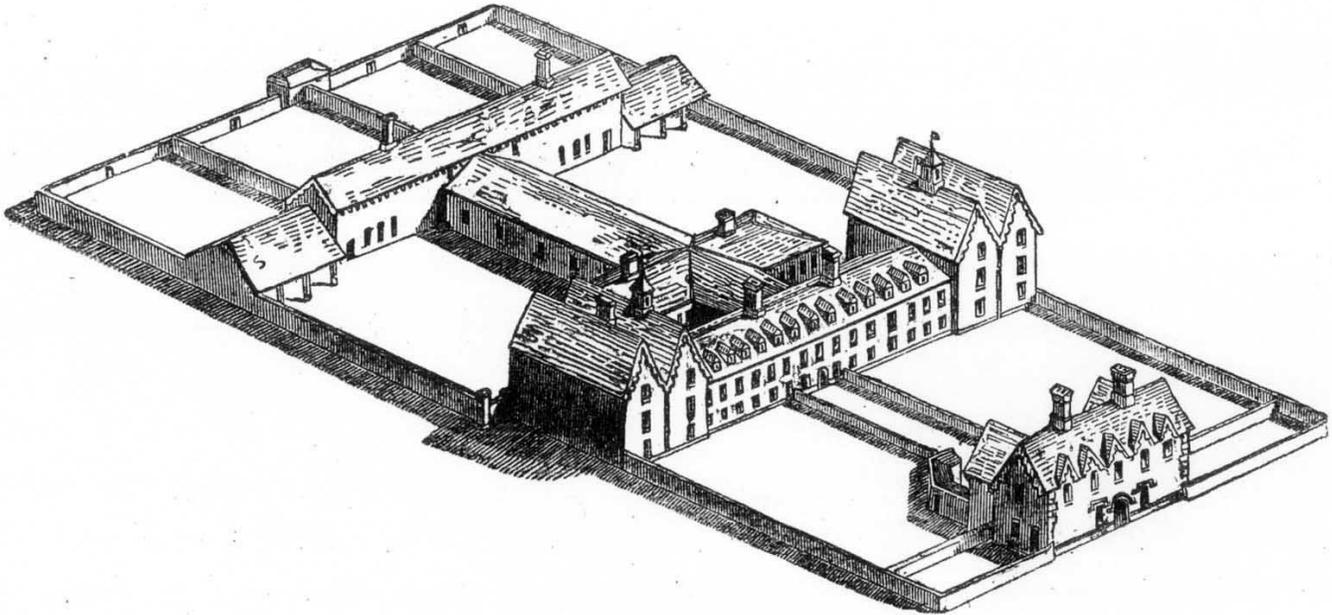
In field tests of this activity, students discussed designs of schools, shelters and hospitals, especially children's wings. The Ronald McDonald House is a good model in its purpose of keeping families close by when children are in treatment, and providing a home-like environment.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

For advanced students:

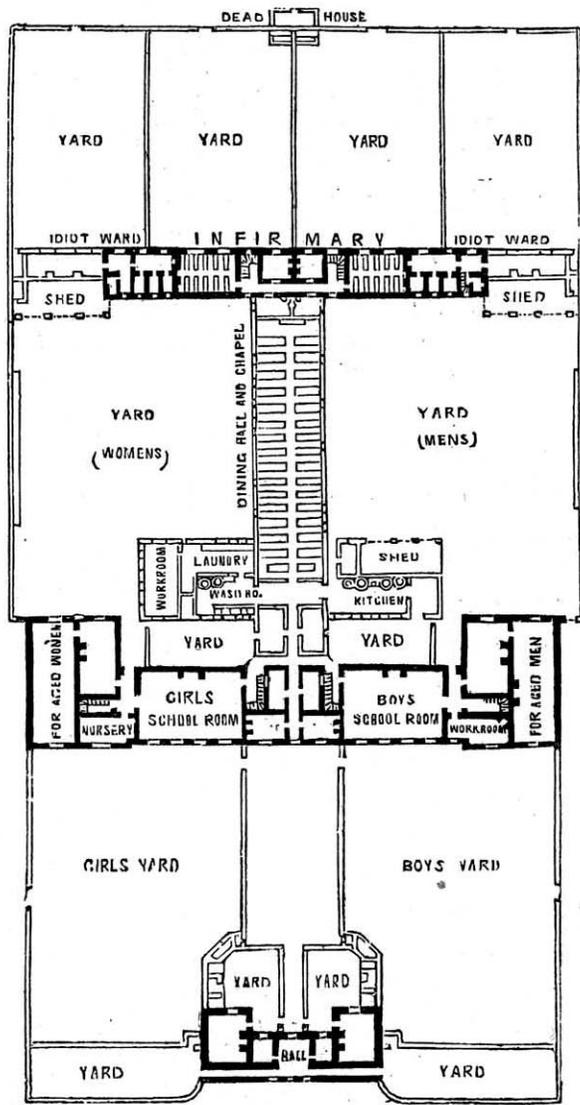
Ask students to research and describe Federal and State systems to assist those in need. Who benefits from Social Security? How are the disabled assisted? Which agency provides assistance to dependent children? (See activities on Soup Kitchens.)

Using drawings and photographs, students can construct a model of an Irish workhouse.

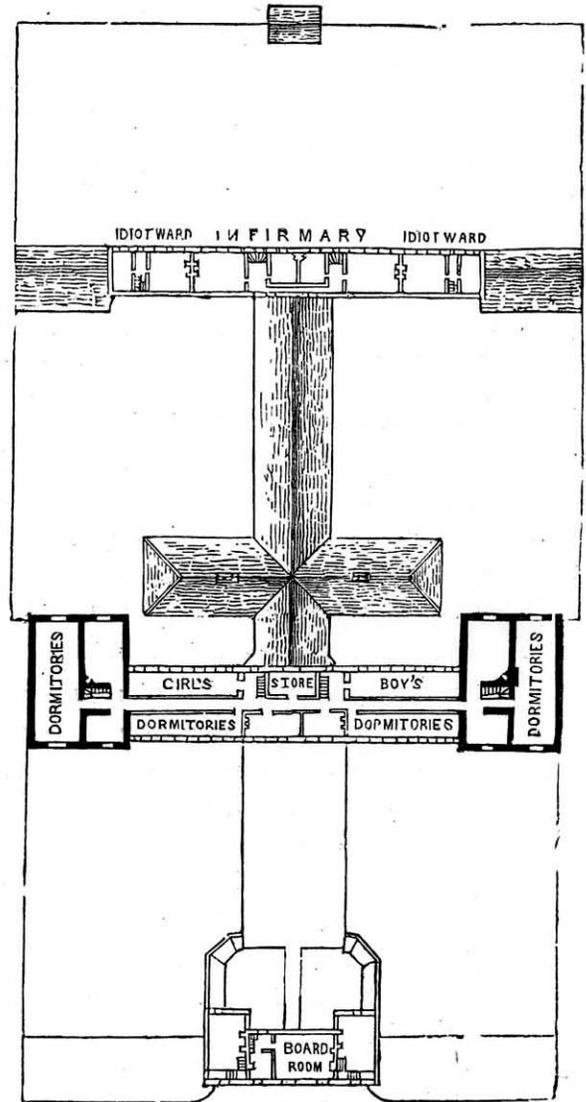


Bird's-eye view of an Irish Workhouse.

Source: Samuel and Anna Hall, **Ireland, its Scenery, Character, &c. III**
London: Hall, Virtue and Co., 1843. p. 343.



GROUND FLOOR.



FIRST FLOOR.

Interior of an Irish Workhouse

Source: Samuel and Anna Hall, **Ireland, its Scenery, Character, &c. III**
 London: Hall, Virtue and Co., 1843. p. 345.



Workhouse. Callan, Co. Kilkenny

Source: Photograph by Maureen Murphy. *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum Committee.*



Workhouse. Callan, Co. Kilkenny

Source: Photograph by Maureen Murphy. *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* Committee.

Designing Relief Legislation

BACKGROUND

Repeated Irish potato crop failures in 1845, 1846, 1848, and 1849 called for extraordinary measures. The Russell government responded with the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act (1847), a revision of the 1838 Poor Law. While the 1838 Poor Law offered only the workhouse to the needy poor, this legislation permitted the elderly, the sick poor, and widows with two or more dependent children to get outdoor (or work and housing) relief. The law continued to assert that Irish relief was Ireland's problem and assigned the costs of the appropriations to the Irish Poor rates (taxes) levied by each Poor Law Union. The 1847 Bill has been much criticized for its financing principles and for the Gregory Clause (described in the Learning Experiences). This activity challenges students to design a better law to provide relief for a disaster.

(Note: This activity can be used in conjunction with *Responses of the Peel and Russell Government*.)

RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Kinealy, Christine. "The Role of the Poor Law During the Famine," in Cathal Póirtéir. *The Great Irish Famine*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995. pp. 104-122.

Kissane, Noel. *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Information on the steps to creating laws in New York State.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Describe the disaster relief measures of the Russell Government and others.

Describe the steps required to create a new law in New York State.

Create mock legislation that addresses the problem of disaster relief.

STANDARDS

SS 5: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 3: Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Understand the structure of New York State and local governments, including executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Understand how civic values reflected in United States and New York State Constitutions have been implemented through laws and practices.

Participate in activities that focus on a classroom, school, or community issue or problem in New York State government.

Propose an action plan to address the issue of how to solve the problem.

Compare and synthesize information from different sources.

Relate new information to prior knowledge and experience.

Produce oral and written reports on topics related to all school subjects.

Establish an authoritative stance on the subject and provide references to establish the validity and verifiability of the information presented.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. In the summer of 1847, during the worst year of the Great Irish Famine, the government revised the 1838 Poor Law to deal with the famine crisis. The 1838 Poor Law offered only the workhouse; however, by 1847 the workhouses were overcrowded, so this law permitted aid outside of the workhouse to the elderly, the disabled and sick poor and widows with two or more dependent children. The law allowed able-bodied people to receive food, but no other form of aid, for a limited period of time. Why do students think that the able-bodied were limited in the sort of relief they could get? Was the provision a comment on the able-bodied poor? (The British regarded the Irish as lazy. Does relief legislation reflect that view?)
2. A provision of the 1847 law was something called the Gregory Clause. It said that anyone who held (on a lease) more than 1/4 acre of land was ineligible for any form of aid including the workhouse. What did that mean? If middlemen and landlords' agents were eager to get rid of little, unproductive farms would they have supported the Gregory Clause? Why? What would the poor have thought of the Gregory Clause?
3. The Poor Relief (Ireland) Act of 1847 was to be financed by the rates (taxes) raised in each of Ireland's Poor Law Unions. The number of Unions was increased from 130 to 163 in the 1847 Poor Relief Act. That meant that some of the larger unions could be divided into smaller units. The Poor Law Unions' responsibility for relief reflected the British Parliament's contention that famine relief was an Irish problem.
4. Ask students to consider a similar situation in New York State. How is a law created in New York State? How does one propose a new law? What steps does one take to turn a proposal into a law?
5. Working in groups, ask students to create a new county somewhere in New York State. Then they should create a disaster in that county. What has happened? Who are affected? What kind of relief is needed by the residents? Will the new county be expected to bear the burden of the cost of providing relief for its residents or will there be other funds available?

As a member of the New York State Assembly, what can a student tell his/her constituency about existing laws that provide relief in a time of disaster? As a member of Congress, what kind of federal funds are available to those suffering from disaster in a member's district?

Working in groups using the New York State law-making model, each group can create a Relief Act to deal with the crisis.

What population will their Relief Act be designed to help?

Who will be eligible for relief?

What kind(s) of relief will the law provide?

If the law includes employment, what kinds of projects will the law allow? Will the wages be at market level? Will the wages be tied to the market price of food?

How will the relief be financed?

Convene a class session of the New York State Assembly. Each group can read its Relief Act. There can then be a debate and a vote to fund the Relief Act, to return the Relief Act for revisions, or to reject the Relief Act.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . Acquire and organize information
- . Use analytical thinking
- . Draw conclusions
- . Think rationally about content
- . Take and defend positions
- . View information from a variety of perspectives
- . Communicate results of research
- . Present conclusions

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Creating laws should be objective and based on data and facts, but emotions and strong opinions can make the process more complicated. Suppose you were a legislator who had to vote on a piece of legislation that your constituents wanted, but you did not want? What should you consider when making up your mind? Suppose you felt that you should represent your British following and leave the Irish problems to the Irish—and then you visited Ireland and saw the terrible effects of the famine? What would you consider before deciding what to do?

