Was The Great Irish Famine an Act of Nature?

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British Famine Relief Policy: A Moral Challenge to Civil Law

BACKGROUND

There are many examples of cases when individuals have been faced with the choice between civil law and moral law. Consider: Antigone burying her brother and violating Creon's orders,Thoreau going to jail rather than pay the poll tax, abolitionists helping slaves escape on the underground railroad, rescuers sheltering Jews in Germany during the European Holocaust, African Americans violating Jim Crow laws in the south. How does one decide what to do? What principles are involved in making such a decision? This activity focuses on one such moral dilemma. It concerns the delivery of relief supplies to starving people in the west of Ireland and the question of whether relief officers should feed the starving directly, or follow the government order that food be taken to a central supply depot.

The British government official in charge of famine policy was Charles Edward Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. From his office in Westminster (London), he decided the British government would buy American Indian corn only once and that it would be stored in British Army depots in Ireland where it would be sold to the poor.

Sir Randolph Routh was the British Army officer in charge of the food depots in Ireland. He realized the amount of Indian corn stored in the food depots was not enough to relieve hunger in Ireland, and in 1846 he begged Trevelyan to authorize the government to purchase additional corn, enough to see the poor through the summer of 1846 until the next potato crop was ready for harvest. Trevelyan refused. By the end of June 1846, the corn stored in the food depots in Ireland was almost gone.

Woodham-Smith's anecdote about the *Eliza* describes the intervention of Sir James Dombrain, Inspector-General of the Coast Guard Service, who had served with Routh on the Relief Commission for Ireland.

Teachers may want to refer to the activities *The Irish Poor Law, Famine Food: American Indian Corn,* and *Making History Come Alive Through Dramatization.*

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Excerpt from *The Great Hunger*

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daly, Mary E. "The Operation of Famine Relief, 1845-1857," in Cathal Póirtéir, *The Irish Famine*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995, pp.123-134.

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.

Great Famine chapters in *A New History of Ireland,*V, Part 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

O'Gráda, Cormac. "Relief," *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press,1999, pp 47-76.

O'Neill, Thomas P. "The Organization and Administration of Relief, 1845-52," in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds. *The Great Famine*. Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1962.

Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Great Hunger*. New York: Harper, 1962.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Describe the conditions of famine and related relief policies.

Consider famine relief policies and write a letter of opinion.

Produce literary interpretations (letters) that draw on the handouts and the literary conventions of the time of the Great Irish Famine.

Write a letter in the character of Sir James Dombrain addressed the Charles Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, the man responsible for famine relief policy.

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 associate 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 though 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.

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

ELA 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

Analyze different interpretations of important events and themes in world history and explain the various frames of reference expressed by different historians.

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

Explain how societies and nations attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce capital, natural, and human resources.

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

Compare and synthesize information from different sources.

Make perceptive and well-developed connections to prior knowledge.

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

Analyze, interpret, and evaluate information, ideas, organization, and language from academic and nonacademic texts, such as textbooks, public documents, book and movie reviews, and editorials.

Read and discuss published letters, diaries, and journals to learn the conventions of social writing.

Make effective use of language and style to connect the message with the audience and context.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- analytical thinking
- observe and conclude
- think rationally about content
- take and defend positions
- identify premises and rationale for points of view
- set up hypotheses and alternative courses of action
- interpret information
- form opinions

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Distribute the handout of the excerpt from *The Great Hunger* that explains the British government's policy about how they would distribute American corn imported to feed the hungry Irish poor. (Share the Background information given in this activity.) Ask students:

Routh begged Trevelyan to purchase additional Indian meal. Why do you think that Trevelyan refused to buy more Indian corn? Why then do you think that Routh complained to Trevelyan about Dombrain's actions?

What would you have done if you had been Sir James Dombrain?

What does it mean to *advocate* for a cause? What barriers did Dombrain run into when he tried to advocate for the people with the officer at the Westport depot?

How do you think that Trevelyan responded to Sir Ralph Routh's complaints about Dombrain? Has Dombrain's action caused Trevelyan to reflect on his relief policy?

2. Ask students to find out more about the British government's Irish famine relief policy. Using the handout, write a letter from Dombrain to Trevelyan. Defend your action of pressuring the officer at the food depot at Westport to give meal to the starving and diverting the shipment of meal to the Killeries. As Dombrain, make some suggestions about relief to the poor. For example, do students agree with Routh's plea for additional meal?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Write an essay in response to the following question:

Sir James Dombrain made a personal decision that he considered to be a moral decision, even though his decision went against the policies of his government (and employer). Do you believe he did the right thing? Was he in a position to decide how the victims of the Great Irish Famine should be fed? Should he have left the decisions up to the leaders of his government, realizing that they may have more information and more influence? Should he have maintained his own personal principles? Explain your response, giving examples.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity, the first of a two-part series based on the *Eliza* episode, has worked well when field tested. Students compared the British famine policy to the welfare policies of other governments. Students have also used the British famine policy to look at government relief efforts in current catastrophic situations (e.g., the 1999 Turkish earthquake).

The Great Hunger

Describing the suffering in the west, Cecil Woodham-Smith wrote:

The revenue cutter Eliza, making a visit of inspection, on June 22, to the Killeries, a wild district of mountain and deep ocean inlets in the far west, was implored for food by a boat-load of skeletons. The Commissariat officer at Westport, supply center for the Killeries, had been instructed to send no more meal to the region because the depot (at Westport) was becoming empty.

One man, stated the officer in command, was lying on the bottom of the boat, unable to stand and already half dead, the others with emaciated faces and prominent, staring eyeballs, were evidently in an advanced state of starvation. The officer reported to Sir James Dombrain, Inspector-General of the Coast Guard Service, who had served on relief during the famine of 1839, and Sir James Dombrain, “very inconveniently,” wrote Routh, “interfered.” He "prevailed" on an officer at the Westport depot to issue meal, which he gave away free; he also "prevailed" on the captain of the government steamship Rhadamanthus, to take 100 tons of meal, intended for Westport, to the Coast Guard Station at the Killeries. “The Coast Guard with all their zeal and activity are too lavish,” wrote Routh to Trevelyan.

Source: Cecil Woodham-Smith. *The Great Hunger*. New York: Harper, 1962. p 85.

How History Becomes Poetry: Making Poems From Prose

BACKGROUND

Poetry can be an intense language, capturing not only historical events, but the feelings associated with those events. This activity involves students responding to the poem "For the Commander of the Eliza," as well as using the images of the historical context (the Great Irish Famine) to create poetry.

For background information, teachers should refer to the Background section of the activity *British Famine Relief Policy: A Moral Challenge to Civil Law*, and the handout that is an excerpt from Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger*. The handout should be shared with the students to provide them with an understanding of the events that led up to the writing of the poem *For the Commander of the Eliza.*

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

For the Commander of the Eliza

The Great Hunger

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daly, Mary E. "The Operation of Famine Relief, 1845-1857," in Cathal Póirtéir, *The Irish Famine*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995, pp.123-134.

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.

"Administration of Relief 1847-1851," *A New History of Ireland*, V, Part 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 194-306, 316-331.

O'Gráda, Cormac. "Relief," *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy and Memory.* Princeton: Princeton University Press,1999, pp 47-76.

O'Neill, Thomas P. "The Organization and Administration of Relief, 1845-52," in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds. *The Great Famine*. Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1962, pp. 209-259.

Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Great Hunger*. New York: Harper, 1962.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Analyze how a poem can capture historical events and the emotional effects of the events.

Critique a poem based on a variety of criteria (e.g., use of language, tone, and other literary elements).

Compare texts from two genres (an historical text and a poem) based on an historical moment in Irish history.

Write a poem in response to Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger* excerpt.

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 associate 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 though 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.

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

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

Analyze different interpretations of important events and themes in world history and explain the various frames of reference expressed by different historians.

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

Explain how societies and nations attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce capital, natural, and human resources.

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

Compare and synthesize information from different sources.

Make perceptive and well-developed connections to prior knowledge.

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

Analyze, interpret, and evaluate information, ideas, organization, and language from academic and nonacademic texts, such as textbooks, public documents, book and movie reviews, and editorials.

Read and discuss published letters, diaries, and journals to learn the conventions of social writing.

Make effective use of language and style to connect the message with the audience and context.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Read the handout that is an excerpt from *The Great Hunger* aloud. Read it a second time asking students to list in a column the words that strike them as especially vivid. Students will use their lists, and perhaps a few additional words they might wish to add, to compose a pyramid poem:

line one: noun

line two: two adjectives

line three: three verb forms (ran, jumped, slid—running, jumping, sliding)

line four: short question/answer or two short statements

skeletons
emaciated, half-dead,
staring, imploring, starving
Give grain? That would be much too lavish.

Ask students to explain the reasons for the word choices.

2. Ask students to review the handouts *The Great Hunger* and Seamus Heaney's poem, "For the Commander of the Eliza." Ask the students:

How has Heaney used Woodham-Smith's text to create his poem?

Who is speaking in the text?

Who is speaking in the poem?

What does the speaker describe?

Heaney has turned Woodham-Smith's text into a narrative told from the point of view of the officer in charge of the cutter *Eliza*. Not only does Heaney create a *persona,* he invests that *persona* with a moral position. What position does commander of the *Eliza* take?

3. Poetry is an intense language. How does Heaney intensify the horrific language of the Woodham-Smith text? Which images are especially striking?

How does Seamus Heaney use an historical text to create his poem "For the Commander of the Eliza?" Consider theme, imagery and form.

4. The episode about the cutter *Eliza* offered three choices to the officer. He can follow orders and ignore the human suffering around him; he can follow orders and let his superior know about the suffering, or he can disregard orders and give food where it is needed. Ask students what they would have done. (See the Activity *British Famine Relief: A Moral Challenge to Civil Law* for further information on how to discuss the moral dilemma provided by the handouts.)

5. Discuss how Seamus Heaney uses an historical text to create his poem. Consider theme, imagery, and form.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

As the officer in charge of the *Eliza*, you have witnessed a horror: a boatload of starving men pleading for food. You feel you must obey orders to not give away grain again, but you write to your superior Sir James Dombrain, Inspector-General of the Coast Guards, to tell him about conditions in the Killeries. What do you say? What message do you want to get across? What moral dilemmas might you deliberate? Notice how effectively Heaney uses simile in his poem. Use some similes in your letter.

TEACHER REFLECTION

The pyramid poem exercise involves careful listening and an appreciation of the vivid language of poetry. The pyramid template requires students to concentrate on images that may be auditory (heard), gustatory (tasted), olfactory (smelled), tactile (touched), or visual (seen).

Ask students how social class affects perception. How does the commander view the men in the boat? What language does he use to describe them? Why does he call the men *brutes*? Is he referring to their physical situation or their social class (poor Irish countrymen).

In field trials where students wrote their pyramid poems before doing this activity, and after hearing the Woodham-Smith excerpt, they were delighted to find that they shared their choices of vivid images (staring eyeballs) with a Nobel Laureate!

For the Commander of the Eliza

....the others, with emaciated faces and prominent, staring eyeballs, were evidently in an advanced state of starvation. The officer reported to Sir James Dombrain...and Sir James, 'very inconveniently,' wrote Routh, 'interfered.'

Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*

Routine patrol off West Mayo; sighting
A rowboat heading unusually far
Beyond the creek, I tacked and hailed the crew
In Gaelic. Their stroke had clearly weakened
As they pulled to, from guilt or bashfulness
I was conjecturing when, O my sweet Christ,
We saw piled in the bottom of their craft
Six grown men with gaping mouths and eyes
Bursting the sockets like spring onions in drills.
Six wrecks of bone and pallid, tautened skin.
'Bia, bia,
Bia.' In whines and snarls their desperation
rose and fell like a flock of starving gulls.
We'd known about the shortage but on board
They always kept us right with flour and beef
So understand my feelings, and the men's,
Who had no mandate to relieve distress
Since relief was then available in Westport—
Though clearly these poor brutes would never make it.
I had to refuse food: they cursed and howled
Like dogs that had been kicked hard in the privates.
When they drove at me with their starboard oar
(Risking capsize themselves) I saw they were
Violent and without hope. I hoisted
And cleared off. Less incidents the better.

Next day, like six bad smells, those living skulls
Drifted through the dark of bunks and hatches
And once in port I exorcised my ship
Reporting all to the Inspector General.
Sir James, I understand, urged free relief
For famine victims in the Westport Sector
And earned tart reprimand from good Whitehall.
Let natives prosper by their own exertions;
Who could not swim might go ahead and sink.
'The Coast Guard with their zeal and activity
Are too lavish' were the words, I think.