TEACHER REFLECTION

Simulations are always exciting, and students in the field tests enjoyed creating disasters.

This activity was an opportunity to talk about suppositions that underlie certain kinds of legislation. Students discussed the underlying concern in the Irish Poor Law (1838) and the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act (1847) that relief be less attractive than labor. The organization of the workhouse (gloomy environment, monotonous diet, forced labor) was similar to that given to prisoners. Family members were separated from one another and that reflected the position that relief facilities not be made humane places. They feared that the undeserving poor would go there to avoid employment (Kinealy 106). Current welfare reform legislation that reflects a concern that work replace public assistance was discussed. Students pointed out that those concerns were similar to those that informed the Irish relief laws.

This activity is also an exercise in process. It is an opportunity to understand how laws are made: in this case social welfare laws. Students might ask their local representative (or a legislative staff member) to speak to the class about how legislation is written.

The Irish Workhouse System

BACKGROUND

The American traveler Asenath Nicholson visited Irish workhouses in Dublin, Roscrea, and Waterford before the famine and found them generally acceptable: well-run, clean, not crowded, and providing decent food.

The famine, however, brought extraordinary demands on the resources of local workhouses which were not designed for such a catastrophe. In order to receive any *outdoor relief*, or any public assistance, families had to be living in an institution like a workhouse. As a result, the population of workhouses increased dramatically. The workhouses were inadequate for the number of inmates and applicants. Callan added 190 inmates to its capacity of 600 by erecting sleeping galleries; Clonmel, which had to add 1000 places to its 600, acquired an old brewery; many workhouse erected sheds in their compounds for their additional inmates. Crowded conditions led to disease and death, and many who were sick and dying were taken into workhouses because there was nowhere else for them.

This activity can be used in conjunction with *Afraid of the Workhouse* and *The Irish Poor Law*.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Ireland's Workhouses

ADDITIONAL READINGS

McTernan, John. *In Sligo Long Ago*. Sligo: Avena Publications, 1988.

Nicholson, Asenath. *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*. ed. Maureen Murphy. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Research Irish poorhouses to determine if they were an effective measure for relief for the poor.

Evaluate poorhouses in the context of other government relief measures during the Great Irish Famine.

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Explain the literal meaning of a historical passage or primary source document, identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led up to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.

View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments in world history by

analyzing their literature, diary accounts, letters, artifacts, art, music, architectural drawings, and other documents.

Investigate important events and developments in world history by posing analytical questions, selecting relevant data, distinguishing fact from opinion, hypothesizing cause-and-effect relationships, testing these hypotheses, and forming conclusions.

Produce oral and written reports on topics related to all school subjects.

Establish an authoritative stance on the subject and provide references to establish the validity and verifiability of the information presented.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . acquire and organize information
- . take and defend positions
- . identify premises and rationale for points of view
- . probe assumptions for accuracy and viewpoints
- . present information
- . reflect upon content/form opinions

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. When Asenath Nicholson visited workhouses during the famine she found appalling conditions. Inmates were confined; there was enforced idleness rather than employment. Ask students to read the handout *Irish Workhouses* that is her account of workhouses from *Annals of Famine in Ireland*. What does Nicholson say the workhouse looks like from far away? What is it like inside? What might an observer think about the occupants of the workhouse?
2. Read aloud to the students: In May 1850 a writer from the *Sligo Champion* visited the sites acquired as auxiliary buildings to house the overflow, mainly children, from the Sligo workhouse. His account of the John Street Auxiliary describes conditions for teenage boys:

In this establishment there are three hundred and forty two boys, beyond fifteen years, doing nothing. They are herded together like so many cattle. There is no school; no employment, idleness is the predominant feature of the place—its besetting sin. From the rising sun in the east to its sinking in the western ocean—during a long, long June day, they spend their time in profitless, demoralizing indolence. The master (who is a well-meaning, good hearted man) assured us that the boys were most willing to work—most willing to do anything they were put to, and that nothing weighed so heavily upon them as the tedious hours of their unoccupied time. They are quiet, docile and obedient, yet, at the period of life when their minds are as wax to receive an impression and as steel to retain, they are neglected, abandoned and forgotten. They do not work, neither can they want. Yet they are willing to labor, to give a hard day's toil in return for the scanty bit they receive. Why leave them together like so many beasts of the field: untaught, unoccupied, at liberty to follow the bent of their own inclinations and run riot? Can no effort be made to save them? Are those children of sorrow doomed? Will they never know the exquisite luxury of carving their own bread? Shall their youth—the prime of their existence, be wasted away, in demoralizing idleness within the gloomy walls of an Auxiliary Workhouse?

John McTernan, *In Sligo Long Ago*. Sligo: Avena Publications, 1988. pp. 311.

Permission pending.

Using details from Nicholson and the *Sligo Champion* writer's accounts, how would students describe life in the workhouse for men, for women and children? Both writers suggest that the workhouse seems like prison. Why do they think the workhouses are that way? What details are most vivid in their accounts? How would the accounts influence public opinion?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

It is 1848. A question has been raised in the House of Commons about the condition of the young people housed in workhouses in Ireland. The government is willing to support some sort of plan to make productive use of the time of teenage boys and girls who are workhouse inmates. Join in groups to create a Special Advisory Committee and draw up a proposal for the House of Commons to consider. What kind of skills do the young people have? Most are children of agricultural laborers or small farmers. The Quakers started a model farm in Galway to teach better agricultural practices. Would that be an idea? What kind of skills are in demand in Ireland? What kinds of training should be made available to young people so that they can acquire those skills? Are there apprenticeships available? Many of the inmates expressed a desire to emigrate to the United States where they had family. What kind of skills would help a young man or young woman with plans to emigrate in 1848? Write a speech that tackles one or more of these questions. Imagine how the speech could be written so you are convincing and persuasive.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity, like *The Greatest Possible Good* activity, raises the question of how best to help famine victims. How can people be helped to become independent? What provisions can be made to make employment available beyond the “make work” projects like breaking stones? What does the adage “Give man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” mean in the context of this activity?

Ireland's Workhouses

An observer, who had no interest in the nation but philanthropy, going over Ireland, after traveling many a weary mile over bog and waste where nothing but a scattering hamlet of loose stone, mud or turf greets him, when he suddenly turns some corner, or ascends some hill, and sees in the distance, upon a pleasant elevation, a building of vast dimensions, tasteful in architecture, surrounded with walls, like the castle or mansion of some lord, if he knew not Ireland's history must suppose that some chief held his proud dominion over the surrounding country and that his power must be so absolute that life and death hung on his lip; and should he enter the gate and find about its walls a company of ragged and tattered beings of all ages, from the man of grey hairs to the lad in his teens, sitting upon the ground, breaking stones with might and main, and piling them in heaps; should he proceed to a contiguous yard, if the day be not rainy, and find some hundreds of the "weaker vessels" standing in groups or squatting on their heels, with naked arms and feet, should he go over the long halls, and in some enclosure find a group of pale, sickly-looking children cowering about a vast iron guard, to keep the scanty fire that might be struggling for life in the grate from doing harm; should he stop at the dinner hour, and see these hundreds, yes thousands, marching in file to the tables, where was spread the yellow stirabout, in tins and pans, measured and meted by ounces and pounds, suited to age and condition; and should he tarry till twilight drew her curtain and see, in due order, these men, women and children led to their stalls for the night, where are pallets of straw in long rooms (they are sorted and ranged according to sex) to lie down together, with neither the light of the sun, moon or candle, till the morning dawn, and call them again to their gruel or stirabout to resume afresh the routine of the preceding day—would not this uninformed stranger find all his opinions confirmed, that this must be the property of a monarch who has gathered these heterogeneous nondescripts from the pirates, highway robbers, and pickpockets of his subjects, and had enclosed them here, awaiting the fit out for transportation.

Source: from Asenath Nicholson. *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*. ed., Maureen Murphy.

Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998 [1851], pp. 109.

Used with permission of the Lilliput Press, Dublin, Ireland.

Afraid of the Workhouse

BACKGROUND

In Ireland, even before the Great Irish Famine, the people had a terrible fear of the workhouse (or poorhouse). Elizabeth Smith noted in her journal in 1841 that, when there was a potato shortage, the poor of her part of Wicklow were terrified of the workhouse. During the Great Irish Famine, when there was no other form of relief, people had to go to the workhouse.

Why did people avoid the workhouse? There were three reasons: its prison-like regime, the stigma of having to go to the workhouse, and the association of workhouse with death. People feared the terrible overcrowding, the poor sanitation, the meager diet and limitations of what doctors could do about infectious diseases like cholera and typhus.

This activity can be used in conjunction with *The Irish Workhouse System* and *The Irish Poor Law*.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Description of the Ennis Workhouse

Kathleen Hurley's Story

The Man Who Was Raised From the Dead

ADDITIONAL READINGS

O'Connor, John. *The Workhouses of Ireland: The Fate of Ireland's Poor*. Minneapolis: Irish Books and Media, 1995.

Ó'Murchadha, Ciarán. *Sable Wings Over the Land: Ennis, Co. Clare and its Wider Community During the Great Famine*. Ennis: Clasp Press, 1998.

Póirtéir, Cathal. *Famine Echoes*. Dublin: Jill and MacMillan, 1995.

Smith, Elizabeth. *The Wicklow World of Elizabeth Smith 1840-1850*. eds. Dermot James and Seámas O. Maitiú. Dublin: The Woodfield Press, 1996.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Describe the conditions of poorhouses in 19th century Ireland, explaining the derivation of fear of workhouses.

Examine eye-witness accounts to understand why the poorhouse is such a powerful image in folk memory of the Great Irish Famine.

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

ELA 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.
- View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments in world history by analyzing their literature, diary accounts, letters, artifacts, art, music, architectural drawings, and other documents.
- Produce oral and written reports on topics related to all school subjects.
- Organize information according to an identifiable structure, such as compare/contrast or general to specific.
- Develop information with appropriate supporting material, such as fact, details, illustrative examples or anecdotes, and exclude extraneous material.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . analytical thinking
- . interpret information
- . acquire and organize information
- . consult and interpret primary sources
- . make generalizations
- . identify patterns and themes

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Ask students if they have ever had to evacuate their home and go to a shelter until a crisis (such as a storm) was over. Explain that when people are made homeless by hurricanes and other natural disasters, shelters are set up by local government or by agencies like the Red Cross. Other shelters for the homeless or for mothers and children are maintained by local governments or charitable organizations like the Salvation Army. How do people feel about shelters? Why would people welcome a shelter and when would they want to avoid going to a shelter?
2. Distribute the handouts and discuss the themes. Ciarán O’Murchadha’s description of the workhouse and workhouse life in Ennis, Co. Clare, would be similar to descriptions of workhouses in all of Ireland’s 130 Poor Law Unions. Ask students to read O’Murchadha’s description and list details which make the workhouse sound like a prison. What was the crime of workhouse inmates? If they had not committed a crime, why were those who entered workhouses dehumanized? What were inmates of the workhouse called? Why were they called that name? Were *paupers* less than human?
3. Irish folk memory is full of stories about the mass graves of the workhouse dead. The story that Kathleen Hurley collected in 1938 is full of images of death. In her text, Hurley says the workhouse bread was called “gandough.” The Irish work gann means poor, thin or sparse, deficient. What did they mean by *gandough*? What details are most striking in Hurley’s account?

Among the accounts of workhouse deaths there are even stories of people being buried alive. In his recollections, O’Donovan Rossa told such a story about a boy in the Skibbereen Workhouse. Ask students to read *The Man who was Raised from the Dead*. Rossa’s story alludes to the story of Lazarus in the New Testament (John 11: 1-44); however, in Rossa’s story Johnnie Collins is only thought to be dead. What makes this story and Hurley’s story authentic? Who tells the stories? What elements in the story are memorable: character, setting, plot? Have students heard of other stories involving people thought to be dead who were alive or even people saving themselves by hiding among the dead?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Complete the chart with words and phrases that describe workhouses during the famine:

WORKHOUSE CONDITIONS

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Using information from the readings, students will write an essay explaining why the workhouse has become such a powerful image in the folk memory of the Irish people.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity combines an examination of the reluctance of people to go into public institutions and the Irish folk memory of a particular institution, the workhouse, during the Great Irish Famine. Students might like to share family memories or folk memories of their own tradition about an event in their group's history.

This is a good time to encourage students to interview parents and especially grandparents. A special aspect of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is the opportunity for storytelling. Often students have reported that such conversations bring to light stories that students' families have not previously heard.

The workhouse as a death house may be used in conjunction with *Mourning the Dead: Custom and Tradition*. Lessons about death may be upsetting for some students, but it is helpful if they understand that death is a central ritual in Irish rural life. The concern with death customs is not ghoulishness but a measure of the respect for giving proper respect to a person at the time of transition from life to death.

Seamus Heaney's "Funeral Rites" describes the traditions surrounding death in the Irish countryside today in a poem that brings the body of one killed in an act of sectarian violence back to the megalithic tombs of the Boyne Valley, to pre-Christian Ireland.

This activity can be used effectively with *The Irish Poor Law*, *Designing Relief Legislation*, and *The Irish Workhouse System*.

Description of the Ennis Workhouse

The very appearances of the workhouses, all of a standard design somewhere between a military barracks and a jail, was forbidding. The Ennis house, identical to all others built to accommodate 800 inmates, was entered through a pair of high gates which led to an arched reception area, through which access was afforded to the internal arrangement of yards enclosed by dormitories and ward buildings. The gates were locked every night, and a high perimeter wall kept inmates inside, hiding the depths of human misery that lurked within the walls from the casual passerby.

On receiving tickets of admission to the house, families were separated: husbands from wives, men from women, girls from boys. There was no further contact between members of a family once they had been admitted to the house, and while they remained there. Those entering the workhouse consigned themselves to a state of being which deprived them of the basic privileges and rights of human beings, belonging henceforth to the administrative category of “pauper,” a term which connoted abject institutional dependency, as well as a near-total abdication of personal freedom. The constant regimentation to which they were subjected; the pointless and never ending tedium of the work they were obliged to perform; the monotonous nature of the diet; the rough uniform they were forced to wear, which remained workhouse property and not their own; the severe punishments inflicted on them for infractions of regulations; all these things combined to strip inmates of their human dignity and self respect.

Source: Ciarán O Murchadha. *Sable Wings over the Land. Ennis, County Clare and its Wider Community During the Great Famine*. Ennis: Clasp Press, 1998. p. 23. Permission pending.

Kathleen Hurley's Story

In 1937-38, pupils in Irish National Schools helped the Irish Folklore Commission gather folklore from the family and neighbors, particularly the older people. Among the questions that students asked were questions about the Great Irish Famine. This is what Kathleen Hurley heard in 1938.

My father worked as baker in the Workhouse [in Castlerea] during the years of the famine. I frequently heard him say he, assisted by five more bakers, baked into bread half-a-ton of flour on the same day.

They kneaded the flour with the ordinary spade used by farmers in tilling land, divided the kneaded dough into large lumps and baked same. The bread was called "gandough."

So great were the crowds of starving people who called at the workhouse during each day that the authorities were obliged to attach iron bars onto the outside of the windows of the bakery to guard against attack for bread, and my father told us that before he or any of his five assistants appeared in public, they made sure to wash their hands and remove any whiteness of flour from their clothes or they stood in danger of being eaten alive by starving people.

There were three deep pits sunk outside the workhouse, one on the women's side, beside the piggery; one on the west side of the workhouse, and a third pit close to the mortuary or dead house.

The workhouse was overcrowded, packed like herrings in a barrel with victims of cholera. When a victim died the remains were lowered on a sliding door from the window into one of the pits and covered with quicklime. The pits became filled with corpses.

The walls and woodwork of the windows, from which those sliding doors were attached, were thickly covered on the outside with a thick coat of black tar. The black tarred walls are still to be seen in the ruins of the work house, also the site of the gruel boilers and the three pits.

Source: Cathal Póirtéir. *Famine Echoes*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995, pp. 128.

Used with permission of Gill and Macmillan.

The Man who was Raised from the Dead

An inmate of the workhouse named Johnnie Collins was Neddie Hegarty's messenger boy. He was lame, he had been dead and buried, but had been brought back to life by a stroke of Rackateen's shovel. Rackateen was the name by which the workhouse undertaker was known. The dead were buried coffinless those times. Rackateen took the bodies to the Abbey graveyard in a kind of trapdoor wagon. He took Johnnie Collins in it one day, and after dumping him with others into the grave-pit, one of his knees protruded from the heap of corpses. Rackateen gave it a stroke of his shovel to level it down even; the corpse gave a cry of pain, and the boy was raised from the pit. The lame man—whose leg had been broken by the stroke of the shovel—used to come into my shop every week, and we used to speak of him as the man who was raised from the dead.

Source: John O'Connor. *The Workhouses of Ireland. The Fate of Ireland's Poor*. Minneapolis: Irish Books and Media, 1995. pp. 189. Used with permission of the publisher.

An Ejected Family: Illustrating Eviction During the Great Irish Famine

BACKGROUND

Between 1846 and 1854 188,346 families were evicted from their homes in Ireland. Evictions continued through the end of the century until legislation was passed allowing people in rural Ireland to purchase their lands. While there are contemporary engravings of evictions, notably those published in *The Illustrated London News* between 1846 and 1849, there are no contemporary famine paintings. Two later nineteenth century paintings depict evictions: Erskine Nichol's *An Ejected Family* (1853) in the National Gallery of Ireland and Lady Butler's *Evicted* (1890) in the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin.

Students will have the opportunity to view both of these engravings and discuss what they see.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

An Ejected Family

Evicted

ADDITIONAL READING

Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*. Boston: Little Brown, 1981.

Kelleher, Margaret. *The Feminization of Famine: Expression of the Inexpressible?* Cork: Cork University Press, 1997.

Kennedy, Brian P. *Irish Painting*. Dublin: Town House, 1993.

Marshall, Catherine. *Irish Art Masterpieces*. New York: Hugh Lanter Levin Associates, 1994.

O'Neill, Tim P. "Famine Evictions" in Carla King, ed. *Famine, Land and Culture in Ireland*. Dublin: University Press, 2000.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Compare the paintings Erskine Nichol's *An Ejected Family* (1853) with Lady Elizabeth Butler's *Evicted* (1890).

Understand how color, grouping, detail, size, and other aspects of the paintings contribute to the portrayal of eviction and ejection.

Understand the historical context of the paintings.

Evaluate the paintings, selecting and supporting preferences.

STANDARDS

ELA 3: Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

Arts 3: Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought. (Visual Arts)

Arts 4: Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society. (Visual Arts)

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.

Reflect upon, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism.

Analyze evidence critically and demonstrate an understanding of how circumstances of time and place influence perspective.

Explain the literal meaning of a historical passage or primary source document (painting), identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led up to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.

View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments in world history by analyzing their art.

Discuss and write their analysis and interpretations of their own works of art and the art of others, using appropriate critical language .

Demonstrate how art works and artifacts from diverse world cultures reflect aspects of those cultures.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . evaluate and connect evidence
- . observe and conclude
- . use reflective thinking
- . interpret information and data
- . conceptualize and observe
- . form opinions

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Using the handout/overhead *An Ejected Family*, ask students:

What did you notice first about this painting?

Look at the group of figures. Who are they? What do their expressions tell you?

How do the figures relate to each other?

How do the figures relate to their environment?

What is the man in the white shirt staring at?

How is nature portrayed? Is it comforting or threatening?

Comment on the composition of the painting.

How do the figures as a grouping relate to the rest of the picture?

Are the colors of the picture suggestive of its meaning?

What hues predominate?

How does Nichol use light in the picture?

2. Using the handout/overhead *Evicted*, ask the students:

What was your first response to *Evicted*?

Lady Butler actually witnessed the scene she painted. What influence do you think that experience had on her painting?

This is a very large picture—almost six feet by eight feet. What impact does the size have on the viewer?

What is the relationship between the figure of the evicted woman and the rest of the picture? Comment on the scale of the figure of the woman. What does Lady Butler want us to know about her?

Does the landscape reflect the figure's mood?

Is there anything about her expression or her pose that says something about her character?

3. In the Great Irish Famine of 1845-1849, another eye-witness recorded this description of evicted tenants near Newport, Co. Mayo:

Perhaps in no instance does the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy come before the mind so vividly as when going over the places made desolate by the Famine; to see the tumbled cabins, with the poor hapless inmates who had for years sat around their turf fire, and ate their potatoes together; now lingering and oftentimes wailing in despair; their ragged barefoot little ones clinging about them, one on the back of the weeping mother, and the father looking in silent despair, while a part of them are scraping among the rubbish to gather some little relic of mutual attachment (for the poor, dear reader, have their tender remembrances); then, in a flock, take their solitary, their pathless way to seek some rock or ditch to camp supperless for the night, without covering for the head or the feet, with not the remnant of a blanket to spread over them in the ditch where they must crawl.

Asenath Nicholson, *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*. Maureen Murphy, ed. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998. pp. 115-116. Used with permission of The Lilliput Press, Dublin, Ireland.

4. What are the similarities between Asenath Nicholson's account of the Newport eviction and *An Ejected Family* and *Evicted*? What details are most poignant to readers/viewers?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Compare the two paintings, commenting on subject matter, the composition, and the use of space and color. Which do you prefer? Explain your reactions, considering the historical context of the two paintings.

TEACHER REFLECTION

The depiction of the ejection of families during the Great Irish Famine can be a disturbing image, particularly if students have experienced being evicted from their homes. Some students may wish to make their own drawings to show how it would feel (or how it felt) to have to move. How would it feel if there seemed as if there was no place to go? Discuss housing options with students to reassure them that services are available to homeless families.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

For advanced and younger students:

Students can create their own artwork that reflects the evictions or other aspects of the Great Irish Famine.



An Ejected Family

Source: Erskine Nichol.

Used with permission of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin.



Evicted

Source: Lady Butler.

Used with permission of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin.

Stealing Food: A Crime or a Failure of the System?

BACKGROUND

Because there are many accounts of food leaving the country during the Great Irish Famine, people often assume the Irish passively let it be taken. There is documentation, however, of people seizing government food supplies. In this activity, students will read four accounts of food theft from ships traveling along the coast of Mayo and from food depots set up in towns by the government. In almost every case, the thefts were carried out against government supplies of food en route to government food depots. Those caught were treated as criminals and could be sentenced to gaol (jail) or even to transportation to Australia.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Theft of Food in County Mayo

The Gleaner

Gardener, Killer

Boy and Girl at Cahera

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Eiriksson, Andres. "Food Supply and Food Riots," in Cormac O'Gráda, ed. *Famine 150. Commemorative Lecture Series*. Dublin: Teagasc/UCD, 1997, pp. 67-91.

Kissane, Noel. "Crime and Food," *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*. Dublin: the National Gallery of Ireland, 1995. pp. 56-57.

Nicholson, Asenath. *Annals of the Famine*. ed. Maureen Murphy. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998.

Pórtéir, Cathal. *Famine Echoes*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1995.

Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999.

Swords, Liam. *In Their Own Words: The Famine in North Connacht 1845-1849*. Blackrock: Columba Press, 1999.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Conclude whether thefts of food by starving people should be considered criminal acts.

Debate and conclude the question of how best to allocate scarce resources during a time of crisis.

Compare the theft of food in Ireland during the Great Irish Famine with a current event in Russia.

STANDARDS

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

SS 4: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Analyze historic events from around the world by examining accounts written from different perspectives.

Analyze evidence critically and demonstrate an understanding of how circumstances of time and place influence perspective.

View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments in world history by analyzing their literature, diary accounts, letters, artifacts, art, music, architectural drawings, and other documents.