Source: Seamus Heaney. "For the Commander of the Eliza," from *Poems 1965-1975*. Copyright © 1980 by Seamus Heaney. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC.

Asenath Nicholson: Shaper of History

BACKGROUND

Asenath Nicholson (1792-1855) is one of the remarkable American women of the nineteenth century. While she did not make history, she did shape history. She participated in the major reforms of her time, such as education, nutrition, and temperance, and was an ardent abolitionist. She visited Ireland before the Great Irish Famine and wrote *Ireland's Welcome to the Stranger* (1847), one of the valuable accounts of Ireland before famine changed the rural landscape. During the Great Irish Famine Nicholson returned to Ireland and ran her own one-woman relief operation, first in Dublin and then, in the winter of 1847-1848, in the west, where conditions were the worst in Ireland. She left Ireland in 1848, served as an American delegate to the International Peace Conferences in 1850, and returned to the United States to a life of obscurity where she died of typhoid fever in 1855. The eulogist at her funeral was her friend the abolitionist Rev. Simeon Jocelyn.

Asenath Nicholson was a New England schoolteacher who settled in New York City about 1830. In 1831, she became a disciple of the health reformer Sylvester Graham who advocated temperance, vegetarianism, cold water baths and exercise. (The Graham cracker is named after him.) Nicholson opened a Graham Boarding House. Among the boarders were men who shared Nicholson's commitment to the abolition of slavery: William Goodell, Arthur and Lewis Tappan and Horace Greeley. While historians don't know it for certain, it is likely that the New York Anti-Slavery Society was launched from Nicholson's boarding house in October 1833. The Tappan brothers helped form the American Anti-Slavery Society in December 1833; Arthur Tappan was elected its first president. The Tappan brothers were so hated by slave owners that there was a price of $100,000 offered for delivery of their bodies to any slave state.

In May 1838, the Tappans broke with William Lloyd Garrison's more radical wing of the Anti-Slavery Society over the matter of women's suffrage, and they joined the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. In July 1839, fifty-three African slaves from Sierra Leone en route to Cuba seized control of their ship *La Amistad.* They turned the ship toward home, but their Spanish captives set the sails so that the ship would sail toward the United States. It eventually reached New York, Culloden Point, on the eastern end of Long Island. An American patrol vessel towed the *La Amistad* to New London, Connecticut. The Africans were moved to New Haven to stand trial for mutiny.

The trial attracted the attention of the Tappan brothers and their friends the Rev. Joshua Leavitt, editor of the *Emancipator* and the Rev. Simeon Jocelyn, minister to New Haven's black Christian community and conductor of runaway slaves on the underground railroad. They formed the *La Amistad Committee*, raised money for the defense, hired abolitionist Roger Sherman Baldwin to represent the Africans and used the trial to raise support for the cause of abolitionism. William Cullen Bryant wrote a poem praising the African leader Cinque's nobility and courage. Joshua Leavitt published "A Poem for Cinque" in the *Emancipator* the day the trial started.

The *Amistad* case went as far as the Supreme Court, which decided in favor of the Africans. The Africans returned to Sierra Leone in November 1841. It was a victory not only for the Africans but for the abolitionists. It brought national attention to the issue of slavery and demonstrated the American judicial system was capable of delivering justice to slaves.

(Note: Teachers should review the handout *Annals of the Famine in Ireland* prior to classroom use.)

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Annals of the Famine in Ireland

A Poem for Cinque

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Jones, Howard. *Mutiny on the Amistad.* rev.ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

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

Morash, Chris, ed. *The Hungry Voice: The Poetry of the Irish Famine.* Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989.

Nicholson, Asenath. *Annals of the Famine in Ireland.* ed. Maureen Murphy. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998 [1851].

Tuke, James Hack. *A Visit to Connaught in the Autumn of 1847.* 2nd ed. London: Charles Gilpin, 1848.

Whittier, John Greenleaf. *Whittier*. Intro. by Donald Hall. New York: Dell, 1960.

Zeinert, Karen. *The Amistad Slave Revolt and American Abolition*. North Haven, CT: Linnet Press, 1997.

In addition to the books written about the *Amistad* case, there is a feature film, *Amistad,* directed by Steven Spielberg.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Poem on the Board (see Learning Experience #1)

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Create a dialogue reflecting points of view about famine conditions and relief.

Describe the roles that New Yorkers played in founding the New York Anti-Slavery Society and the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Describe the way American, Irish, and British abolitionists and temperance crusaders joined forces to provide relief for the suffering Irish during the Great Irish Famine.

Describe how Asenath Nicholson was a *shaper of history.*

Write a response poem to "A Poem for Cinque."

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.

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

Gather and organize information about the important achievements and contributions of individuals and groups living in New York State and the United States.

Describe how ordinary people and famous historic figures in the local community, state, and the United States have advanced the fundamental democratic values, beliefs, and traditions expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the United States and New York state constitutions, the Bill of Rights, and other important historic documents.

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

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

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.

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

Interpret and analyze complex informational texts and presentations, including primary sources.

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

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

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- analytical thinking
- take and defend positions
- interpret information
- reflect upon content
- form opinions
- consult and interpret primary sources

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Students will read "A Poem for Cinque" by New York poet/editor William Cullen Bryant. How does the poet describe the nobility of Cinque? What physical attributes does Bryant describe? Who are the "gathering multitude?" Why do they shrink to hear Cinque's name? What simile does Bryant use to describe Cinque? Why does Bryant say Cinque could not be a slave? Do students think that Bryant believes that anyone could be a slave?

2. In the poem "The Moral Warfare," another abolitionist poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, speaks of preparing for moral warfare:

> Our fathers to their grave have gone;
> Their strife is past, their triumph won;
> But sterner trials wait the race
> Which rises in their honored place;
> A moral warfare with the crime
> And folly of an evil time (Whittier 88-89)

Whittier was writing about the evil of slavery in the 19th century. Ask students to imagine themselves as poets right before the American Civil Rights Movement began in the 1960s. How would they describe the "moral warfare ahead? Write a six-line stanza describing the times ahead.

3. During her time in Ireland and Britain, Nicholson described conversations about abolitionism and her sense of shame when the matter of slavery was raised. Nicholson's friendship with the Tappans opened doors for her with English abolitionists like the Birmingham Quaker philanthropist Joseph Sturge who gave her letters of introduction for her first trip to Ireland, and who was generous to her famine efforts in 1847. Nicholson's closest friend in Ireland was the Quaker printer Richard Davis Webb who printed *Ireland's Welcome to the Stranger,* offered her the hospitality of his home and probably helped her make local contacts when she went to rural Ireland to carry on with her famine relief efforts.

The organization skills that Irish Quaker temperance advocates and abolitionists had developed were helpful when they organized the Central Relief Committee in November 1846. Ask students to list the kind of skills a group would need to organize a project like a major famine relief effort.

4. Early in her time in Dublin, Nicholson had to make an important decision about how she would use her limited resources. "...I saw that a little thrown over a wide surface was throwing all away, and no benefit that was lasting would ensue. Ten pounds divided among a hundred, would not keep one from starvation many days; but applied to twenty economically, it might save those twenty; till more efficient means might be taken." In other words, Nicholson said she could not save everyone, but she could save some. Do students agree with her approach? What would students have done in a similar situation?

5. Nicholson wrote about her famine experiences for newspapers and periodicals of the day; later, her account was published in book form. She wanted people to know of the extent of the suffering that Irish were experiencing, and she hoped her words would encourage readers to contribute money, food and clothes to relief efforts. Ask students to read excerpts from Nicholson's *Annals of the Famine in Ireland.* Why did Nicholson suggest that a few heads of barley be sent to William Bennett? Why did she think Bennett's gift of seed was a good idea? Why was she critical of government relief efforts? Why were the Irish called lazy dogs? Did the Irish deserve help?
6. In her passage about hunger, Nicholson accurately described the clinical symptoms of starvation. Discuss the stages of starvation. Why does Nicholson describe them in detail? Even the most emaciated figures in the drawings of the time, those done by the Cork artist James Mahony for the *London Illustrated News*, stopped short of the kind of description Nicholson gives of the starving Irish she encountered. Do students feel that it was necessary to be so graphic at the time?
7. Nicholson describes an old man with a child on his back coming to get relief and being sent away because the official did not have the time to enter the man's name on relief book. He was told to return on Saturday when he was sent away again. Nicholson was extremely critical of government bureaucracy that required the poor to have their names entered on official relief rolls before they could receive food. How does Nicholson's story illustrate her point?
8. Nicholson's account of the family who died together in a cabin with the door fastened closed is particularly sad for it also describes the change in the neighborliness of the Irish countryside. When famine-related diseases swept through villages, it made people frightened to help one another. James Hack Tuke, the English Quaker relief worker, also described this tragic practice, "In some cases, it is well-known, where all other members of a family have perished, the last survivor has earthed up the door of his miserable cabin to prevent the ingress of pigs and dogs, and then laid himself down to die in this fearful family vault" (Tuke 8).

   In Nicholson's passage about dogs, she leaves it to her reader to figure out why the dogs look so well-fed. Later in *Annals*, Nicholson reports that an orphan girl who died alone in a ditch was devoured by dogs. This horrific image of devouring dogs appears in other famine stories. Jeremiah O'Ryan's famine ballad "Ireland's Lament: a Poem" has the lines:

   Shroudless and coffinless they thickly lie

   The famish'd dogs devour'd them in their graves (Morash 69).

   Why are these passages so powerful to the reader? How did students respond?
9. Nicholson's *Annals* are valuable for the accounts she gives us of the famine heroes lost to history who worked among the suffering, often at risk to their own lives. She was particularly impressed with those who created employment for the poor. Mr. Gildea's workers were producing linen. (Hand-skutching is beating flax by hand, a step in the linen-making process.) There is a proverb that goes "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for life." What does that proverb have to do with Nicholson's argument that employment must be created for the Irish poor?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

At one point during the Great Irish Famine, the people of Charlestown, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, many of whom were Irish or Irish-American, offered aid to the Central Relief Committee. The Quakers were in a dilemma. They were firm abolitionists who had nothing to do with slave states. The quandary for the Quakers was that the southern states were willing to contribute aid to the starving Irish, but the Quakers were determined not to do business with states that supported slavery. What to do? Read

Nicholson's letter from Erris which asks England to call on America "foul as her hands may be with slavery" to help feed Ireland's poor.

Write a dialogue between Nicholson and her friend the Rev. Joshua Leavitt, editor of *Emancipator*. Leavitt believes the cause of abolitionism and the evil of slavery take precedence of all. Nicholson has witnessed the terrible spectacle of famine and believes hands fouled with slavery can still save lives. Show "point of view" in the letters.

REFLECTION

This activity links those whose abolitionist work helped them to develop organizational skills, and a network of committed people who stepped in to provide relief during the Great Irish Famine. Nicholson's life links the causes of abolitionism and famine relief and shows how the organizational skills and networks developed among anti-slavery activists served them during the Great Irish Famine. Nicholson's story demonstrates the good that one dedicated person can do and restores to history the work of individuals who worked unselfishly for others. Throughout history, rescuers have placed their own lives at risk in order to help others. Can students think of other rescuers? Could students have been rescuers? What qualities does one need to be a rescuer? Teachers may want to use the learning experiences *Irish Friends and Frederick Douglass' Freedom* and *Irish Quaker*s with this activity.

In field-tested discussions, students were candid about what they thought they could do as rescuers. The idea was to encourage students to think, like Nicholson, that they could do *something*. Teachers may want to do the Nicholson activity with the activity titled *Heroes of the Great Irish Famine.*

In discussions of the Nicholson passage, students were predictably struck most by the dog episode. What they learned from the episode is that the dog story became a metaphor for the Great Irish Famine for them, and that we often have to create our own metaphors for understanding events of this magnitude.

Students also discussed the role of government in addressing the problems of poverty in society and whether it makes a difference if the poverty is a regular feature of the society or if it is caused by a sudden crisis like the Great Irish Famine.

Annals of the Famine in Ireland

Relief

At a little distance was a smooth green field, rearing its pretty crop of young barley, whose heads were full and fast ripening for the sickle. “This is the growth of seed which was presented by William Bennett last March, the poor creatures have sowed it, and if the hands that planted it live to reap the crop, they will have a little bread. Take a few heads of it, and send them to him as a specimen of its fine growth, and of their care in cultivating it. Had these industrious people been supplied in the spring with seed of barley and turnips they would not need charity from the public. The government sent a supply around the coast, the delighted people looked up with hope, when to their sad disappointment, this expected gift was offered at a price considerably higher than the market one, and we saw the ships sailing away, without leaving its contents; for not one was able to purchase a pound. And we have since been told, that the ‘lazy dogs’ were offered seed, but refused, not willing to take the trouble to sow it.”

Hunger

To those who have never watched the progress of protracted hunger, it might be proper to say, that persons will live for months, and pass through different stages, and life will struggle on to maintain her lawful hold, if occasional scanty supplies are given, till the walking skeleton is reduced to a state of inanity—he sees you not, he heeds you not, neither does he beg. The first stage is somewhat clamorous—will not easily be put off; the next is patient, passive stupidity; and the last is idiocy. In the second stage, they will stand at a window for hours, without asking charity, giving a vacant stare, and not until peremptorily driven away will they move. In the last state, the head bends forward, and they walk with long strides, and pass you unheedingly.

Starvation

Going out one day in a bleak waste on the coast, I met a pitiful old man in hunger and tatters, with a child on his back, almost entirely naked, and to appearance in the last stages of starvation. The old man was interrogated as to why he took such an object into sight, upon the street. He answered that he lived seven miles off, and was afraid the child would die in the cabin, with two little children he had left starving, and he had come to get the bit of meal, as it was the day he heard that the relief was giving out. The officer told him he had not time to enter his name on the book, and he was sent away in that condition; a penny or two was given him, for which he expressed the greatest gratitude; this was a Wednesday or Thursday. The case was mentioned to the officer, and he was entreated not to send such objects away, especially when the distance was so great.

The next Saturday we saw an old man creeping slowly in a bending posture upon the road.The old man looked up and recognized me. I did not know him, but his overwhelming thanks for the little that was given him that day, called to mind the circumstances; and, inquiring where the child was, he said the three were left in the cabin, and had not taken a ‘sup nor a bit’ since yesterday morning, and he was afraid some of them would be dead upon the hearth when he returned. The relieving officer had told him to come on Saturday, and his name should be on the book, he had waited without scarcely eating a mouthful till then, and was so weak he could not carry the child, and had crept the seven miles to get the meal, and was sent away with a promise to wait until the next Tuesday, and come and have his name on the books. This poor man had not a penny nor a mouthful of food, and he said tremulously, “I must go home and die on the hearth with the hungry ones.” The mother had starved to death. He was given money to purchase seven pounds of meal....

Death of a Family

A cabin was seen closed one day a little out of the town, when a man had the curiosity to open it, and in a dark corner he found a family of the father, mother, and two children, lying in close compact. The father was considerably decomposed; the mother, it appeared, had died last, and probably fastened the door, which was always the custom when all hope was extinguished, to get into the darkest corner and die, where passers-by could not see them. Such family scenes were quite common, and the cabin was generally pulled down upon them for a grave.

Dogs

Six men, beside Mr. Griffith, crossed with me in an open boat, and we landed, not buoyantly, upon the once pretty island. The first that called my attention was the death-like stillness—nothing of life was seen or heard, excepting occasionally a dog. These looked so unlike all others I had seen among the poor—I unwittingly said— "How can the dogs look so fat and shining here, where there is no food for the people?" "Shall I tell her?" said the pilot to Mr. Griffith, not supposing that I heard him. This was enough: if anything were wanting to make the horrors of famine complete, this supplied the deficiency. Reader, I leave you to your thoughts, and only add that the sleek dogs of Arranmore were my horror, if not my *hatred*, and have stamped on my mind images which can never be effaced.

Source: Asenath Nicholson. *Annals of the Famine in Ireland.* ed., Maureen Murphy. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998 [1851]. pp. 76, 38-39, 197-198, 117-118, 73. Used with the permission of The Lilliput Press, Dublin, Ireland.

A Poem for Cinque

Chained in a foreign land he stood,
A man of giant frame,
Amid the gathering multitude
That shrunk to hear his name-
All stern of look and strong of limb,
His dark eye on the ground-
And silently they gazed on him
As on a **lion** bound.

Vainly, but well, that chief had fought—
He was a captive now;
Yet pride, that fortune humbles not,
Was written on his brow.
The scars his dark broad bosom wore
Showed warrior true and brave;
A prince among his tribe before,
He could not be a slave.

Source: William Cullen Bryant. "A Poem for Cinque," in Karen Zeinert, *The Amistad Slave Revolt and American Abolition*, North Haven, CT: Linnet Press, 1997, p. 63.

New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine

BACKGROUND

When New York businessmen learned of the Great Irish Famine in Ireland, they met in a room in the Prime's Building, 54 Wall Street, to found the Irish Relief Committee in order "to contribute their mite towards the alleviation of misery, which we fear no human aid can reach in all its depth and recesses." The Committee worked from February 1847 until May 1848 raising relief funds and sending food and supplies to Ireland.

Teachers may want to refer to the activities *A Call for Help in 1846: The Rush Letter, New York State Response to the Great Irish Famine* and the six activities titled *The Long March.*

RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daly, Mary E. "The Operations of Famine Relief, 1845-57," in Cathal Póirtéir, ed. *The Great Irish Famine.* Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995, pp. 123-134.

O'Donnell, Edward T. "'The Scattered Debris of the Irish Nation': The Famine Irish and New York City," in E. Margaret Crawford, *The Hungry Stream. Essays in Emigration and Famine*. Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1995. pp. 49-60.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Reading material on the Great Irish Famine, including copies of handouts in this Great Irish Famine Curriculum

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Identify resources for disseminating information about the Irish Relief Committee.

Describe the strategies used to promote fundraising.

Prepare a position paper on raising funds for the Irish Relief Committee.

Express opinions about the Irish Relief Committee in the form of Letters to the Editor and editorials.

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

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

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

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.

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

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- acquire and organize information
- analytical thinking
- 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

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Ask students how they would organize a relief campaign using the media of the time period of the Great Irish Famine. Students should discuss what points they want to make in their campaign to get public support for the Irish Relief Committee. What information would they include?

Not only has the Irish Relief Committee pledged itself to informing the public of the Irish crisis and to soliciting funds for Irish relief, it sees itself as the clearinghouse for individuals, group, and community contributions.What is the advantage of that approach over people sending their contributions individually?

The Irish have asked for shipments of food because the prices in Ireland are so high. Aid will take the form of cash grants, food (flour and Indian meal/corn) and clothing. Discuss the advantages to bulk shipping and the difficulties of shipping large quantities of products.

2. Horace Greely promised to promote the Irish Relief Committee in the pages of his *Tribune*, so some students could write editorials for the paper.

Others can write Letters to the Editor describing what they know about the situation and how the Irish Relief Committee can be of help.

What will students have to keep in mind when writing editorials in a paper read by New Yorkers who may not be sympathetic to the city's Irish immigrant population, let alone to a country far overseas? What values must the writer appeal to in order to be persuasive?

Students writing Letters to the Editor need to keep in mind that such letters are best received when they establish the writer's authority based on particular knowledge, experiences, and facts.

How will the writer build the confidence of readers in what s/he has to say about the Great Irish Famine and the unique role the Irish Relief Committee can play in providing aid?

Other students might prepare an analysis of famine issues for Bishop Hughes to use in a sermon that persuades New York's Irish immigrant population that channeling their aid through the Irish Relief Committee is the best way to help those at home.

3. Ask students to prepare position papers as references for those who are considering giving money. Students preparing the paper must know that New York's Irish immigrant population is very poor; some recent arrivals have just escaped the famine themselves. They may not be very trusting about what committees of businessmen can do; they may, naturally, want to see aid go to their own districts. They may not trust anyone who claims to handle their money for them. They may believe that the best thing they can do is try to save the money for passage and get it home to family members to help them emigrate.

   Students need to recognize that all of these points are valid and should be acknowledged in the position paper. If Bishop Hughes needs to make a case for the Irish Relief Committee in his next sermon, what information in the position paper would help him out?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Prepare written responses to questions that may be asked by the public when considering giving money to the Irish Relief Committee.

What other means of communication would help to spread the word about the mission of the Irish Relief Committee?

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

For advanced students:

Ask students to consider how the Irish Relief Committee of the 21st century would get the word out about their mission. What resources can be used today that were not available during the Great Irish Famine? For example, telemarketing, MTV promotionals, Feed the World concerts, etc. are all means to collect donations for charitable organizations. Ask students to design a campaign using the resources of today.

Creating Broadsheets and Posters for the Irish Relief Committee

BACKGROUND

A *broadsheet* is a large poster (or *broadside*), printed only on one side, used for the purpose of advertising a cause or event. While there were political broadsheets produced during the French Revolution and the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland, broadside ballads in Great Britain, Ireland and the United States, and bright posters advertising American circuses in the 19th century, the poster as an art form evolved in France in 1859 with the work of the lithographer Jules Cheret. He used only two or three primary colors and black in his posters.

In this activity, students will create broadsides that promote the cause of the Irish Relief Committee. (Also see the activities *The Greatest Possible Good: Deciding How to Award Famine Grants* and *New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine*.)

RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Kissane, Noel. *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995. See examples of broadsheets pp. 52, 111, 139 (Proclamations), pp. 67, 76, 138 (Notices).

Mack, Gerstle, *Toulouse-Lautrec.* rev. ed. New York: Knopf, 1953.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Art supplies for creating broadsheets, art books, and sample posters

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Explain the purpose of in creating broadsheets for advertising a cause or event.

Describe the impact of the style of the broadsheet in promoting a cause.

Design posters and broadsheets for the Irish Relief Committee to be displayed in public areas.

STANDARDS

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

SS2: 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 nations' economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

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

Arts 2: Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles. (Visual Arts)

Arts 3: 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.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

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

Explain how societies and nations attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce capital, natural, and human resources.

Know and use a variety of sources for developing and conveying ideas, images, themes, symbols, and events in their creation of art.

Develop skills with a variety of art materials and competence in at least one medium.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- reflective thinking
- acquire and organize information
- present information
- communicate results of research and projects
- consult and interpret primary sources
- identify patterns and themes

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Arts

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Provide information to students about the purpose of the Relief Committee using the Background sections of the activities *The Greatest Possible Good: Deciding How to Award Famine Grants* and *New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine*. Ask students to create a poster or broadsheet for the Irish Relief Committee. Students will make choices about image, message, medium, emphasis, tone, form of appeal, and use of color. The development of the broadsheets will be carried out in three art workshops:
   - planning the image, message, and medium
   - executing the design
   - class critique section
2. In the first and second workshops students will begin with a sketched design and should be prepared to explain their thinking when designing. Note that broadsheet proclamations or notices were printed on one side of single sheet of paper. Different type fonts and sizes add interest and emphasis.
3. In the critique workshop students should consider that posters and broadsheets are usually judged on qualities including clarity, expressiveness, and aesthetic appeal. In the case of the Irish Relief posters, it is also important to consider whether the message is clear and inspiring. Would donations pour in once the poster is disseminated?
4. Ask students to evaluate their own poster overall, describing what they believe is most effective about it.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Ask students to write a paragraph describing how they felt when viewing one of the posters.

Ask students to write a letter to the Irish Relief Committee, explaining how a poster inspired them to send money.

TEACHER REFLECTION

While the poster as an art form developed later than the Great Irish Famine, it is important to give students the opportunity to use an arresting medium to express their visual understanding and expression of the famine crisis.

Discuss with students the differences between the experience of seeing and hearing. Why can visual images be powerful motivators?

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

For Younger/Advanced Students:

Ask students to either bring in or describe their favorite poster (or look around the room at posters), discussing why the poster has an impact on the viewer. Ask them to discuss why they think the artists drew the poster the way that they did, including the choice of lettering, colors, and detail. If they purchased the poster, what compelled them to make the investment?

Follow this discussion with the question: What could be included in a poster that would inspire you to make a donation to a charity such as the Irish Relief Committee?

The Greatest Possible Good: Famine Grants

BACKGROUND

In this activity, students will experience the process of reviewing grant applications. During the Great Irish Famine, there were calls to help the suffering poor in Ireland. The Irish Relief Committee organized by New Yorkers in 1847 sent some $250,000 in aid to Ireland between February 1847 and May 1848. (See also the activity *New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine*.) Students will have the opportunity to convene a meeting of the Irish Relief Committee in February 1848 to consider applications for relief. The Committee has the dollar equivalent of £10,000 to award this funding round.

Members of the Committee are from business (merchants, bankers, shipping company owners), government, (including a former Mayor of New York City), and the print media, including a newspaper reporter who will become President of Columbia University. They are people accustomed to making decision based on facts. Before making decisions about grant applications, the Committee (the class) will discuss some general principles and agree on criteria. Recorders will take notes of the discussion and two other class members will list the main points of the discussion on the board. Some of the students may serve as advocates for the proposals.
(Note: The Learning Experiences section of this activity describes the process for carrying out this activity.)