Investigate important events and developments in world history by posing analytical questions, selecting relevant data, distinguishing fact from opinion, hypothesizing cause-and-effect relationships, testing these hypotheses, and forming conclusions.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . analytical thinking
- . reflective thinking
- . draw conclusions
- . ask and answer logical questions
- . identify premises and rationale for points of view
- . probe assumptions for accuracy and viewpoints
- . set up hypotheses and alternative courses of action
- . interpret information and data
- . question arguments
- . consult and interpret primary sources

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Law/Legal Studies (if available)

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Ask students to examine the front page of the September 5, 1999, *Newsday*, “Gardener, Killer” and the handout *Gardner, Killer* which describes a Russian man killed for stealing potatoes. Why did the local prosecutor rule that Valentina Dolgopyatova had the right to protect her property even at the cost of taking a life to do so? Was this case unique or is it one of a number of such cases? There was not a famine in Russia in 1999, so why were people stealing food? What are some of the problems that have led to this crisis?
2. In December 1846, Asenath Nicholson, an American relief worker traveling in Ireland, heard a story from a policeman about a woman brought before a judge who was “stealing” potatoes from a field that had been harvested. She was *gleaning*, picking up what was left after the field was harvested. (The handout of James Mahoney’s engraving *Boy and Girl at Cahera* shows two gleaners.) The landlord treated her gleaning as a crime. What details in the woman’s story support the argument that this was not a criminal act? What was the point of Nicholson’s account of the gleaner? What did she want her reader to know? What did she want her reader to do?
3. Ask students to determine how they would answer the question below. Ask students to join others who

took the same position and be prepared to explain their choice.

Is theft of food by a person who will die of starvation or who is responsible for persons who will die of starvation, still *stealing* and therefore a criminal act?

(**Note:** It would be interesting to invite a lawyer to the class to discuss the legal interpretations of the question.)

ASSESSMENT OPTION

You are a resident magistrate in Co. Mayo in 1848. In the last six months you have heard about four cases involving theft of food. The government has written to you to ask your opinion about whether you regard these incidents as an outbreak of criminal behavior or as an acute food shortage that has driven people to steal or starve. How will you answer the letter? Use examples from the Mayo accounts in your response and make a recommendation about what should be done. Is the answer to call out the military to protect the food carriers on land or sea? Should the government reconsider how to meet the needs of those who are hungry?

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity is a good opportunity to discuss the work of Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel Prize for economics in 1998. In his book *Development as Freedom* (1999) Sen asserts that “No famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy” and that freedom is the principal means of development. He argues that famine is not the result of food shortage, per se, but the lack of access to food because they do not have the economic power. His solution is a minimum income or economic entitlements for those suffering from conditions that precipitate famine.

Theft of Food in County Mayo

Belmullet. Reports of Sub-Inspector Henry Blake:

7 June 1847:

On the eve of the 3rd inst. the Wellington of Belfast bound for Westport, was passing the islands of Inniskea.... About ten miles off at sea, she was boarded by several currachs, manned by country people, who plundered her of about forty tons of Indian meal and corn ... Up to the present date the plunderers are unknown.

4 October 1847:

On yesterday 3 October about the hour of 12 o'clock, a ship was passing Eagle Island about six miles at sea, she was boarded by 25 small boats, manned by countrymen who plundered her of over 30 tons of Indian meal consigned to the commissary here. The vessel was again boarded this morning and plundered of about ten more tons of meal. From the enquiries I have made I have every hope to be able to track the plunderers.

Tubbercurry. Police report:

21 January 1848:

The relief depot at Piper's Hill was broken into and two sacks of Indian meal stolen ... The meal was hidden under straw in the priest's garden. The following night the police set up watch on the homes of the suspects and saw them leave their houses and return with small bags of meal. In the morning they made a search and found a quantity of the meal in each of the premises.

Report of Captain Gilbert:

26 January 1848:

The depot of Tubbercurry was broken into on 21 January and seven and a half cwt of meal taken. The police have arrested several persons. One of them will probably turn evidence against the remainder and I hope the punishment inflicted on them will prevent such disgraceful outrages for the future.

Swinford. Report of Capt. Hanley to William Stanley:

27 May 1848:

The carriers bringing the week's supply of meal for the division of Bohola from the contractor's store at Ballina, were attacked yesterday about four miles from this town, by a numerous party, and their loading, two tons of meal, forcibly taken from them. The police having arrested several, charged them with the offence, the case was fully inquired into this day at the Petty Sessions at Foxford, where I attended and four of the party were identified and committed for trial to Castlebar gaol. From the state of this district, without an escort, no carrier is safe in conveying provisions.

Source: Liam Swords. *In Their Own Words. The Famine in North Connacht. 1845-1849*. Blackrock: The Columba Press, 1999. pp. 190, 229, 277, 323. Used with permission of the publisher.

The Gleaner

A man had died from hunger, and his widow had gone into the plowed field of her landlord to try to pick a few potatoes in the ridge which might be remaining since the harvest; she found a few—the landlord saw her, sent a magistrate to the cabin, who found three children in a state of starvation and nothing in the cabin but the pot, which was over the fire. He demanded of her to show him the potatoes. She hesitated; he inquired what she had in the pot—she was silent; he looked in, and saw a dog, with a handful of potatoes she had gathered from the field. The sight of the wretched cabin, and still more the despairing looks of the poor silent mother and the famished children, crouched in fear in a dark corner, so touched the heart of the magistrate that he took the pot from the fire, bade the woman to follow him, and they went to the court-room together. He presented the pot containing the dog and the handful of potatoes, to the astonished judge. He called the woman—interrogated her kindly. She told him they sat in their desolate cabin two entire days, without eating before she killed the half-famished dog; that she did not think she was stealing to glean after the harvest was gathered. The judge gave her three pounds from his own purse; he told her when she had used that to come again to him.

Source: Asenath Nicholson. *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*. ed. Maureen Murphy. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998. pp. 36-37. Used with permission of The Lilliput Press, Dublin, Ireland.

Newsday

THE LONG ISLAND NEWSPAPER

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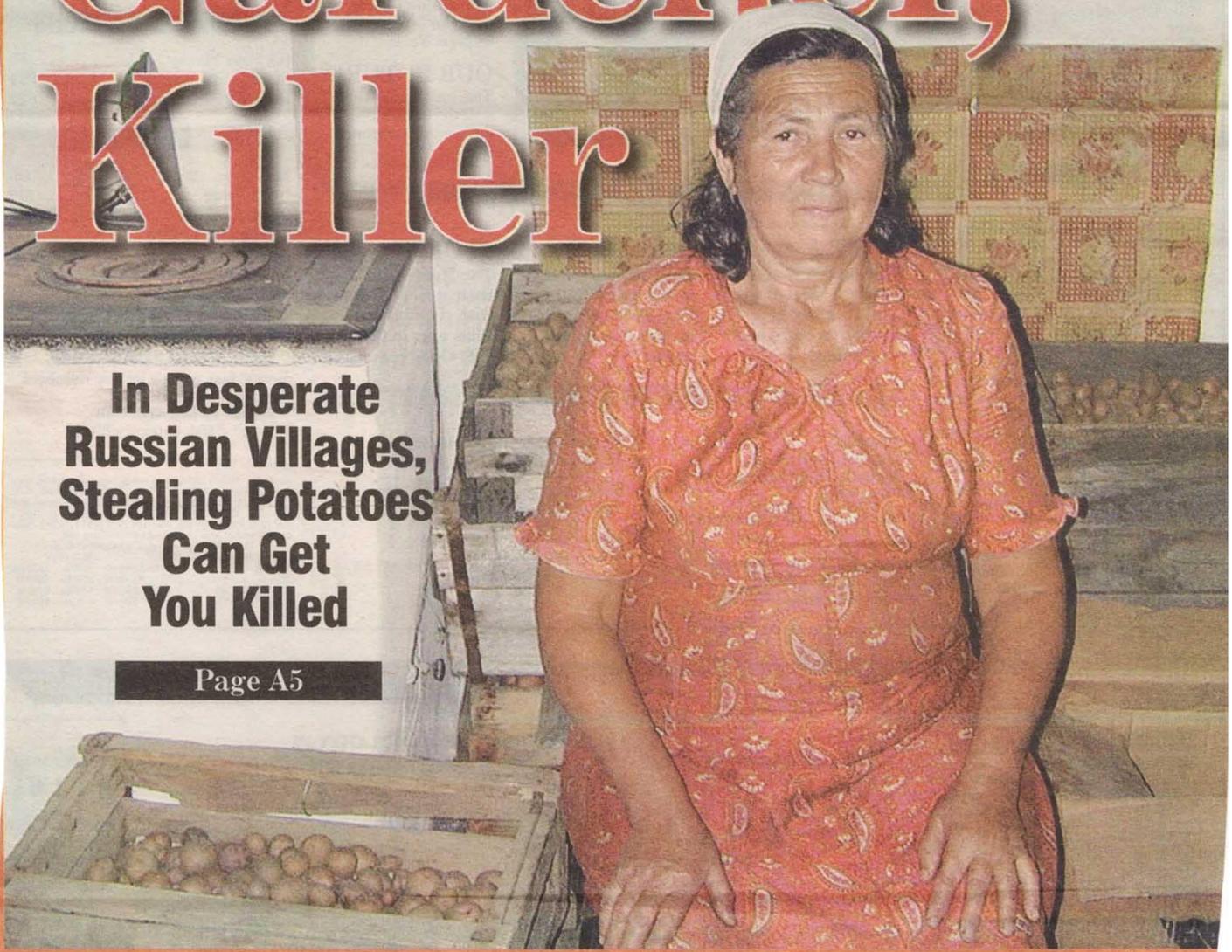
SUNDAY, SEPT. 5, 1999 • NASSAU

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Gardener, Killer

**In Desperate
Russian Villages,
Stealing Potatoes
Can Get
You Killed**

Page A5



Valentina Dolgopyatova, 68, fatally stabbed a man she caught raiding her garden. The killing was ruled justified.

Newsday Photo / Michael Slack

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Garden Killer Lives in Desperate Times

A September 5, 1999, story by *Newsday* writer Michael Slackman reporting from Vassilievka, Russia described the murder of a man by an elderly grandmother for stealing two pounds of potatoes from her garden. Tipped off by a friend that somebody was stealing her potatoes, the woman waited to catch the thief, a man well-known in the village. When she confronted him stealing her potatoes, he tried to strike her with his spade. She stabbed him with a knife. She said she did not intend to kill him.

The woman and her 73-year-old husband had both been employed, but the brush factory where she worked closed and her husband's mine shut down. The couple lived on the vegetables she cultivated for their own table and to sell. Because the woman and her husband lived on the produce from her garden, local authorities ruled that she had the right to protect her livelihood and decided not to bring charges against her.

Conditions are hard in Vassilievka, a small village of 700 people, where most people are unemployed. Slackman wrote:

Life is so desperate here that stealing potatoes has become a kind of capital crime. Not just in Vassilievka, but throughout Russia. In the Volga River town of Ulyanovsk, eight people were killed last summer raiding vegetable gardens in what local authorities are calling "the war against dacha [garden] thieves."

With four of every 10 Russians living in poverty, and the central government in Moscow weak and ineffective, Russians are in a lonely struggle to survive and a feeling of every-person-for-himself has spread like a plague.

Source: Summary of "Garden Killer Lives in Desperate Times" by Michael Slackman. © 1999 *Newsday, Inc.*
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BOY AND GIRL, AT CAHERA.

Source: *The Illustrated London News*, February 20, 1842, p. 116.

Did James Hasty Murder Major Denis Mahon?

BACKGROUND

In this activity, students will assume the roles of officials of the court and the jury in the trial of James Hasty for the murder of Major Denis Mahon on November 2, 1847. Mahon owned extensive lands in Co. Roscommon. He had inherited an estate that had been mismanaged and neglected; there were thousands of pounds owed in late rents. Mahon worked hard to put the estate in order. He was a resident landlord who had helped to organize local relief for those suffering from the consequences of the famine, but at the same time, he decided to reduce the number of his tenants by a policy of assisted emigration. (They had no choice. It was assisted emigration or eviction.) By the spring of 1847 he had cleared his estate of some 900 tenants whom he assisted to emigrate to North America. Those who emigrated traveled on the *Virginus*, a coffin ship that lost 158 of its 500 passengers at sea and delivered the rest to Quebec's Grosse Isle in desperate condition.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

The Trial of James Hasty
Denis Mahon

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Dodd, Luke, Sheila Dillon and Triona Sherwin. *The Great Irish Famine and Famine Today*. Strokestown: The Famine Museum, n.d.
Foley, Michael. "Strokestown Park House," *Ireland of Welcomes*, 36, 4 (July-August, 1987), pp. 14-17.
Scally, Robert James. *The End of Hidden Ireland. Rebellion, Famine & Emigration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Optional: Set up room like a courtroom
Background information (pamphlets, court documents, handbooks) that describe the role of the jury, lawyers, and judge in a court trial room.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Describe the conflict between landlord and tenant during the Great Irish Famine.
Explain the events leading up to the assassination of Major Denis Mahan.
Participate in a mock trial and draw conclusions.
Write an essay on the topic of whether it was possible for Hasty's trial to be fair.