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

Grant Applications

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daly, Mary E. "The Operations of Famine Relief, 1845-47," in Cathal Póirtéir, ed. *The Great Irish Famine*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995. pp. 123-132.

Hatton, Helen. *The Largest Amount of Good: Quaker Relief in Ireland 1654-1921*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993.

Kissane, Noel. "Charity," *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*. Dublin: The National Library of Ireland, 1995. pp. 123-135.

Nicholson, Asenath. *Ireland's Welcome to the Stranger*. Maureen Murphy, ed., Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Model economic decision-making by developing criteria for grant selection.

Develop and describe principles and criteria for determining charity funding.

Describe the complexities of funding projects designed to serve the needy.

Develop appropriate graphics to present information about their funding decisions.

Present information advocating for a cause.

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 associate 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 though market and nonmarket mechanisms.

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

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Understand the broad patterns, relationships, and interactions of cultures and civilizations during particular eras and across eras.

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

Explain how societies and nations attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce capital, natural, and human resources.

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

Explain how nations throughout the world have joined with one another to promote economic development and growth.

Understand the roles in the economic system of consumers, producers, workers, investors, and voters.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- acquire and organize information
- analytical thinking
- evaluate and connect evidence
- observe and conclude
- use reflective thinking
- think rationally about content
- take and defend positions
- view information from a variety of perspectives
- ask and answer logical questions
- present information
- participate in interpersonal and group activities
- make decisions about process
- communicate results of research and projects

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Mathematics

MULTIPLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Visit sites of charitable organizations to see how funding is used

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Bring in samples of solicitations for charitable organizations. Ask students to share their experiences with charities asking for support.

   How do charitable organizations ask for money?

   If each student had a budget of £500 for worthy causes, how would she/he spend the budget?

   What criteria would students use?

2. Designate (or choose by lot) nine individuals/pairs who will advocate for each of the nine grant proposals listed on the handout.

   Organize the class into one or more Relief Committees (see background). Discuss the following with the entire class and put the key points up on the board. The class does not have to reach consensus, but their main points should be clear so that each Committee can further discuss the points:

   Will they adopt the Irish Society of Friends (Quakers) principle that their grants should provide "the greatest possible good?" Does the Committee have goals beyond relieving the current acute distress? If so, what are their goals?

   What does the Committee believe its role is in the entire scheme of famine relief? What does it believe the British government should provide? Local relief committees? Churches? Other private relief organizations?

3. Using the main points discussed and recorded, the "Committee" should adopt four or five principles that they will use when reviewing grants.

   As the Committees are discussing their principles, the advocates should be preparing their presentation to the Committee. They will read the grant application and be prepared to speak to its urgency and be able to answer questions about their proposal.

   The Committee(s) will then hear the presentations for each of the nine grant applications.

   Students will rank the letters in order of most pressing need using their principles as a guide.

   Does the proposal meet the criteria that the Committee established?

   If not, will the students still consider the grant?

   The Committee(s) can award partial grants (100 pounds of the 300 requested).

4. The class can be polled for their conclusions and the grants awarded, or each Committee can reach agreements and share their results with the class. Since it will not be easy to reach consensus (and some Committees may never agree), it is important to stress the difficulty of the process of choosing since every need is significant. They should be prepared to discuss their process of selection, what persuaded them, and what may have made it difficult to agree.

   Ask the Committees or the entire class to chart their results.

ASK STUDENTS TO DISCUSS:

What made this process difficult?

What made it *easy* to decide? Was it the actual need or the way the need was presented?

Would the Committee suggest revisions or different approaches by the advocates?

How did it feel to be in charge of the distribution of funds?

How did it feel to make a difference in the lives of the poor?

Did it feel as if the impact was great enough?

Follow up with discussions about how individuals and families decide to donate money or other items (food, clothing). What criteria do they use? What else could they donate? (Keep in mind that some students may have been recipients of donations.)

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Write an essay reflecting on the simulation.

Research organizations that give grant funds and review their criteria for selection.

Select a cause or charity and develop a simulated plan to solicit donations. Describe how funds will be used and prepare a budget.

TEACHER REFLECTION

Field testing of this simulation has led to useful discussions with students about giving, and students have taken the discussion home to talk with their families about making choices about worthy causes to support. The discussion is not about people's donation records but about making choices between many worthy causes. Students may not be in a position to support charities; indeed, they may be the recipients of their activities, but it is important for students to understand the value of charity organizations, and that people support them by making monetary contributions as well as volunteering their time and skills. Teachers may want to do this activity with *The Role of Charities in Fighting Poverty, Hospitality Rewarded: People Helping Others,* and *Stories of Famine Generosity.*

Grant Applications

1. The fishermen of the Claddagh [CLAH-dah], the village across the Corrib River from the city of Galway, pawned their fishing clothes, nets, lines, tackle and finally their boats in order to buy food. Fifteen new boats and nets (217 pounds) would help rebuild their fleet and revitalize their fishing industry, which is the sole support of the Claddagh people. Another 20 pounds would provide the fishing clothes the men need.

2. The English Quaker William Bennett believes the Irish need to grow a greater variety of crops. In March and April of 1847, at his own expense, Bennett traveled to the most seriously afflicted famine areas of the west of Ireland where he distributed seed for crops such as turnip, carrots, beans, oats and barley. The people of Aranmore and west Donegal are requesting a grant of 200 pounds for seed for the 1848 growing season.

3. The nuns of the South Presentation Convent on Douglas Street in Cork city have been running a school for orphan children which has grown to 1300. The price of food continues to rise in the city. They have received flour and meal from the United States and are appealing to the Irish Relief Committee for another grant of 250 pounds to buy American food—flour and Indian meal—which would be shipped from New York for the hungry children of Cork.

4. The Rev. Francis Kinkead, Curate of the Church of Ireland in Ballina, Co. Mayo, died on January 28, 1847. One of his last efforts was to establish the Ballina Ladies' Institution in January 1847. The society has created work for women and it ran at a slight loss for the year 1847. Even though the wages are pitifully small (8 pence a week, less than the price of a four-pound loaf of bread), the women are begging for work. A grant of 190 pounds would retire the debt (20 pounds), provide supplies for women doing spinning and knitting (120 pounds) and raise the workers wages slightly (50 pounds).

5. Rev. John Greene, Curate of Binghamstown, Erris, Co. Mayo, works in one of the most seriously afflicted famine areas in Ireland. He is eager to start the poor women and children of the parish making cloth and knitting. The cloth will provided material for much needed clothing for people who have had to pawn their clothes and blankets for food. The women will also be able to begin to earn money from their needlework. Rev. Greene asks for grants for wool (40 pounds) and for spinning wheels and other supplies (50 pounds).

6. Mrs. Samuel Stock, wife of the Rector of Kilcommon-Erris, has been operating a soup kitchen for the poor from her own kitchen. Her resources are limited and she can not feed all those who are in need. There are no other resources. The Central Relief Committee in Dublin has given her a grant for clothing because people have had to sell their possessions, including their clothing, to purchase food. She is asking for a grant of 15 pounds for the purchase of Indian meal and 40 pounds for the purchase of boots and of flannel to make warm clothes.

7. Mr. Samuel Bourne, one of the most charitable men in his area of northwestern Mayo, supports his seventy tenant families and others whose landlords have not been responsive to their needs. Mr. Bourne has a school on his estate where children are fed daily with a grant from the British Association. He would like to teach the older girls spinning and flax hackling and the boys carpentry so that they would learn skills to support themselves and their families. Mr. Bourne estimates he would need 40 pounds for this project.

8. Mr. Gildea of Belcarra, Co. Mayo, has started a linen works that employs large numbers of women, 700 last year (1847). He currently has twenty-six looms working. He requests a loan of 600 pounds for thirty additional looms. He calculates that such an investment would provide employment for some 1500 women and children in the district.

9. The Belfast Ladies' Association for the Relief of Irish Destitution has engaged in a wide variety of good works for the Irish poor. They are the chief support of a scheme to create industrial schools in the province of Connacht that will create model farms to teach better methods of agriculture and building trade skills to boys and needlecraft to girls. The Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends (Dublin) has provided a grant of 500 pounds to the schools. The Ladies' Association requests a grant of 500 from the New York Irish Relief Committee so that it can extend the school scheme to the province of Munster.

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

Irish Medical Officers and the Great Irish Famine

BACKGROUND

Great Irish Famine fatalities were more commonly the result of famine-related diseases than starvation. During the Great Irish Famine those diseases included cholera, dysentery, relapsing fever, typhoid fever, and typhus.

In this activity the class will take on the role of the Chief Medical Officer for Co. Cork. It is 1848. Cork's famine-suffering poor have been ravaged by epidemics. Outbreaks of diseases are especially high in the overcrowded union workhouses of the county. To add to the misery, cases of Asian cholera contracted by members of the British Army stationed in India and transmitted to western Europe have been reported in Ireland. Cholera presents yet another health crisis. An evaluation of the public health crisis in Cork is required and a new, aggressive public health plan is necessary. What course of action will they recommend to the Irish Surgeon-General?

Remind students that when they are discussing treatment and prevention, the year is 1848! The work of Robert Koch and Louis Pasteur would not come until later in the 19th century. Pasteur advanced the germ theory in 1865 and Koch discovered the cholera bacterium in 1884; both worked on the theory of inoculation as a way to weaken the effect of disease agents. Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1929 and Paul Muller developed the insecticide DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloro-ethane) in 1948.

Note that this activity can be taught in conjunction with biology and health curricula.

HANDOUT

Condition of the Sick During the Great Irish Famine

RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL READINGS

American Public Health Association, *Control of Communicable Diseases in Man.* New York: American Public Health Association, 1955.

DeKruif, Paul. *Microbe Hunters.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932.

Garrett, Laurie. *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*. New York: Hyperion, 2000.

Kissane, Noel, "Fever and Disease," *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History.* Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995, pp. 107-121.

McArthur, William P., "Medical History of the Famine," in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds., *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History 1845-52.* Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1956. pp.263-315.

The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy, 8th edition. Rahway, NJ: Merck, 1950.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Resources on famine-related diseases

Access to the Internet for research on famine-relate diseases

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Research and gather information about infectious, communicable diseases.

Write reports about those diseases.

Listen to the reports of other groups and write a memorandum recommending a course of action.

Assume the role of Irish Surgeon-General and create a simulated Action Plan to meet the public health crisis created by the Great Irish Famine.

Make posters for care givers.

STANDARDS

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.

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 institution 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.

MST 1: Students will use mathematical analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering design, as appropriate, to pose questions, seek answers and develop solutions.

MST 7: Students will apply the knowledge and thinking skills of mathematics, science, and technology to address real-life problems and make informed decisions.

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.

ELA 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

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.

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

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

Explain how societies and nations attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce capital, natural, and human resources.

Interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books for young adults, as well as reference materials, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, graph, charts, diagrams, and electronic data bases intended for a general audience.

Interpret and analyze complex information texts and presentations, including technical manuals, professional journals, and primary source materials.

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

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- acquire and organize information
- analytical thinking
- inquire, question, probe
- think rationally about content
- consult and interpret databases
- ask and answer logical questions
- consult and interpret primary sources
- identify premises and rationale for points of view
- present information
- participate in interpersonal and group activities
- communicate results of research and projects
- interpret information and data
- synthesize information

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

Science

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Divide the class into five teams. Using both print and Internet resources, each team will become an expert on a famine-related disease: cholera, dysentery, relapsing fever, typhoid fever, and typhus and prepare a report about that disease for the rest of the class. Reports should include a description of the disease, its cause, its mode of transmission, the susceptibility of the population to the disease, its occurrence and the effective methods of treatment, control, and prevention. Students will create a chart of public health information about famine diseases.

Groups can make their presentations and the class can look for the common features that some or all of the diseases share. The class, acting as the Chief Medical Officer, will be particularly attentive to transmission, treatment and prevention of the diseases.

2. Ask the class to act as Chief Medical Officer:

Without insecticides, pasteurization of milk and antibiotics, what kind of a treatment plan could the Cork Medical Officer utilize?

What instructions would you give the people of the district?

Share conclusions based on personal research, general knowledge of the subject, and information provided in the presentations. The class does not have to agree on their solutions, but individuals and groups should be able to defend their course of action with facts and supportive documentation. Emphasize the context of the disease is the Irish Famine, causing additional problems for victims of disease and for caretakers.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Based on group reports and class discussion, write a memorandum to the Irish Surgeon-General outlining a plan of action to contain famine-related disease in the district. The memorandum will describe the problem in the first paragraph, followed by paragraph (or paragraphs) that address facilities, personnel and supplies needed to implement the plan. The conclusion will describe expected outcomes. What can the Cork Medical Officer predict will happen if her/his plan of action is adopted?

TEACHER REFLECTION

This activity provides an opportunity to work with colleagues in the biology and chemistry departments. This activity anticipates the kind of research and writing that is appropriate for the study of the germ theory of disease and the work of major bacteriologists. Further, the activity involves students in real-life problem-solving with the facts they have gathered about famine-related diseases.

Teachers can also invite an epidemiologist from the Health Department to speak to the class about local health issues.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

For younger students:

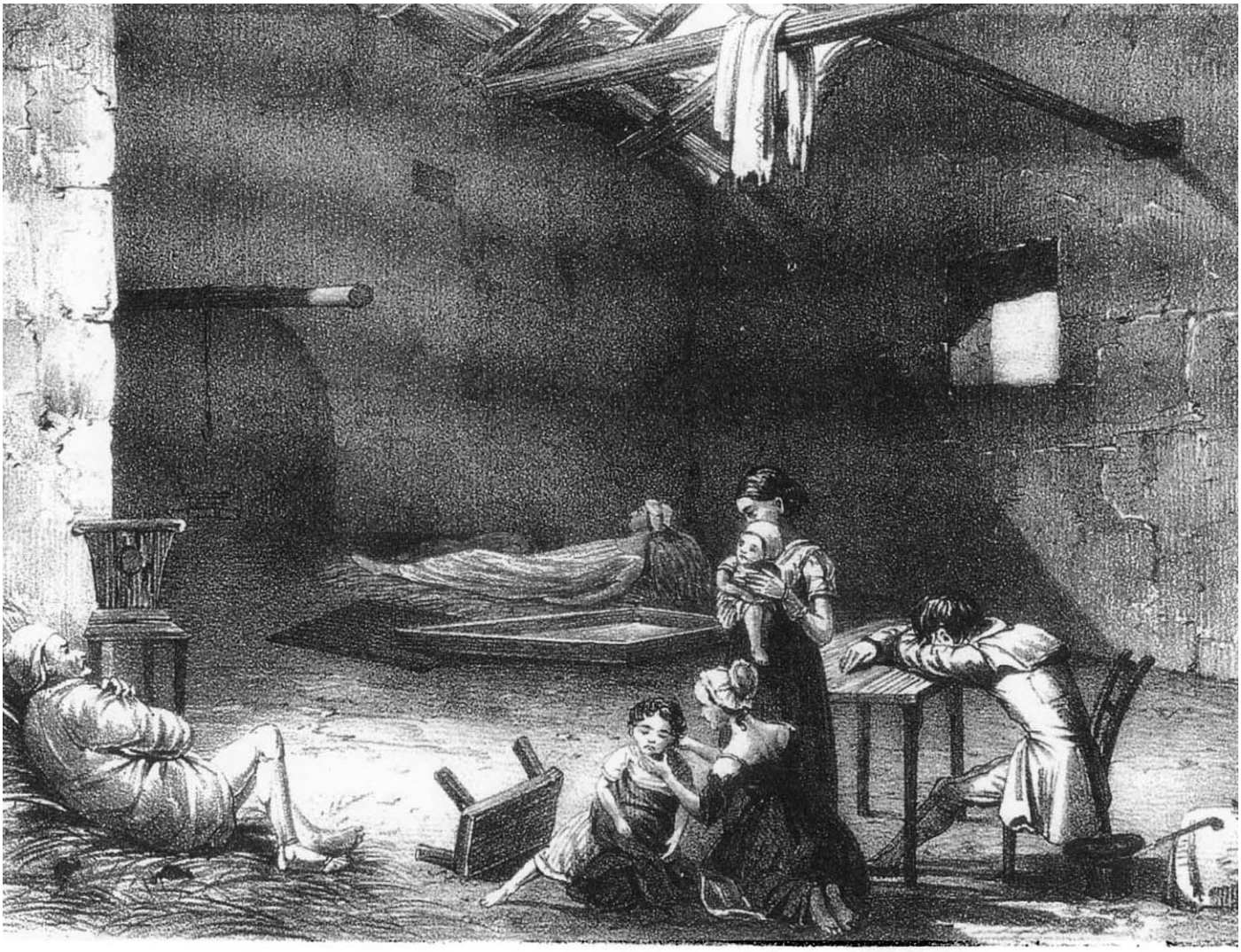
Make posters about disease protection with instructions for patients or for parents and other caregivers.

For advanced students:

Investigate whether one of the diseases researched for this activity is still a threat in some countries today, emphasizing the conditions that may create or perpetuate an outbreak of the disease. Include research about organizations that are designed to identify and treat victims of disease.

Research the role of epidemiologists in the local area.

Students can create a series of public health documents for a document-based question.



A contemporary lithograph drawn by A.S.G. Stopford. (NLI P&D.)

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

Mourning the Dead: Custom and Tradition

BACKGROUND

Mourning the dead is a central ritual in Irish life. An entire small town community mourns by following a pattern of gathering, speaking about the dead, comforting the family, and burying the dead within the rites of the church.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one special feature of Irish death customs was the *caoine* [keen], a spontaneous song with traditional elements sung by women. A famous *caoine* is "Caoine Airt Uí Laoghaire" ("The Lament for Art O'Leary") which is attributed to Eileen O'Connell, the aunt of Daniel O'Connell, the famous Irish lawyer and politician who was known as the *Liberator*. The elements of the *caoine* include: an address to the deceased, a plea to rise from the dead, praise for the special qualities of the deceased, how all of nature mourns, and sometimes a curse on the person thought responsible for the death of the person mourned.

In this activity, students will examine works of art that depict mourning of the dead before and during during the Great Irish Famine.

Note: Sir Frederick Burton (1816-1900), painter of *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child*, shown in the handouts, was born in Co. Clare. He was a watercolorist. His most famous painting is the romantic "The Meeting on the Turret Stair," a painting based on the Danish poem "Hellalyle and Hildebrand." He gave up his painting career when he was appointed Director of the National Gallery (London) in 1874. He was knighted for his service to the Gallery, particularly for the way that he built the Gallery's collection of pictures.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child

Funeral at Skibbereen

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Bourke, Máire, "Rural Life in Pre-Famine Connacht: a Visual Documentary," in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy, eds., *Ireland: Art into History.* Niwot, Co: Roberts Rinehart, 1994, pp. 61-74. See discussion of "The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child," pp. 64-74.

Danaher, Kevin. *In Ireland Long Ago.* Cork: Mercier Press, 1991. See "The Wake," pp. 169-176, and "The Funeral," pp. 177-182, and "In Memory of the Dead," pp.183-189.

Murphy, Maureen and James MacKillop, eds., *Irish Literature: a Reader.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987. See Éilís Dillon's translation of "The Lament for Art O'Leary," pp. 49-62.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Analyze works of art depicting Irish mourning customs, put them in an historical context, and draw conclusions.

Examine texts and visual images and report about what they observe.

Explain (based on the works of art) the impact of changes in traditional mourning rituals as a result of the Irish Famine.

Contrast the pre-famine and famine images of Irish funeral/burial customs as an example of the disintegration of community life and social customs 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.

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)

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.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Know the social and economic characteristics, such as customs, traditions, child-rearing practices, ways of making a living, education and socialization practices, gender roles, foods, and religious and spiritual beliefs that distinguish different cultures and civilizations.

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

Explain the dynamics of cultural change and how interactions between and among cultures has affected various cultural groups throughout the world.

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.

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

Make perceptive and well developed connections to prior knowledge.

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

Express opinions (in such forms as oral and written reviews, essays) about books, issues, and experiences, supporting their opinions with some evidence.

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

Discuss and write their analyses 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
- reflective thinking
- interpret information
- synthesize information

. consult and interpret primary sources
. make generalizations.
. identify patterns and themes

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Arts

English Language Arts

MULTI-CULTURALISM

Recognizing similarities in mourning rituals across cultures.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Ask students to jot down what they know about rituals and traditions that family and friends engage in when they mourn the dead.

What customs and rituals have they experienced?

What customs are followed by others? (Note: This is an opportunity for students of different cultures to describe the traditions of their culture in mourning. The teacher can point out many of the basic similarities across cultures.)

Have they ever attended a funeral, wake, or memorial service? What did they notice about the rituals that people followed? Examples might be: kneeling before the casket, pallbearers, tossing dirt on the casket as it is lowered into the ground, sitting shivah, sending cards, etc.)

What other information do they know about death customs? Why are such customs important to surviving families and friends?

What do they notice about the painting *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child*?

What did they see right away, and what took a while to see?

What is the response of each of the parents? What about the rest of the figures?

It appears as if the child's death has brought people together for some sort of ritual. Is there a woman keening?

Ask students to write a description of the scene as if they were there, or to write a *caoine* for the Aran child.

2. Having observed the highly ritualized treatment of death in the Burton painting, students will look at H. Smith's *Funeral at Skibbereen,* the engraving of the famine dead being removed for hasty burial sometimes into mass graves. Ask students:

What is going on in the painting?

Who are the mourners?

Who are the onlookers?

Why is the man whipping the tired horse?

Is there any sense of urgency? Why?

Ask students to discuss or write about the contrast between the two treatments of death.

What is different about the tone?

What emotions are depicted with the two different works of art?

How can the works of art make the viewer feel uncomfortable? Is there a difference?

How do the works of art show the significance of mourning?

3. Ask students to discuss the need for mourning as a chance to honor the dead, express emotion, share feelings with others, bring closure, and come together for moral and spiritual support.

Then ask the students to discuss how the loss of the mourning rituals (such as depicted in the handout Funeral at Skibbereen) can break down communication and other connections with families and communities.

What if families could not come together to mourn?

What if the death was particularly frightening and witnesses and loved ones had no opportunity to grieve?

What if burials did not have a sense of caring, but a sense of urgency and indifference?

What if people who would normally mourn are scattered, unaware of the death, or unable to respond because of their own trying circumstances?

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Famines have not only individual and family casualties; whole communities are spiritually as well as physically destroyed. Using examples from the class discussion, the Burton painting and the Skibbereen illustration, write an essay that discusses how the breakdown of the traditional way to mourn the dead reflects the breakdown of community during the Great Irish Famine.

TEACHER REFLECTION

In the 1997 commemoration of the Famine, many artists produced works on famine subjects that not only honor the victims but also provide some sort of appropriate ritual to mark the death of those who were hastily buried and not given the traditional rites. Alannah O'Kelly, a performance artist, has produced a piece that involves walking around a a famine mound, photographing the landscape and singing a song that is part *caoine* and part love song, as if to tell those buried on the site that they are not forgotten and are cherished by this generation. Students have been encouraged to think about other kinds of monuments that have been created to the dead whose deaths were not observed in the traditional ways. Monuments to victims of the European Holocaust would be another example of ways to mark posthumously the deaths of members of the community.

Note that it is important for teachers to remember that some students may have had a traumatic experience with death, or may be confused and frightened about the topic of death. Some may have a relative or friend who is seriously ill, or may have witnessed parental reaction to the death of someone close. For some students, the reaction to this topic may be one of sadness and memories, while for others it might be simply one of curiosity. Teachers may want to check with guidance counselors about students who may be particularly sensitive to discussions about death and dying, and watch for signals of discomfort and stress when the activity is carried out.

Teachers can also refer to the activity *Michael Longley's Elegies for Children*.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

For advanced students:

Research the different ways that cultures mourn. Consider how some of the rituals, regardless of their derivation, assist in the grieving process. Then write a reflective essay on how it would feel to have traditional rituals changed or eliminated. What would be the responses of the people involved? (For example, what if the relatives were not allowed to gather? What if the body were not buried according to the guidelines of the religion?) What would people do to compensate? How would the changes affect views of death—and views of living?

The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child

Source: Fredrick William Burton. "The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child," Used with permission of the National Gallery of Ireland.

'Funeral at Skibbereen'. (*The Illustrated London News*, 30 Jan. 1847.)

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

Remember Skibbereen: The Skibbereen News Hour

BACKGROUND

In the late 1840s, Skibbereen, Co. Cork, was a place that was synonymous with the Great Irish Famine. One of the first deaths by starvation was reported from near Skibbereen in 1846 (O'Gráda 38); its markets had food but the people lacked employment and even a working man could not afford to feed himself and his family. Reports of the suffering and dying reached the world from reports of visitors and from the drawings of James O'Mahony that appeared in the pages of the *Illustrated London News.*

This activity will use contemporary media to recreate Skibbereen on December 15, 1847. Students will research conditions in Skibbereen from a variety of sources, and they will take on the roles of people and officials in the town, and visitors who came to the town to bear witness to the suffering and take the message of Skibbereen to the wider world via television. The program will review the events of 1847 and look ahead to 1848. It will be presented as if it were 1847.