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

SS 5: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Investigate important events and developments in world history by posing analytical questions, selecting relevant data, distinguishing fact from opinion, hypothesizing cause-and-effect relationships, testing these hypotheses, and forming conclusions.

Analyze different interpretations of important events, issues, or developments in world history by studying the social, political, and economic context in which they were developed; by testing the data source for reliability and validity, credibility, authority, authenticity, and completeness; and by detecting bias, distortion of the fact, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.

Understand that effective, informed citizenship is a duty of each citizen, demonstrated by jury service, voting, and community service.

Understand that the American legal and political systems guarantee and protect the rights of citizens and assume the citizens will hold and exercise certain civic values and fulfill certain civic responsibilities.

Show a willingness to consider other points of view before drawing conclusions or making judgments.

Explain the role that civility plays in promoting effective citizenship in preserving democracy.

Participate as informed citizens in the political justice system and processes of the United States, including voting.

Explain how democratic principles have been used in resolving an issue or problem.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . evaluate and connect evidence
- . take and defend positions
- . identify premises and rationale for points of view
- . probe assumptions for accuracy and viewpoints
- . present information
- . participate in interpersonal and group activities
- . set up hypotheses
- . interpret information and data
- . acquire and organize information
- . make decisions about process

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Share the Background section and the following information with the students:

On the evening of Nov. 2, 1847, Major Denis Mahon of the 9th Lancers, heir to the extensive Hartland estates in County Roscommon, was returning from a meeting of the Board of Guardians, the landowners in each county charged with financing and administering famine relief. Mahon's friend Dr. Terence Shanley was traveling in Mahon's coach. While Mahon's coachman William Flanagan was with them, Mahon himself drove the phaeton. (A phaeton is an open carriage drawn by four horses. It takes its name

from Greek mythology—Phaeton, the unlucky driver of the chariot of the sun.)

Mahon and his party were on his own estate lands as they approached a bridge in the townland of Fourmilehouse. Dusk was falling. Mahon looked at his watch and said to Dr. Shanley, “Ten minutes before six. We should be home about half past six.” Suddenly, there were two blasts of *duck shot* (the shot used to shoot wild fowl) fired from the bridge. One blast wounded Shanley; the other hit Mahon in the chest. He had time only to say, “Oh, God” before he died (Sally 39).

Mahon was not the only casualty of that winter. Six other landlords were killed; one was badly wounded; at least ten middlemen were targets of assassination attempts (Sally 38). The government was alarmed by what it saw as an outbreak of violence in the countryside, and passed a “Crime and Outrage Bill” designed to curb these attacks.

According to Robert Scally’s book *The End of Hidden Ireland*, James Hasty had been charged by February 1848. “This speedy result was achieved by the head constable with the help of two sworn *Approvers* (informers) of an adjoining townland who came forth in response to an offer suggested by the agent Ross Mahon that “the tenants who are anxious to stay ... be allowed to do so if the murderers are surrendered.”

Hasty was fingered by informers (spies or people who reported the behavior of others—particularly political behavior— to the police or to the government). Informers have been traditionally disliked by the Irish, so that would be an additional wrinkle for jurors. Would they believe the testimony of an informer?

There is no *smoking gun*. To make matters worse the trial will be conducted in a charged atmosphere. The government, press, and landlords fear that the Mahon murder is part of a conspiracy to attack those in lawful authority. The Mahon tenants harbor resentment for the evictions that have sent their relatives and friends to North America on a *coffin ship* that arrived at Grosse Isle, Quebec, with most of its passengers dying of fever. If that isn’t bad enough, all of the tenants who lived in the townland where Major Mahon was shot were evicted by February 1848, the worst winter to date in the Great Irish Famine (Sally 94). They could be next to be on a ship.

Distribute the handout *The Trial of James Hasty*. Ask students what they know about the roles and responsibilities of a juror. Discuss the jury’s role in important trials in the United States. Discuss the roles of other officials of the court.

Divide the students into groups, with each group responsible for preparing a role for the trial. One member will act for the group in the trial. The rest of the group will prepare the student for his or her role.

Note that students can find valuable testimony in the handouts of the activity *A Wave of Evictions* in this curriculum.

2. Conduct a mock trial of James Hasty, using the trial procedures described in the handout. Ask students to keep in mind that the trial was influenced by the dramatic impact of the famine on the lives of tenants and landlords.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Given the atmosphere of the times, do you think a fair trial could have been held in 1847? Emotions were undoubtedly running high for everyone, and both sides of the case may have felt strongly that their actions were justified. The media and public opinion could certainly influence the direction of the trial. Facts could easily be distorted. How could a trial be fair? Write an essay about your observations.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This is based on one of the activities that is part of *The Great Irish Famine and Famine Today*, an educational project developed for students by Trócaire [TROWE-ker-rah, the Irish word for mercy], an Irish relief organization, and the Strokestown Park Famine Museum. The activity is used with their permission. Founded by Irish bishops in 1973 to respond to the needs of people in the developing world, Trócaire has a web site for school children and secondary school students at: www.trocaire.org. They also have a wide variety of resources about hunger in the world today.

Having conducted their own trial, students might be interested in knowing the outcome of the Hasty trial in Strokestown. Found guilty of the murder of Major Denis Mahon, “Hasty was hanged at Roscommon in August 1848 before a crowd of four thousand”, confessing his guilt of all charges in a dying declaration, thanking his jailers and priests for their kindness, and denouncing ‘that accursed system of Molly Maguirism’ (an oath-bound agrarian secret society) that had brought his damnation” (Scally 95).

James Hasty also has been identified as Patrick Hasty. The editors have chosen to use the name James Hasty that appears in Robert Scally’s account of the Mahon assassination. There was tremendous attention in the press paid to the Mahon murder, and emergency police powers were extended in response to this case and to the murders of other landlords and middlemen. Students will think about the degree to which Mahon’s own actions: an eviction/forced emigration program imposed on suffering people, contributed to his murder.

Mahon’s home, Strokestown Park House, is now the site of the Famine Museum. The Museum is organized into a series of eleven theme-based rooms: the gentry, the tenantry, the potato, Poor Law and relief efforts, famine folklore, famine diseases, emigration, eviction, secret societies, the aftermath of the famine in Ireland, and contemporary famine. The exhibitions explain the conditions that led to the Great Irish Famine, and the on-going conditions of global poverty, hunger and homelessness.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

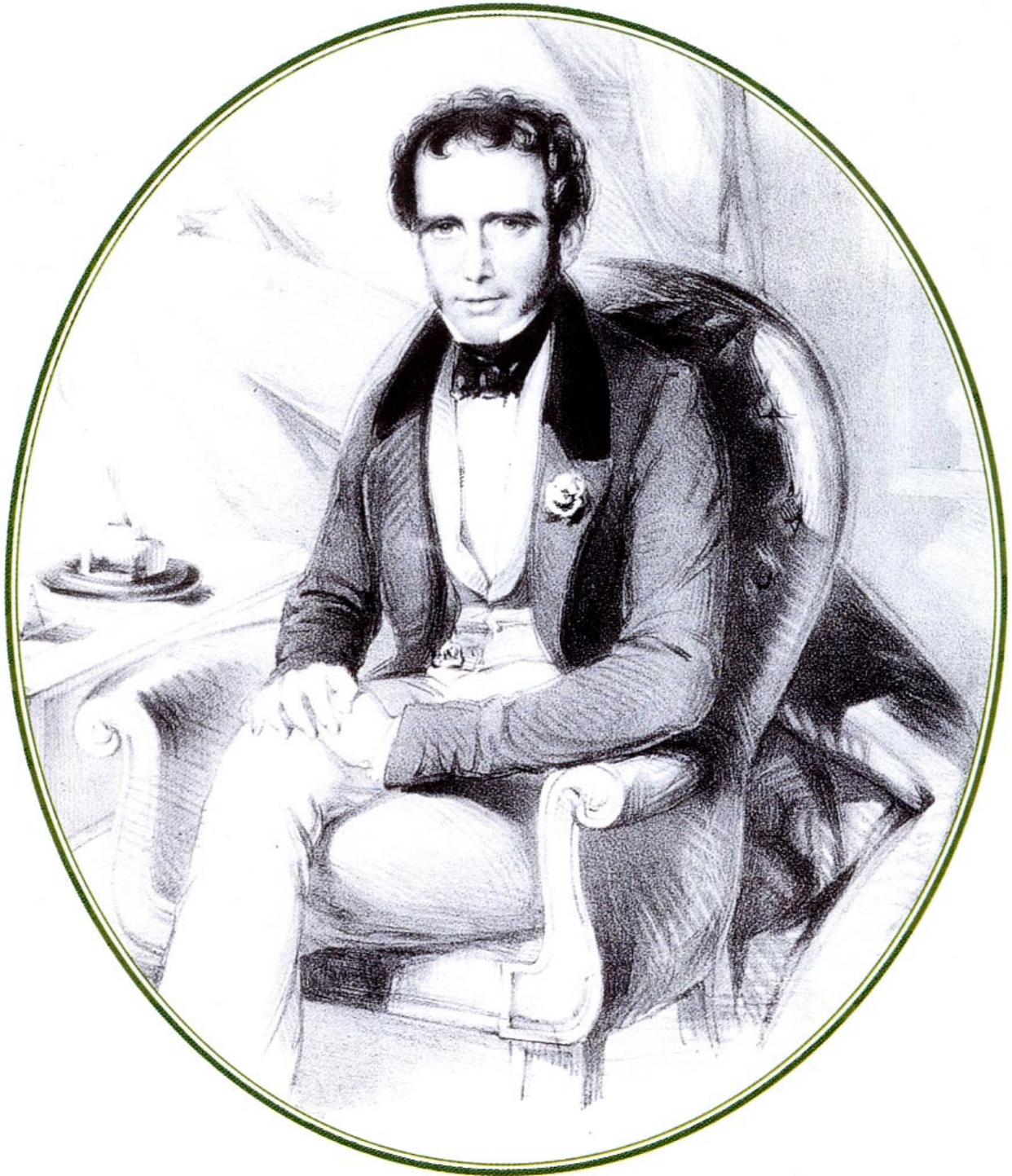
For advanced students:

The trial in this activity is based on the American system of justice. How different is the Irish court system? Is the judicial process in Northern Ireland different than Southern Ireland?

The Trial of James Hasty

- Judge:** Chairs the proceedings and facilitates the jury's decision.
- Prosecuting Attorney:** Tries to convict the accused of the crime of assassinating Major McMahon, using the testimony of witnesses.
- The Accused:** James Hasty, a tenant on Major Mahon's estate who sells liquor in an unlicensed pub. Accused of murdering Major Mahon.
- Defense Attorney:** Defends the accused against the charges that he assassinated Major Mahon, using the testimony of witnesses.
- Witness John Ross Mahon:** Major Mahon's land agent who not only believes that James Hasty is guilty of murdering Mahon, but is fearful of being the target of an assassination attempt.
- Witness Father Michael McDermott of Strokestown:** Character witness for James Hasty who knows him to be a good and honest man. While working with Major Mahon on the relief committee, the Father had often been at odds with the Major, and had made past accusations. Father Michael condemned Major Mahon's eviction policy from the altar, an action that might be seen as incitement to commit the crime. After Mahon's death Father Michael wrote to the *Evening Freeman* saying:
The infamous and inhuman cruelties which were wantonly and unnecessarily exercised against a tenantry, whose feelings were already wound up to woeful and vengeful exasperation by the loss of their exiled relatives as well as by hunger and pestilence, which swept so many victims to an untimely grave—in my opinion may be assigned as the sole exciting cause of the disastrous event which has occurred.
- Other Witnesses:** Members of the Board of Guardians, evicted tenants, family members of those on the Virginius, starving workers, Dr. Terence Shanley, William Flanagan.
- The Jury:** Listens to all the evidence presented, and not permitted to ask questions. At the end of the trial the jury votes on whether the accused is innocent or guilty. (Appoint a foreman to report the verdict of the jury.) Members of the jury are shopkeepers, publicans, farmers, townspeople.
- Trial procedure:**
- The Judge** will open the trial stating that James Hasty is on trial for the assassination of Major Denis Mahon on Nov. 2, 1847.
 - The Prosecuting Attorney** will call James Hasty, John Ross Mahon, Father Michael McDermott, and other witnesses. Assign a bailiff to keep time.
 - The Prosecuting Attorney** will have five minutes each to question Hasty, Ross, McDermott. and other witnesses.
 - The Defense Attorney** will call the same persons to the stand and will have five minutes each to question witnesses.
 - The Prosecuting Attorney and the Defense Attorney** will each have five minutes to make their closing statements.
 - The Judge** will instruct the jury.
 - The Jury** will elect a foreman and deliberate.
 - The Foreman** will poll the jury and report the verdict to the judge.

Source: Luke Dodd, Sheila Dillon and Triona Sherwin, *The Great Irish Famine and Famine Today*. Strokestown: The Famine Museum. n.d. Used with permission of Trócaire.



Major Denis Mahon

Source: Strokestown Park House. Strokestown, Co. Roscommon. Permission pending.

Food Exports During the Great Irish Famine

BACKGROUND

During the Great Irish Famine, the government followed an economic policy of *laissez faire* (let do) which was based on the eighteenth century idea that government regulations hold the economy back while a *laissez-faire* policy allows the economy the freedom to develop and to promote prosperity. The government's *laissez-faire* policy is central to the charge that the famine was not an act of nature but of governmental leadership.

A nationalist would charge it was the government that created famine. John Mitchel was one of the nationalists who was tried for treason during the Great Irish Famine (1848) and sentenced to 14 years transportation (penal servitude) in Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). He escaped to America in 1853. Mitchel's *Jail Journal* (1854) inspired a number of later nationalists' prison accounts including Brendan Behan's *Borstal Boy*.

(Note that Learning Experience #1 in this activity offers practice for both listening and note taking.)

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

The Famine in Ireland (if used as Listening Exercise)

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Donnelly, James S. "The construction of the memory of the Famine in Ireland and the Irish diaspora, 1850-1900,"

Éire-Ireland, xxi, 1-2 (Spring/Summer, 1996).

"The Great Famine, 1845-51," seven chapters in W.E. Vaughan, ed. *A New History of Ireland*. V. Part 1. Ireland Under the Union 1801-1870. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. pp. 272-371.

Daly, Mary E. *The Famine in Ireland* (Dublin: Dublin Historical Association, 1986), pp. 56-7.

"Historian and Famine; A Beleaguered Species?" *Irish Historical Studies*, xxx, 120 (Nov 1997), 591-601.

Kinealy, Christine. *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine (1845-1852)*. Boulder: Roberts Rinehart, 1995.

A Death: Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger for Ireland. London: Pluto Press, 1997.

O'Gráda, Cormac. *The Great Irish Famine*. Dublin: Gill, 1989.

Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy and Memory. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

"Table of Livestock Exports" on blackboard—see Learning Experience #2 in this activity.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Gather and evaluate information from listening to a text and taking notes.

Gather and evaluate information by examining a Table of Livestock Exports.

Comprehend the policy of *laissez faire* in Ireland during the Great Irish Famine.
Describe the principles of the *laissez faire* policy and its impact on causes of the famine.

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

SS 4: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Study about major turning points in world history by investigating the causes and other factors that brought about change and the results of these changes.

Explain the importance of analyzing narratives drawn from different times and places to understand historical events.

Define basic economic concepts such as scarcity, supply and demand, markets, opportunity costs, resources, productivity, economic growth, and systems.

Analyze the effectiveness of varying ways societies, nations, and regions of the world attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce resources.

Develop conclusions about economic issues and problems by creating broad statements which summarize findings and solutions.

Use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing, and categorizing information.

Make distinctions about the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas.

Select a focus, organization, and point of view for oral and written presentations.

Support interpretations and decisions about relative significance of information with explicit statement, evidence, and appropriate argument.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . analytical thinking
- . observe and conclude
- . reflective thinking
- . consult and interpret databases
- . take and defend positions
- . view information from a variety of perspectives
- . identify premises and rationale for points of view
- . participate in interpersonal and group activities
- . reflect upon content/form opinions
- . consult and interpret primary sources
- . make generalizations
- . take effective notes

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Mathematics

Economics

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Copy the chart in learning experience #3 on the board.

1. Ask students to take notes as they listen to the following passage from Mary E. Daly's *The Famine in Ireland* about the matter of food exported from Ireland during the Great Irish Famine:

On the eve of the famine Ireland exported a considerable amount of grain. Peter M. Solar has estimated that the pre-famine food exports could feed an average of one million to one and one-quarter million people at English standards of consumption. The continuing export of grain during the famine years is a topic which has given rise to considerable nationalist criticism. John Mitchel alleged that every ship bringing relief supplies of grain into Ireland during the famine was likely to meet six ships leaving the country laden with grain. P.M.A. Bourke's figures suggest, however, that the grain exports of 1846 totaled approximately 285,000 tons, the food equivalent of slightly more than one million tons of potatoes, while the potato shortfall in that year was "well over ten times that figure." Imports during the ten months from September 1846 to June 1847 were about five times the volume of exports, totaling 659,000 tons, and on Bourke's estimates would have had the equivalent food value of approximately two and one-half million tons of potatoes, or one-quarter of what was needed. Total supplies of grain and potatoes were therefore inadequate; exports were much exceeded by imports, though food exports were concentrated in the autumn of 1846, imports in the period from December, 1846 and the early months of 1847. Had the food exported during the autumn of 1846 been kept in Ireland, Bourke says, it "could have made an appreciable contribution to bridging the starvation gap between the destruction of the potato crop in August and the arrival of the first maize cargoes in the following winter."

In addition to grain exports, livestock exports also continued during the famine years. Cattle exports rose steadily during the famine years but pig exports fell sharply because pigs were fed on potatoes. Few peasant families could afford to eat any quantity of meat even in normal years; pork and bacon were the meats normally eaten, beef was too expensive. The substitution of beef for potatoes would have been financially impossible and limits on livestock exports, or on grain exports, would probably have been counterproductive. Attempts to keep the food in Ireland by legislative decree would not have ensured that the food so held would have reached those most in need, while such restrictions would have probably deterred food imports. Ireland was short of food during the famine years and needed all possible imports. In fact, demands for controls on exports of food were negligible during the famine years.

In normal years most Irish families were virtually self-sufficient in potatoes and only a small proportion of the total crop entered into the commercial trade. The failure of the potato crop not only robbed families of their dietary mainstay, it also forced the Irish population to buy the bulk of their food rather than producing it themselves. Food had now to be acquired through cash transactions on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

2. Ask students to review and revise their notes with partners.

Then ask students to listen to the passage again and make further revisions to their notes.

With their partners or in groups, students should answer the following questions:

Why did nationalists (people who supported Irish independence from Great Britain—like John Mitchel) criticize the government’s export policy during the Great Irish Famine?

What figures does Daly give for the ratio of imported to exported food?

Daly quotes P.M.A. Bourke to suggest what would have happened if the food exported in the autumn of 1846 had been held in the country. What does Bourke say the results would have been?

Does Daly think government restrictions on food export would have been effective?

3. In partners or groups, students should examine Daly’s table:

TABLE OF LIVESTOCK EXPORTS DURING THE FAMINE YEARS

	1846	1847	1848	1849
Oxen, bulls, cows	186,483	189,960	196,042	201,811
Calves	6,363	9,992	7,086	9,831
Sheep, lambs	259,257	324,179	255,682	241,061
Swine	480,827	106,407	110,787	68,053

What do students notice about cattle exports? Daly says few peasant families could afford to eat meat even in good times. Why? Why did they raise cattle if they weren’t going to eat them? Why were more cattle sold as the years went on even though people were hungry? What did Daly say that would explain this?

What do students make of the increase in the sale of calves? Usually farmers fattened calves and then sold them. What might have happened during the famine years?

What do students notice about the figures for sheep and lambs? (Notice that sheep and lamb are grouped together.) There is a significant rise in 1847 and drop in 1848. Why?

Daly explained the fall in the number of pigs was due to the fact that pigs were fed on potato scraps. What did the fall in pig exports mean? Did less exports mean less pigs? If pigs were the usual source of meat for the Irish, what do the numbers suggest?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

At the end of the passage, Daly says the famine changed the rural Irish poor from food producers to food consumers. If food had to be acquired by cash, what did that mean for the Irish people during the famine? Write an analysis of the impact of suddenly needing to find other resources for food.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This matter of food export is part of a larger question: Was the Great Irish Famine an act of nature or an act of governmental leadership? The British government officials have been sharply criticized for their delayed and inadequate response to the Great Irish Famine. The most bitter criticism charges that the British let food leave the country while the poor starved, a charge that historian James S. Donnelly has identified as the basis of the nationalist charge of British genocide.

Christine Kinealy’s conclusion to *This Great Calamity* takes the nationalist position. Having pointed out the effectiveness of the embargo on the export of food during an earlier shortage (1782-84), Kinealy concludes:

There was no shortage of resources to avoid the tragedy of a Famine. Within Ireland itself, there were substantial resources of food, which, had the political will existed, could have been diverted, even as a short-term measure, to supply the starving people (359).

Her indictment of the government subscribes to Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s theory based on his work on the Indians famines of the 1940s that famines are not caused by food shortages but by access to food. He argues in *Development as Freedom* that functioning democracies do not know famine.

Kinealy’s position turn on the argument that there was sufficient food in the country to feed the Irish; other

contemporary famine historians accept the Peter Solar's data that demonstrates that Ireland's food production which was sufficient for between nine and one-half and 10 million people—more than enough for Ireland's some eight million—fell by about half during the famine (Daly 595). James S. Donnelly's analysis of the statistics for food imports and exports also challenges the genocide theory. He questions the nationalist interpretation of history in light of those primary sources that document the Great Irish Famine (27). His work suggests the importance of subjecting historical interpretation to the rigor of data analysis.

Mary Daly's analysis of Livestock Exports illustrates some of the complexity of the food export question, and the activity encourages students to scrutinize the issue carefully. Cormac O'Gráda's analysis of the Irish Grain Trade also addresses the complexity of the food scarcity question. He notes that "food imports dwarfed food exports, but in the months between the second potato failure of the summer of 1846 and the arrival of a poor quality, cheap substitute, maize [corn], in the spring of 1847, the story of 'perverse' food flows [food leaving Ireland] has some appeal" (123). O'Gráda's interpretation both describes the statistical overview of the grain trade during the famine years and locates the critical months of late 1846 when there was still a significant export of oats and the early months of 1847 before American corn arrived and suggests that the imbalance in those months contributed to the powerful image of food leaving a country of starving people. O'Gráda concludes: "A temporary embargo on grain exports coupled with restrictions or prohibitions on brewing and distilling" would have helped to alleviate suffering in the worst months of the famine (123-124).

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

For advanced students:

Using notes from the Daly passage and questions and at least two other sources, students can defend or challenge the government's *laissez faire* economic policy which allowed food to be exported as well as imported during the Great Irish Famine. Each student essay should have an introduction that describes the conditions of the Great Irish Famine, that explains the government's *laissez faire* policy and that states the writer's argument with data from the Daly essay and at least two other sources. The conclusion should restate the writer's main points and relate the question of food exports to the larger question of whether the Great Irish Famine was an act of nature or an act of governmental leadership.

Notice at the end of Daly's discussion of food exports she talks about the way the Great Irish Famine changed the Irish agricultural economy from one of self-sufficiency to one of commerce. Farmers whose potato crop made them self-sufficient had to find cash to buy food. Ask students to discuss what that change meant for farm households, for agricultural laborers and for the merchants who bought and sold food? (See also the activity on *Diverting Resources During the Great Irish Famine*.)