Note that students will need their *Skibbpacs* (see handouts) to get started. They can also use many of the handouts provided in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* as resources when conducting research for their broadcast.

RESOURCES

HANDOUTS

The Skibbereen News Hour—December 15, 1847

Skibbpac:

- Skibbereen: A Case Study
- Skibbereen—Union Workhouse
- Skibbereen from Clover Hill
- Skibbereen—Old Chapel Lane
- Unions of Skibbereen
- Funeral at Skibbereen
- Skibbereen
- Dr. Daniel Donovan
- The Black Prophet

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Cleary, Pat and Philip O'Regan, *Dear Old Skibbereen*. Skibbereen: Skibbereen Printers, 1995.

Crawford, Margaret. "The Great Irish Famine 1845-9: Image versus Reality," in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy, *Ireland: Art into History.* Niwot, CO: Roberts Rinehart,1994.

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

Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine.* New York: Harry Abrams, 1995.

Hickey, Patrick. "The Famine in the Skibbereen Union (1845-51)" in Cathal Póirtéir, ed. *The Great Irish Famine.* Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995. pp. 185-203, 278-279.

Killen, John ed., *The Famine Decade: Contemporary Accounts 1841-1851.* Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1995.

O'Cathaoir, Brendan. *Famine Diary.* Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999.

O'Gráda, Cormac. *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy and Memory.*

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Great Hunger.* New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

Students will find a set of *Illustrated London News* engravings on the Vassar famine website: http://vassun.vassar.edu/~sttaylor/FAMINE/

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Room set up for television "broadcast" and videotaping

Costumes, props, art materials for scenery

Video equipment

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

Locate Skibbereen on a map and explain its significance.

Assume the roles of news reporters and Skibbereen residents, famine experts, and witnesses to portray the impact of the Great Irish Famine on the town of Skibbereen.

Describe (without a script) the impact of the famine on Skibbereen.

Select appropriate music, video support, scripts, costumes, props, and other resources to produce an effective newscast.

Describe the contents and messages of the drawings and photographs of Skibbereen.

Explain the role of art and music in understanding the famine in Skibbereen.

Critique the Skibbereen News Hour.

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.

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.

Arts 2: Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

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.

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.

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

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.

ELA 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

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

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.

Gather and present information about important developments from world history.

Analyze the roles and contributions of individuals and groups in relation to key social, political, cultural, and religious practices throughout 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 drawings.

Map information about people, places, and environments.

Investigate why people and places are located where they are located and what patterns can be perceived in these locations.

Interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books, as well as reference materials and electronic databases.

Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and fiction.

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

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

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

- acquire and organize information
- probe ideas and assumptions
- ask and answer logical questions
- participate in group activities
- communicate results of research and projects
- synthesize information
- consult and interpret primary sources
- present information

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

English Language Arts

Arts

Music

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Distribute the handout *The Skibbereen News Hour—Dec. 15, 1847*. Ask students to select (or assign) roles to take in the Skibbereen News Hour. Each role has a suggested question or topic that students can use as a starting point for their reports or interviews.
2. Students can read the handout *Skibbereen: A Case study* for an overview of the crisis in Skibbereen at the end of 1846. Their program will cover the events of *Black '47*, the worst year of the Great Irish Famine. What has changed? Agricultural prices are lower, but public works projects have been phased out. After a slow start in the spring, the government soup kitchens began to offer cooked food to the poor. The potato crop output is at its lowest, but prices are lower in 1847 than they were in 1846. Evictions are on the rise and will continue to rise. Who is emigrating in 1847? How will students present the Skibbereen crisis to their viewers?

3. Students can use their Skibbpacs and other print and non-print materials to prepare their segments for the News Hour. Segments should be between one and two minutes long. Students should appear in appropriate "costumes" and have props. Students should work on presenting the personality and emotional response of the character.
4. Students will need time to work collaboratively on their research. They can rehearse their segments for classmates who can offer suggestions. The student director is responsible for giving a list of coaching hints to each participant before the final dress rehearsal.

   Remind students that they are presenting more than just the facts about an historical event. They are to go beyond the information provided in the Skibbpac and emphasize a theme such as the impact of famine on humanity, the repercussions of famine, or causes of famine "then and now." (See the activity *Famine in the World Today.*) Encourage students to raise questions for the audience to think about and to choose a story "angle" that creates audience interest and contemplation.
5. The Skibbereen News Hour can be aired before a live audience and be video-taped by the student camera crew. Students can do a group assessment and individual evaluations of the News Hour experience.

ASSESSMENT OPTION

Describe the experience of participating in the Skibbereen News Hour activity, emphasizing your views of the content, format, accuracy, planning audience responses, and overall theme (not individual performances).

TEACHER REFLECTION

The materials for this activity include some of the most graphic descriptions of the Great Irish Famine. Teachers may want to use discretion in selecting what materials students will use. Students working on their part of the News Hour will find helpful materials in other handouts in this curriculum covering topics such as evictions, famine and disease, food exports, government policy, The Poor Law, public works, workhouses, and the Society of Friends.

This activity is an effective culminating experience for the long-term study of the Great Irish Famine.

The Skibbereen News Hour
Dec. 15, 1847

Two Anchor persons are going to prepare and read headlines in their news hour. What do they judge are the most significant events of 1847 in Skibbereen? in Ireland? in the world?

Lead Stories:

Interviews with: local landlord who has ejected tenants: How does the landlord justify clearing his land of tenants who are starving?

Nicholas Cummins, R.M.: Based on what he witnessed, what would he recommend to the British government?

Master of the Skibbereen Workhouse: Conditions seem unbearable in the Workhouse and yet people continue to beg to be admitted. Why?

Dr. Donovan, local medical officer: As the famine continues, what has happened to the health of the poor of Skibbereen? What measures should be taken to protect the public health of Skibbereen?

James Mahony, artist for *Illustrated London News*: Mahony is a Cork artist sent by the *Illustrated London News* to record the famine in west Cork. What did he see in Skibbereen?

Workingman: With public works cut and a delay before the government soup kitchen were in operation, how did you survive in the spring of 1847?

The American visitor Elihu Burritt: What would Mr. Burritt tell Americans about the conditions in Ireland?

Features:

Politics: Death of O'Connell on May 15, 1847. What about the Young Irelanders? There is a rumor that there may be an armed rebellion. What do the political correspondents think will happen? Why?

Weather: The winter of 1846-1847 was especially harsh: temperature on the average of 4 degrees lower than average and very wet (O'Gráda 36). What is predicted for the 1847-1848 winter? What effect does bad winter weather have on laborers on the public works projects? What about farmers and a late cold winter?

Agriculture: Analyze the potato production. What are the trends? How about the prices? Food prices were highest in January 1847. In 1847 the agricultural prices began to fall (Daly 88).

Public works: Is there enough work available? Can workers make enough money to feed themselves and their families? Public works projects were phased out in 1847 and replaced by government soup kitchen, but there was a gap of some months during the spring between the end of the public works projects and the establishment of the soup kitchens. What happened? The price of food was falling but there was no work (Daly 88).

Health report: What is the situation in the highly congested Skibbereen Workhouse? What are the public health hazards in Skibbereen?

Famine soup: Quaker vs. Soyer soups.
Which is the more nutritious? Interview the soup makers.

Book review: William Carleton's new book *The Black Prophet* has been published after it appeared in installments in *Dublin University Magazine*. Based on the famines of 1817 and 1822, Carleton wrote the book which he dedicated to Lord John Russell, the British Prime Minister, to urge the government to intervene in Ireland. He also wanted his reader to respond to the Great Irish Famine. How does Carleton describe the evil gombeen man or money lender Darby Skinadre? What is the reader's response to Carleton's picture of the famine in Ireland?

Music: Ballad singers sing of Skibbereen. Student musicians select Skibbereen ballads to perform.

Emigration: Report from New York by one of the newly created New York State Commissioners for Immigration. We understand that emigration continues from Skibbereen and all of Ireland. What does that mean for New York State, the main immigration port? Who is emigrating from Skibbereen?

Skibereen News Hour Technical Staff:

Producer: The producer's responsibility is to get all of the segments together, order them, and time them.

Director: The director is responsible for coaching each of the participants. Do they stay in character? Do they give their reports clearly?

Camera operator/assistant: The camera team's responsibility is to tape some rehearsal segments and to video-tape the News Hour.

Wardrobe: The wardrobe director is responsible for researching what people wore in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century and advising students about costumes.

Art director: The art director will work with a crew to produce an appropriate backdrop for the News Show.

Music director: The music director will select (or create) the theme music for the program.

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

Skibbereen: A Case Study

Skibbereen is situated on the Ilen (River), which is navigable to vessels of 200 tons burden from Baltimore (Co. Cork) to within two miles of the town. It is a very brisk thriving place and carries on a good retail trade for which it is well circumstanced, being the last town of any importance in this most southern corner of the island. There are a church, an extensive Roman Catholic chapel, Methodist meeting house, numerous schools, a sessions-house, market-house, union workhouse, hospital, dispensary and an inn where horses and carriages can be hired. In the neighborhood are one or two flour mills, and a brewery; close to the town are the ruins of Abbeystrowry (a Cistercian abbey). The part of Old Court up to which larger vessels sail is two miles below the town.

Source: James Fraser. *A Handbook for Travelers in Ireland*. Dublin: Curry, 1844. pp. 315.

Population of Skibbereen

Population:	1841
Skibbereen town	4,715
Townlands:	
Curragh	136
Gortnamucklagh	118
Lissanoohig	131
Licknavar	135

Population density per square mile by parish:

Abbeystrewery	426
Creagh	583

Skibbereen town and local area economy

Employment	number of laborers	number employed
Creagh	341	55

Profile of an agricultural laborer in Creagh parish before the Great Irish Famine:

Michael O'Sullivan paid an annual rent of £3 to a farmer called Daniel Regan for one acre of land. He received 6d/day and a meal when he worked for Regan. In late summer, O'Sullivan became a *spailpín* [spalpeen], a wandering laborer. He walked as far as Tipperary or Limerick to work the harvest. For that work he earned between l 1 and 30 shillings. O'Sullivan, his wife and his children lived on a diet of potatoes. (6-7, Evidence given before the Devon Commission/Poor Law Inquiry.)

Farm sizes in Cork (1841 census): (7)

1-5 acres	30%
5-15 acres	34%
15-30 acres	23%
30+ acres	12.5%

Potato production in Co. Cork: (12)

1845	1,576,000
1846	482,000
1847	239,000
1848	341,000

Source: Pat Cleary and Philip O'Regan, eds. *Dear Old Skibbereen*. Skibbereen: Skibbereen Printers, 1995. pp. 6, 7, 12.
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Accounts of Conditions in Skibbereen from Various Sources:

5 October 1846: A police officer warns of 'the most dire consequences' in Skibbereen unless immediate employment is provided on public works. But the relief given this year is more stringently administered, frugal and difficult to obtain (O Cathaoir 74).

17 December 1846: This town contains, according to the last census, about 6,000 inhabitants. Of those, more than one-half are totally destitute, having no means to procure food, clothing, or fuel, except their daily hire, which, as I will show, is totally inadequate to supply a sufficient quantity of those to support life. The rate of wages is eight pence per day, and the prices of provisions in this market at present are, for**:**

Indian meal	2s. 5d. per stone of 14 lbs.
Wheaten meal	2s. 6d.
Oaten meal	2s. 9d.
Barley meal	1s.10d.
Household bread	9d. per 4 lbs loaf
Potatoes	None at any price

At these prices you can easily suppose that a working man with a family of six persons (which is about the average number) cannot procure for them even one tolerable meal out of his miserable earnings, supposing him fortunate enough to get employment, and to be able to work every day, which is impossible in this inclement season (T.H. Marmion, *Cork Constitution*, O'Gráda 68).

21 December 1846: Famine is raging in Skibbereen union. Since November 5th, 197 have died in the poorhouse, the principal cause of death being "the prevalence of a fatal diarrhea, acting on the exhausted constitutions of the persons admitted."

Nearly 100 bodies have been found in the lanes or in derelict cabins, half-eaten by rats.

The guardians want to open soup "shops," but the Poor Law Commission insists that relief is to be provided only inside the workhouse (O'Cathaoir 88)

December 1846: Disease and death in every quarter—the once hardy population worn away to emaciated skeletons—fever, dropsy, diarrhea and famine rioting in every filthy hovel, and sweeping away whole families—the populations perceptibly lessened—death diminishing the destitution—hundreds frantically rushing from their home and country, not with the idea of making fortunes in other lands, but to fly from a scene of suffering and death—400 men starving in one district, having no employment, and 300 more turned off the public works in another district, on a day's notice—seventy five tenants ejected here, and a whole village in the last stage of destitution there—relief committees threatening to throw up their mockery of an office, in utter despair—dead bodies of children flung into holes hastily scratched in the earth without shroud or coffin—wives traveling ten miles to beg the charity of a coffin for a dead husband, and bearing it back that weary distance—a government official offering the one-tenth of a sufficient supply of food, at famine prices—neither mill nor corn store within twenty miles—every field becoming a grave, and the land a wilderness (Killen 83 from *Cork Examiner*).

4 January 1847: A grim beginning to this year of death. Nicholas Cummins, a Cork magistrate, sets out for Skibbereen with as much bread as five men can carry. He is surprised to find the wretched hamlet apparently empty. He enters some of the hovels to ascertain the cause.

"In the first, six famished and ghastly skeletons, to all appearances dead, were huddled in a corner on some filthy straw, their sole covering what seemed a ragged horsecloth, their wretched legs hanging about naked about the knees.

I approached with horror and found by a low moaning they were alive—they were in fever, four children, a woman and what had once been a man. ... In a few minutes I was surrounded by at least 200 such phantoms, such frightful spectres as no words can describe, either from famine or from fever."

Their demonic yells are still ringing in his ears, Mr. Cummins writes in a letter addressed to the Duke of Wellington and published in the London *Times*. "In another case, my clothes were nearly torn off in my endeavor to escape from the throng of pestilence around, when my neck cloth was seized from behind by a grip which compelled me to turn, I found myself grasped by a woman with an infant just born in her arms and the remains of a filthy sack across her loins—the sole covering of herself and baby."

That morning the police opened a house on the adjoining lands and two corpses were found, half-devoured by rats. "A mother, herself in a fever, was seen the same day to drag out the corpse of her child, a girl about twelve, perfectly naked, and leave it half-covered with stones. In another house, within 500 yards of the cavalry station, the dispensary doctor found seven wretches lying unable to move under the same cloak. One had been dead many hours, but others were unable to move either themselves or the corpse."

Sir Randolph Routh blames the landlords. The proprietors of the Skibbereen district, he tells Charles Trevelyan, draws an annual income of 50,000 pounds.

One of the reasons why the British government does not feel bound to send food to Skibbereen is because there are ample provisions in the locality. On Saturday the market was supplied with meat, bread and fish. This contradiction is occurring all over Ireland. Trevelyan insists that the resources of the country should be drawn out, failing to realize that those resources are utterly inaccessible to the wretches dying in the streets and by the roadsides.

The starving in such places as Skibbereen perish not because there is no food but because they have no money with which to buy it. But it is the payment of rents which separate the people from food in the first instance.

The British Association for the Relief of the Extreme Distress in the Remote Parishes of Ireland and Scotland is formed (O'Cathaoir 91-92).

16 January 1847: SKIBBEREEN—In the parish of Kilmore, fourteen died on Sunday; three of these were buried in coffins, eleven were buried without other covering than the rags they wore when alive. And one gentleman, a good and charitable man, speaking of this case, says—'The distress is so appalling, that we must throw away all feelings of delicacy;' and another says—"I would rather give 1s. to a starving man than 4s. 6d. for a coffin." One hundred and fifty have died in the Skibbereen Workhouse in one month; eight have died in one day! And Mr. M'Carthy Downing states that 'they all came into the [work]house merely and solely for the purpose of getting a coffin.' The Rev. Mr. Clancy visits a farm, and there, in one house, he administers the last rite of religion to six people.' On a subsequent occasion, he 'prepared for death a father and daughter lying in the same bed.' Dr. Donovan solemnly assures a public meeting that the people are 'dropping in dozens about them.' Mr. Marmion says that work on the public road is even more destructive than fever, for the unfed wretches have not energy enough to keep their blood in circulation, and they drop down from the united effects of cold and hunger—never to rise again (Killen 95-96 from *The Illustrated London News*).

February 1847: Skibbereen poorhouse is described as "a plague spot." The medical officer is nearing breakdown; seven of his staff have fever, other members resign. He asks the guardians to meet in the courthouse instead of the disease-ridden workhouse; 332 of the 1,169 paupers are suffering from fever or dysentery. Nevertheless, starving and sick people beg for admission daily (O'Cathaoir 97)

February 13 1847: We next reached Skibbereen, a general view of which I send you from Clover Hill, the residence of J. Macarthy Downing Esq.: and, it being then late, I rested until Monday, when, with the valuable aid of Dr. D. O'Donovan and his assistant, Mr. Crowley, I witnessed such scenes of misery and privation as I trust it may never be again my lot to look upon. Up to this morning, I like a large portion, I fear, of the community, looked upon the diaries of Dr. Donovan, as published in *The Cork Southern Reporter*, to be highly-coloured pictures, doubtless intended for a good humane purpose; But I can now, with perfect confidence, say that neither pen nor pencil could ever portray the misery and horror, at this moment, to be witnessed in Skibbereen. We first proceeded to Bridgetown, a portion of which is shown in the right hand distance of the sketch; and there I saw the dying, the living and the dead, lying indiscriminately upon the same floor, without anything between them and the cold earth, save a few miserable rags upon them. To point to any particular house as a proof of this would be a waste of time, as all were in the same state; and, not a single house out of 500 could boast of being free from death and fever, though several could be pointed out

with the dead lying close to the living for the space of three or four, even six days, without any effort made to remove the bodies to a last resting place.

After leaving this abode of death, we proceeded to High-street or Old Chapel-lane (see sketch), and there found one house, without door or window, filled with destitute people lying on the bare floor and one, fine, tall, stout, country lad, who had entered some hours previously to find shelter from the piercing cold, lay dead among others likely soon to follow him. The appeals to the feelings and professional skill of my kind attendants here became truly heart-rending: and so distressed Dr. Donovan that he begged me not to go into the house, and to avoid coming into contact with the people surrounding the doorway. (James Mahony, "Sketches in the West of Ireland" *The Illustrated London News*,100).

February: "In the Skibbereen area in February 1847 the larger farmers were saving up the proceeds of selling corn and planning 'on the first opportunity [to] escape from the famine-stricken island to the unblighted harvests of America'" (O'Gráda 109).

15 March 1847: The Rev. Richard Townsend, of Skibbereen, does not see the Famine in terms of divine wrath; he blames British government policy for much of the suffering and describes the local population as victims of "a most mistaken national policy on whom the principles of political economy have been carried out in practice to a murderous extent" (O'Cathaoir 104)

3 May 1847: The Famine suffering is sapping not only the vitality but the compassion of the people.

In Skibbereen, Dr. Daniel Donovan is given ample opportunity to study the sensations experienced by the starving. Young and old are becoming increasingly insensitive to the wants of other, he notes, responses being dictated by the desperation of their own needs. Dr. Donovan has seen mothers snatch food from their starving children, sons and fathers fight over a potato, and parents look on the dead and decaying bodies of their offspring without evincing the slightest emotion (O'Cathaoir 113).

13 December 1847: The British Relief Association [a privately funded organization founded by merchant bankers in London in 1847 to help those "beyond the reach of the government"] is feeding 200,000 schoolchildren daily throughout the distressed Poor Law unions. The inspector of the Skibbereen union reports: "You have no idea of the great good the British Association bounty is doing to this union: hundreds of lives have been saved by it, and were it not for this the scenes of last year would have been witnessed in Skibbereen again" (O'Cathaoir 155)

From Elihu Burritt, *A Journal of a Visit of Three Days to Skibbereen and its Neighborhood, 1847*. The American linguist was the editor of *Christian Peace* when he visited Skibbereen in 1847; he was later the United States Consul in Birmingham (1863-1870). In his account of Skibbereen, Burritt described a man dying of starvation:

He lived several miles from the center of the town, in one of the rural districts, where he found himself on the eve of perishing with his family of seven small children. Life was worth the last struggle of nature, and the miserable skeleton of a father had fastened his youngest child to his back, and with four more by his side, had staggered up to the door. The hair upon his face was nearly as long as that upon his head. His cheeks were fallen in, and his jaws so distended that he could scarcely articulate a word. The children's appearance, though common to thousands of the same age in this region of the shadow of death, was indescribable. Their paleness was not that of common sickness. There was no sallow tinge in it. They did not look as if newly raised from the grave and to life before the blood had begun to fill their veins anew: but as if they had just been thawed out of ice, ice in which they had been imbedded until their blood had turned to water (Gray 139).

Deaths:

Skibbereen workhouse and auxiliary workhouses:
1841-1851: 4,346

Skibbereen fever hospital:
1841-1851; 631

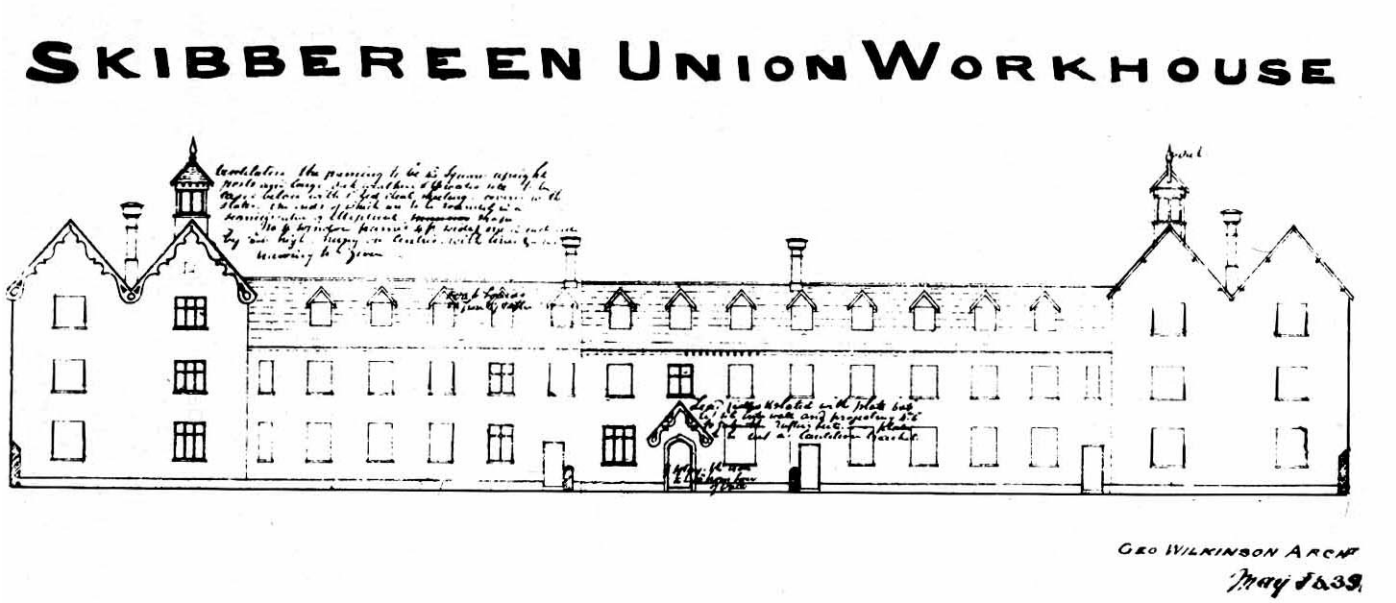
Skibbereen Workhouse

Workhouse opened March 19, 1842, to serve the Poor Law Unions of Skibbereen, Schull and part of Clonakilty and to accommodate 800 aged and infirm. The Skibbereen Union had a population of 104,508 in 1841.

At the December 1848 meeting of the Skibbereen Union Poor Law Guardians it was reported that there were more than one thousand able-bodied men and seven hundred able-bodied women in the workhouse. There were 1,641 children (2-15) and 880 aged and infirm. The Cork Examiner (Dec. 8, 1848) reported that there was a total of 4,230 inmates in the Workhouse and in temporary additional space used for the poor. In 1851, there were still 2,511 inmates in the Skibbereen Workhouse.

Sources: Pat Cleary and Philip O'Regan, *Dear Old Skibbereen*. Skibbereen: Skibbereen Printers, 1995. pp. 48.
Used with permission of the editors.

O'Cathaoir, Brendan. *Famine Diary.* Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999.
pp. 74, 88, 90-91, 97, 104, 113, 155. Permission pending.



Skibbereen Union Workhouse, opened in March, 1842. — elevation of main building.