The Famine in Ireland

On the eve of the famine Ireland exported a considerable amount of grain. Peter M. Solar has estimated that the pre-famine food exports could feed an average of one million to one and one-quarter million people at English standards of consumption. The continuing export of grain during the famine years is a topic which has given rise to considerable nationalist criticism. John Mitchel alleged that every ship bringing relief supplies of grain into Ireland during the famine was likely to meet six ships leaving the country laden with grain. P.M.A. Bourke's figures suggest, however, that the grain exports of 1846 totaled approximately 285,000 tons, the food equivalent of slightly more than one million tons of potatoes, while the potato shortfall in that year was "well over ten times that figure." Imports during the ten months from September 1846 to June 1847 were about five times the volume of exports, totaling 659,000 tons, and on Bourke's estimates would have had the equivalent food value of approximately two and one-half million tons of potatoes, or one-quarter of what was needed. Total supplies of grain and potatoes were therefore inadequate; exports were much exceeded by imports, though food exports were concentrated in the autumn of 1846, imports in the period from December 1846 and the early months of 1847. Had the food exported during the autumn of 1846 been kept in Ireland it "could have made an appreciable contribution to bridging the starvation gap between the destruction of the potato crop in August and the arrival of the first maize cargoes in the following winter."

In addition to grain exports, livestock exports also continued during the famine years. Cattle exports rose steadily during the famine years but pig exports fell sharply because pigs were fed on potatoes. Few peasant families could afford to eat any quantity of meat even in normal years; pork and bacon were the meats normally eaten, beef was too expensive. The substitution of beef for potatoes would have been financially impossible and limits on livestock exports, or on grain exports, would probably have been counterproductive. Attempts to keep the food in Ireland by legislative decree would not have ensured that the food so held would have reached those most in need, while such restrictions would have probably deterred food imports. Ireland was short of food during the famine years and needed all possible imports. In fact, demands for controls on exports of food were negligible during the famine years.

In normal years most Irish families were virtually self-sufficient in potatoes and only a small proportion of the total crop entered into the commercial trade. The failure of the potato crop not only robbed families of their dietary mainstay, it also forced the Irish population to buy the bulk of their food rather than producing it themselves. Food had now to be acquired through cash transactions on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

Source: Mary E. Daly. *The Famine in Ireland*. Dundalk: Dublin Historical Association, 1986. pp. 56-57.
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Interpretations of the Great Irish Famine: Written and Visual

BACKGROUND

Artists Erskine Nichols and Lady Elizabeth Butler saw first-hand the consequences of evictions of tenants during the Great Irish Famine (1845-52) and during the Land War (1879-82) which followed another period of disastrous potato harvests (1877-79). Both Nichols and Butler painted pictures of evicted tenants. While the official art establishment did not welcome such frank painting, the painters felt compelled to record what they saw in rural Ireland. Asenath Nicolson, an American relief worker, wrote down her observations of the impact of the famine.

In this activity, students will compare written and visual interpretations of eviction during the Great Irish Famine.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

An Ejected Family

Evicted

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Kelleher, Margaret. *The Feminization of Famine*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1997.

Kennedy, Brian P. *Irish Painting*. Dublin: Town House, 1993.

Marshall, Catherine. *Irish Art Masterpieces*. New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1994.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

Describe and compare the impact of a painting and of a written passage about eviction during the Great Irish Famine.

Describe how the art of a period contributes to an understanding of a country's social history.

Analyze works of art depicting eviction.

Create a storyboard of a series of events related to eviction.

STANDARDS

ELA 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the world.

Arts 3: Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought. (Visual Arts)

Arts 4: Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society. (Visual Arts)

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments in world history by analyzing their literature, diary accounts, letters, artifacts, art, music, architectural drawings, and other documents.

Discuss and write their analysis and interpretations of their own works of art and the art of others, using appropriate critical language.

Demonstrate how art works and artifacts from diverse world cultures reflect aspects of those cultures.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . observe and conclude
- . reflective thinking
- . view information from a variety of perspectives
- . reflect upon content/form opinions
- . compare and contrast various mediums

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Arts

English Language Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Ask students to describe what is happening in each painting. What is their response to the paintings? What elements in the paintings are most striking to the viewer? Do the paintings stir any emotion in students? What stirs students more: the statistic that more than 65,000 families were evicted between 1846 and 1851 or the paintings? What makes visual images so powerful?

2. Read aloud the following passage:

During the Great Irish Famine, an American relief worker wrote this eye-witness account of evicted tenants near Newport, Co. Mayo:

Perhaps no instance does the impression of the poor and the sighing of the needy come before the mind so vividly as when going over the places made desolate by the Famine; to see the tumbled cabins, with the poor hapless inmates who had for years sat around their turf fire, and ate their potatoes together; now lingering and oft' times wailing in despair; their ragged barefoot little ones clinging about them, one on the back of the weeping mother, and the father looking in silent despair, while a part of them are scraping among the rubbish to gather some little relic of mutual attachment (for the poor, dear reader, have their tender remembrances); then, in a flock, take their solitary, their pathless way to seek some rock or ditch to camp supperless for the night, without covering for the head or the feet, with not the remnant of a blanket to spread over them in the ditch where they must crawl.

Asenath Nicholson, *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*. Maureen Murphy, ed. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998. Used with permission of The Lilliput Press, Dublin, Ireland.

Ask the students: What are the similarities between Asenath Nicholson's account of the Newport eviction and "An Evicted Family" and "Evicted?" What details are most poignant to readers? What can a writer do that a painter cannot do? Notice how Nicholson can represent motion, people are moving around in her account; they are not static. She also moves between past ("inmates who had for years sat around their turf fire"), present ("weeping mother and the father looking on in silent despair"), and the future

(“to camp supperless for the night”). Could an artist represent past/present/future? Does a story book with panels that tells a story do this? Ask students to make at least six panels of Nicholson’s description of the Newport eviction.

3. How do the paintings and the text present gender? Are women represented differently than men? How are children represented?
4. In her book, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?*, Margaret Kelleher observes that literary descriptions are more graphic than drawings, and that paintings of human suffering show expressions of anguish and ragged clothes but not any clinical representation of starvation. In other words, the figures are too well fed. Verbal accounts, on the other hand, are far more frank in their description of starvation. Is that observation true for the Nichols and Butler paintings? Why is there a difference?

Examining the visual and verbal images of famine in the Great Irish Famine and in the Bengali famine in India in 1943-44, Kelleher concluded that images of female suffering carry helplessness and hopelessness in their meaning, that they express the inexpressible, and that they become a metaphor for the grieving country.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

What is the difference between the way famine victims are depicted in writing and in graphic representation? Describe the ways that the study of these paintings adds to their understanding of evictions in Ireland in the nineteenth century.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This is a follow up activity to what Erskine Nichols’ *An Ejected Family* (1853) and Lady Elizabeth Butler’s *Evicted* (1890) tell us about evictions in Ireland in the nineteenth century. Teachers also may want to use this activity with *Wave of Evictions*.



An Ejected Family

Source: Erskine Nichol.

Used with permission of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin.



Evicted

Source: Lady Butler.

Used with permission of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin.

Wave of Evictions

BACKGROUND

A *push* factor in Irish emigration during the Great Irish famine was eviction, the legal process of recovering land or property from those who occupy but do not own it. Famine evictions were especially cruel because those evicted were suffering from hunger and/or famine-related disease.

Why were people evicted? Some evictions were carried out so landlords could clear their lands of smaller farms—some less than five acres—in order to have fewer, more efficient holdings. Some landlords evicted tenants because they themselves were in debt and had to raise cash. Other simply cleared their lands of those tenants who were unable to pay their rents.

The eviction picture was further complicated by the tenants, sub-tenants, cottiers, and laborers who were evicted by farmers and middle-men who leased land from the landlord and then sub-divided it themselves. As conditions became more desperate, bonds of community and kinship became frayed and there were even cases of the neighbors turning out neighbors.

Whatever the reason, evictions have a special horror for the Irish. The topic of laws about land ownership became the most important post-Famine issue, and was settled only with legislation that introduced land purchase for tenants (Wyndham Act, 1903).

Using court records and police reports, Tim P. O’Neill has concluded that 140,835 families were served with eviction notices between 1846 and 1848 and 47,511 were actually evicted between 1849 and 1854 (total families: 188,346). Using the measure of five persons per family, O’Neill estimated the number of persons represented as 974,930 (O’Neill 40).

Teachers may want to refer to the activity *British Famine Relief Policy: Moral Challenges to Civil Law*.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

The Ejectment

Letter from Daniel Mullarkey

Evictions in Ballykilcline

John Costello’s Account of his Eviction

Excerpt from *Famine*

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daly, Mary E. *The Famine In Ireland*. Dundalk: Dublin Historical Society, 1986. pp. 109-113.

“Expulsion of Tenantry,” “Extermination in Roscommon,” “Evictions of Peasantry in Ireland,” “Conditions in Ireland,” in John Killen, ed. *The Famine Decade*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1995. pp. 151, 190-191, 206-207, 231-233.

O’Gráda, Cormac. *Black ‘47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy and Memory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

O’Neill, Tim P. “Famine Evictions,” in Carla King, ed. *Famine, Land and Culture in Ireland*. Dublin: University College, Dublin Press, 2000. pp. 29-58.

Swords, Liam. *In Their Own Words: The Famine in North Connacht 1845-1849*. Blackrock: Columba Press, 1999. pp. 150, 286, 331, 350, 389-90.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Comprehend the impact of evictions during the Great Irish Famine.

Trace how the Great Irish Famine led to evictions and homelessness, using primary sources.

Write dramatic monologues based on the engraving “The Ejectment.”

Understand how eviction or the threat of eviction became one of the “push” factors for emigration.

STANDARDS

SS 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

ELA1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

ELA 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for response and expression.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.

Study about major turning points in world history by investigating the causes and other factors that brought about change and the results of these changes.

Analyze the roles and contributions of individuals and groups to social, political, economic, cultural, and religious practices and activities.

View history through the eyes of those who witnessed key events and developments, in world history, by analyzing their literature, diary accounts, letters, artifacts, music, architectural drawings, and other documents.

Synthesize information from diverse sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information.

Make perceptive and well developed connections to prior knowledge.

Develop information with appropriate supporting materials, such as facts, details, illustrative examples or anecdotes, and exclude extraneous material.

Write stories, poems, literary essays, and plays that observe the conventions of the genre and contain interesting and effective language and voice.

Write original pieces in a variety of literary forms, correctly using the conventions of the genre and using structure and vocabulary to achieve an effect.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- . analytical thinking
- . probe ideas and assumptions
- . present information
- . participate in interpersonal and group activities
- . communicate results of research and projects
- . interpret information and data
- . acquire and organize information
- . make decisions about process

- . reflect upon content
- . form opinions
- . consult and interpret primary sources
- . utilize multiple resources in research

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

Drama

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Using court records, Tim O’Neill has given the following numbers of families served with eviction notices between 1846 and 1848:

1846	19,704
1847	51,232
1848	69,899

Ask students to calculate the total number of families evicted between 1846 and 1848. These numbers represent the number of evictions counted in the *official* records. There were still other evictions that were not recorded. Students will make graphs showing the percentage of evictions in each year between 1846 and 1848. What do they notice about the pattern of these numbers? O’Neill’s study of police records reveals that 47,511 were evicted in the period from 1849 to 1854. The government regarded the Great Irish Famine as “over” by 1849. Do you agree or disagree that the famine was “over” by 1849? Why? Why not?

2. Working in groups, students can write dramatic dialogues based on the engraving “The Ejectment.” A student narrator can set the scene and each student can speak in turn representing the figures in the engraving: landlord, tenant, soldier, neighbor. (See the activity *Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Blight.*)

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

The handouts provide additional information and impressions of the evictions. Included are The Parish Priest of Kiltimagh’s letter to the *Freeman’s Journal*, John Costello’s account of his eviction in Galway, Robert James Scally’s report of an eviction in Roscommon, and Liam O’Flaherty’s fictional account in his novel *Famine*. John Millington Synge’s description of an eviction on Inishmaan in 1898 will demonstrate to students that evictions continued on after the Great Irish Famine.

What elements are present in each account? Do the tenants seem surprised that they could be put out and their houses destroyed? If so, why?

TEACHER REFLECTION

This is an opportunity for students to consider the circumstances under which people are evicted from their homes today. What are steps that a landlord must take to evict a tenant? What recourse does the tenant have against eviction?

Ask students whether there are any similarities between the eviction policy in Ireland and people displaced by urban gentrification.



Source: Noel Kissane, *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*.
Dublin: The National Library of Ireland, 1995.
Used with permission of the author and the National Library of Ireland.

Letter from Daniel Mullarkey
Parish Priest of Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo
to the editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, June 22, 1848:

On the 14th instant, the sheriff with a strong force of police, arrived in the townland of Treenagleragh, parish of Killedan, Co. Mayo, with strict orders from the landlord, Lord Lucan, to execute the law by evicting the poor inhabitants. The townland is now made the theatre of many a melancholy and heartrending scene. The whole townland, I may say, presents the appearance of a battlefield the day before the fight—nothing to be seen but the shattered ruins of what were so lately the abodes of men. No less than 33 families, numbering in all one hundred and forty-five human beings, have been thrown on the world. It would be impossible for me, Sir, to give you a full and fair description of the wretched and deplorable condition of these unfortunate creatures, stretched along ditches and hedges—many of them children and decrepit old parents—falling victims to cold and hunger and destitution.

Source: Liam Swords. ed. *In Their Own Words. The Famine in North Connacht. 1845-1849*. Blackrock: Columba Press, 1999. pp. 331. Used with permission of Columba Press.

Evictions in Ballykilcline, Co. Roscommom, 1947

This passage from Robert James Scally's *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine and Emigration* describes the famine and eviction in the townland of Ballykilcline, Co. Roscommon. It suggests some of the complexities of land tenancy: "rightful tenants," "dependents," "squatters." "Rightful" Ballykilcline tenants were offered assisted emigration to North America aboard the *Virginus*. It was a "coffin ship." Of the 500 passengers who left Liverpool, 158 died en route and the rest were deathly sick when they arrived at Quebec's Grosse Isle.

Evictions were served on all the occupants (excepting Patrick Maguire and the Reverend Thomas Lloyd) in May of that year, along with a proclamation of the Crown's offer of free passage to America for all those who were willing to leave the country. Those who were unable to establish their identity as rightful tenants, like the landless laborers Geelan, McGanne, and Costello, or the "dependents" unrecorded in the rent rolls (including some women and children whose head of household had died of hunger or fever), would also be removed from the land without the option to emigrate at the Crown expense. At least twenty-two longtime residents of the townland fell into this category, as well as an unknown number of landless laborers "lodging" or squatting on the lands who disappear from the record at this point. Those of them without kin in the area with the means to take them in would have had little choice but to apply to the lethally overcrowded poorhouses, where thousands died and uncounted others from the countryside were seen to wait for weeks before their doors.

The panic that may have been lacking in their earlier fears of eviction began to show itself in the spring of 1847, though probably not because of the proclamation [eviction notice] alone. They had been served notice before and had remained. Rumors of all kind had circulated in the past about the landlord's intentions, that payment of one or two years' arrears would satisfy Knox [the Crown agent], that only those who led the strike would be forced to go, that only some would have to leave while others who could provide "security" (which they understood as testimony of "good will") would remain on holdings of twenty acres or more. But rumor became knowledge during May, when the first "batch" of Mahon's tenants, 490 of their neighbors and kin, were evicted and gathered in Strokestown to begin the journey by cart and foot to the Dublin ferries, eventually to board the *Virginus*. The ship's fate would not become known till August, but to witness the mass eviction and departure of their neighbors, the scene that incited Father McDermott's incendiary outburst from the pulpit [a denunciation of the evictions], must have frozen all illusions of landlord bluff or last-minute help from the law.

Source: Robert James Scally. *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine and Emigration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. pp.107-108. *Virginus*, p. 39. Reprinted with permission of Oxford University Press.

John Costello's Account of his Eviction
From his Cabin near Inverin, Co. Galway, on New Year's Eve, 1847

He threw my children out in the street; one of them was sick at the time. Her name was Anne. She died last week; she was near five at the time. Coleman, my son, died Friday last, aged ten years. He died from cold and hardship. My house was completely destroyed, and it was near dusk when it was thrown down. Myself and my family had to sleep in the open air.. It was raining and snowing that night and it blew very hard. My wife and remaining child are now lying sick...in a hovel I made for them against the ruins of the house. When my child Coleman died, there was over six inches of water about him.

Source: Thomas P. O'Neill. "From Famine to Near Famine, 1845-1879," *Studia Hibernica* I (1961), pp. 163. Permission pending.

Excerpt from *Famine* Chapter XXXIV

Chadwick had no difficulty in getting an order of seizure and ejection from the assistant barrister at Sessions who made a decree, under the Ejection Act of 1815, against all Major Thompson's tenants whose rent was under twenty pounds and who failed to meet their demand notes. The law was made so convenient for the landowners that Mr. Chadwick's word sufficed to procure the decree. Forthwith, he hired a gang of ruffians in Clogher, procured a large force of armed police and marched into Black Valley on horseback, accompanied by his bailiff, also mounted. I must remark at this point that Colonel Bodkin did everything in his power to dissuade Chadwick from this course, but Chadwick told the Colonel to "go to Hell." Whereupon, the colonel said he was no better than a common ruffian and the two of them would have come to blows on the road from Clogher if they had not been prevented by some people who happened to be present at the altercation.

Chadwick divided his forces at the mouth of the Valley, sending one part into Glenaree, to prevent the inhabitants hiding their stock while he was engaged in the Black Valley. Then he marched his men quickly up the Valley, planting sentries at various points, intending to begin operations among the sheep men at the far end. In spite of the early hour and the speed with which he moved, the people were warned of his approach by the barking of dogs. When he arrived at the hamlet of the sheep men, there was not a soul there other than women and children. All the males had fled into the mountains to drive their sheep away to safety among the northern regions. They had often outwitted the landlord's men in this way, but Chadwick had no intention of being outwitted.

Halting before the first cabin in the hamlet, which happened to be that of Halloran, the man whom Patch Hernon had struck with a stone, he asked for the tenant.

"He's not in, sir," said Halloran's wife who stood before the door with a child in her arms.

"Where is he?" said Chadwick.

The woman remained silent.

"What have they got?" said Chadwick to Hegarty, the bailiff. "Five sheep, eight lambs and a goat with two kids," said the bailiff. "They had a donkey too, but he died on them this winter."

"They're lost, sir," said the woman in a sing-song voice. "The sheep and the goat are lost on the mountain. Himself is out to look for them. We have nothing else at all, sir. The praties rotted on us. We hadn't enough for the sowing, not to mind pigs."

"Can you produce those animals or not?" cried Chadwick.

"Sure, we have no animals," said the woman, "only the sheep and goat that are lost on the mountain. I have five children, sir."

"You may keep the children," said Chadwick. "As you owe me some rent and you have nothing to pay it with, I'm going to evict you. Get your personal belongings out of this hut. Get going."

When the horrified woman realized that she was going to be evicted and that the rowdies with the crowbars were advancing to demolish her hut, she uttered a wild shriek and threw herself at Chadwick's feet. The child began to wail. Chadwick moved away from her and shouted: "Come along, you men. Make a quick job of it."

Another woman standing in a yard near by cried out:

"God have mercy on us! We're going to be evicted."

"Every blasted one of you," said Chadwick, "unless you produce those sheep."

As the rowdies began to batter down the walls of Halloran's hut with their crowbars, the women of the hamlet gathered in a distant yard and began to whisper. Chadwick smiled as he watched them and whispered to Hegarty:

"You just watch, Hegarty. I bet those sheep will appear in no time."

He was right. The women presently began to call out to their men on the mountain, uttering their peculiar mountain cry:

"Hooyah! Hooyah! Hooyah!"

Men appeared on the crags above. The women then changed their cry to a long-drawn wail which resembled the bleating of sheep. They rocked themselves and scattered stones about the yard from the fences to indicate that Chadwick was threatening to evict them. The men answered with a wild shout and then their voices could be heard calling their sheep up above.

“Chowen! Chowen! Chowen!”

The cry re-echoed through the mountain caverns.

“Hold your hand, sir,” said Hegarty running up to Chadwick. “They are going to bring the sheep.”

“Carry on, men,” said Chadwick to the rowdies who had paused at Hegarty’s words. “Down with the hovel. Swing your bars. I’ll show those ruffians they can’t fool me.”

“Ma-ah!” came the bleating of sheep from the mountains.

A cry of horror rose from the assembled women as the doorway and a large part of the front of the cabin came down in a heap. The thatch sank in the middle. Then the chimney wall crumbled up and fell. Mrs. Halloran, foolish with misery, gathered her five children about her in the yard beside the miserable bed that had been thrown out. She tried to cover the children with a ragged blanket.

“Who owns that hovel in the next yard?” said Chadwick.

“Patch Herson, sir,” said Hegarty. “There is no one living in it. That share of land is idle.”

“Down with it in any case,” said Chadwick. “I’ll clean out the vermin. Swing those bars.”

Source: Liam O’Flaherty. *Famine*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1984. pp. 259-262. Used with permission of the publisher.

- . take and defend positions
- . view information from a variety of perspectives
- . ask and answer logical questions
- . identify premises and rationale for points of view
- . communicate results of research and projects
- . synthesize information
- . consult and interpret primary sources
- . identify patterns and themes

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Ask students to examine the United Nations definition of genocide and the Document Packet (see handouts). Ask them to start thinking about the question: Was British policy in Ireland During the Great Irish Famine an Example of Genocide?

Divide the students into work groups that will examine the primary source documents. Ask students to look at British policy during the Great Irish Famine and compare it with two twentieth-century events that resulted in the high mortality of particular peoples: Armenia, the European Holocaust, Bosnia, Rwanda, or East Timor. They are to conduct thorough research, using print, media, electronic, and primary sources. Which event(s) meet the requirement of the United Nations definition?

Put the following chart on the board and ask students to complete the chart with supporting evidence that they have found in their research:

Characteristics of genocide:	Great Irish Famine	Country Example 1	Country Example 2
Intention to destroy a particular group			
Collective act			
Extermination is carefully organized			
Individual deaths are intentional			
Individuals are killed only for reasons of ethnicity			

2. Review the handout on demographic dialogue, *Promoting Student Dialogues on Genocide*. Ask students to review materials on the Great Irish Famine, with particular emphasis on the causes of the famine and the responses of the government to the famine. Students are to review the material to determine whether they believe that the famine was an act of nature or an act of genocide. They should be prepared to support their conclusions, and should be able to recognize biases and purposes of some of the writings (particularly primary sources).

Students should join work groups based on their personal conclusion.

The work groups should prepare opening and closing statements, and should begin preparing their positions for the democratic dialogue.

3. Students begin the democratic dialogue with their opening statements (one per group). Set a time limit for the opening statements. After the opening round of statements, students caucus in their groups to prepare rebuttals. After the round of rebuttal statements, Work groups caucus again to update their

concluding statements.

4. After the round of concluding statements, the class should discuss what they have learned from the process. (Encourage students to respond with positive comments about the speakers, but not to view the discussion as an opportunity to critique presentations.) Emphasis in the discussion should be on the following questions:

What points were made that confirmed your point of view—or changed your mind?

Were there points made by the other groups that your group did not consider?

Did additional points occur to you when you listened to all of the presentations?

How did the process help you to understand how decisions are made about governmental policy?

Did you find it was difficult to decide the “right” answer? What other information would help you to decide?

What else would you like to know if you were an historian writing a paper that expressed your views on the subject?

How did your group respond if you could not reach consensus?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Use the data from the democratic dialogue handout to answer the document-based essay question: Was British Policy in Ireland during the Great Irish Famine an act of genocide?

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity was field-tested with a ninth-grade law elective class at the Law Government and Community Service Magnet High School, South Ozone Park, Queens, New York, and in a twelfth grade government class. Students found that the chart shown in the Learning Experience was a useful way to organize their research. Experience with this activity and with the famine dialogues suggested that students’ analysis of the Great Irish Famine recognize that the question of genocide and the Great Irish Famine is a complex one because the United Nations definition requires the demonstration of intentionality. Students spent a lot of their discussion time talking about how to frame language to charge responsible people with failure to act or to act appropriately.