Source:: Pat Cleary and Philip O'Regan. *Dear Old Skibbereen*. Skibbereen: Skibbereen Printers, 1995. pp. 18.
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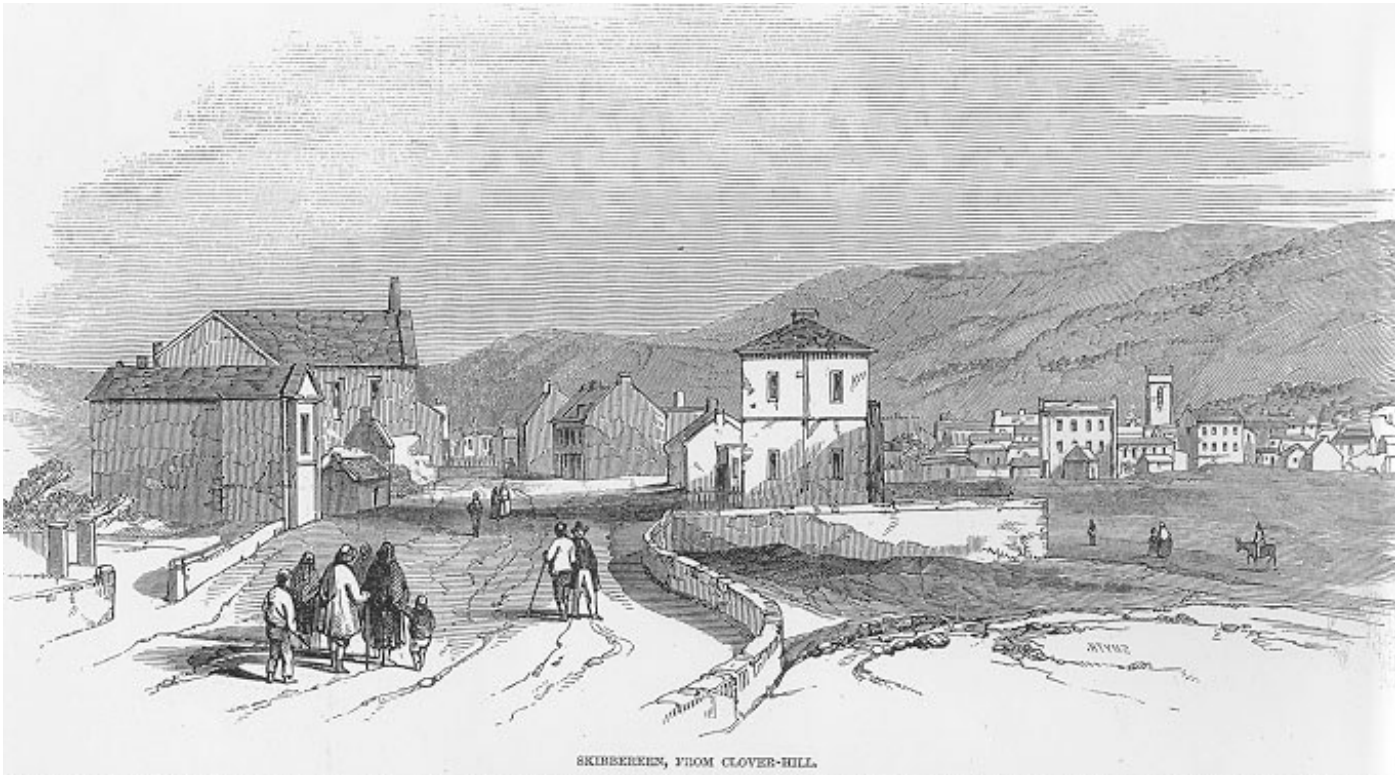
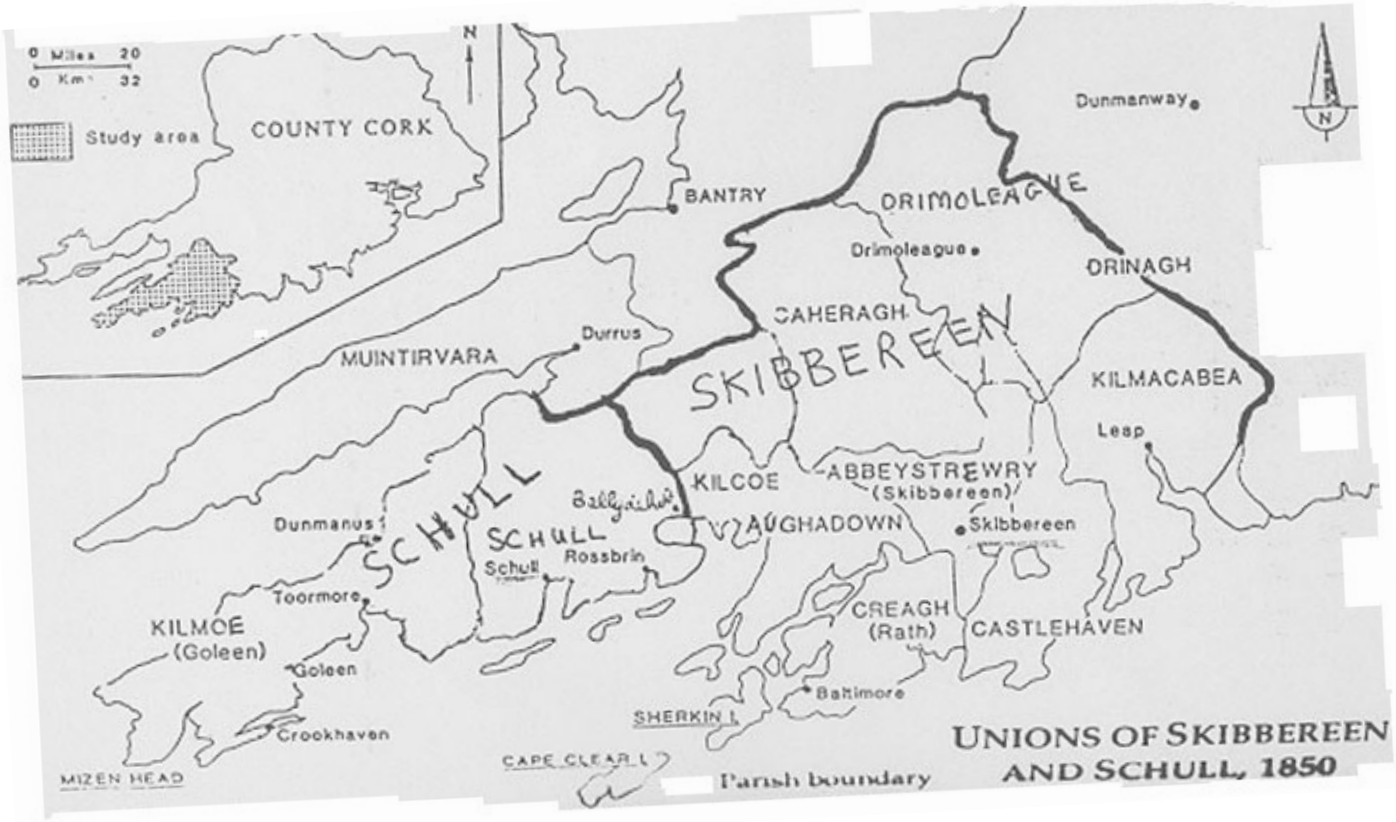


Source: *Illustrated London News*, February, 1847. Maureen Murphy, private collection.

(LD CHAPEL-LANE, SKIBBERREEN.

Source: *Illustrated London News*, February, 1847. Maureen Murphy, private collection.



Map of the Union of Skibbereen and Schull, 1850.

Pat Cleary and Philip O'Regan, Dear Old Skibbereen: Skibbereen Printers, 1995. pp. 48.
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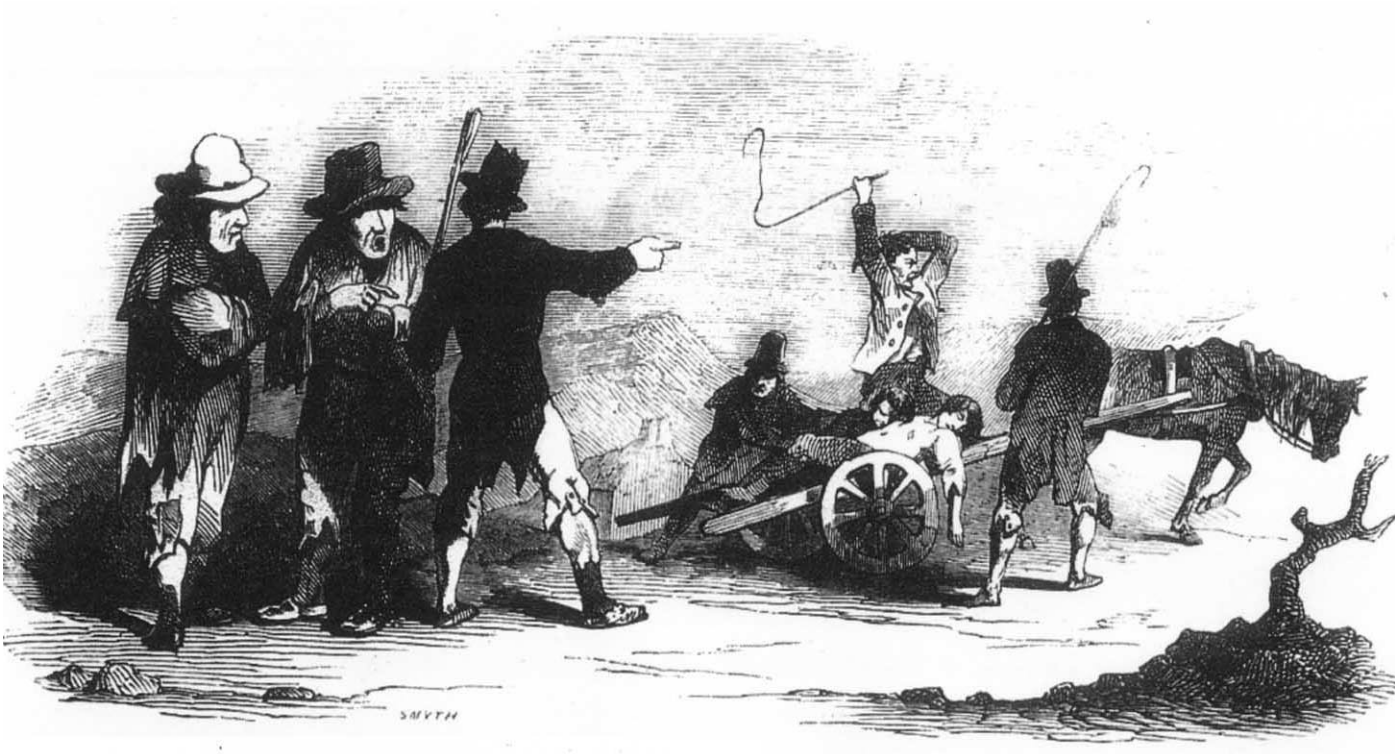

'Funeral at Skibbereen'. (*The Illustrated London News*, 30 Jan. 1847.)

Source: Noel Kissane, **The Irish Famine, A Documentary History**.
Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995. p. 172.
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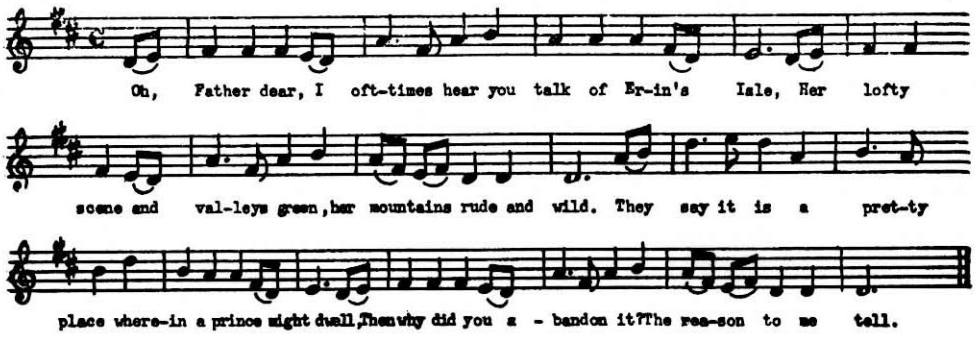
SKIBBEREEN



Oh, Father dear, I oft-times hear you talk of Erin's Isle,
Her lofty scene and valleys green, her mountains rude and wild,
They say it is a pretty place wherein a prince might dwell,
Then why did you abandon it? The reason to me tell.

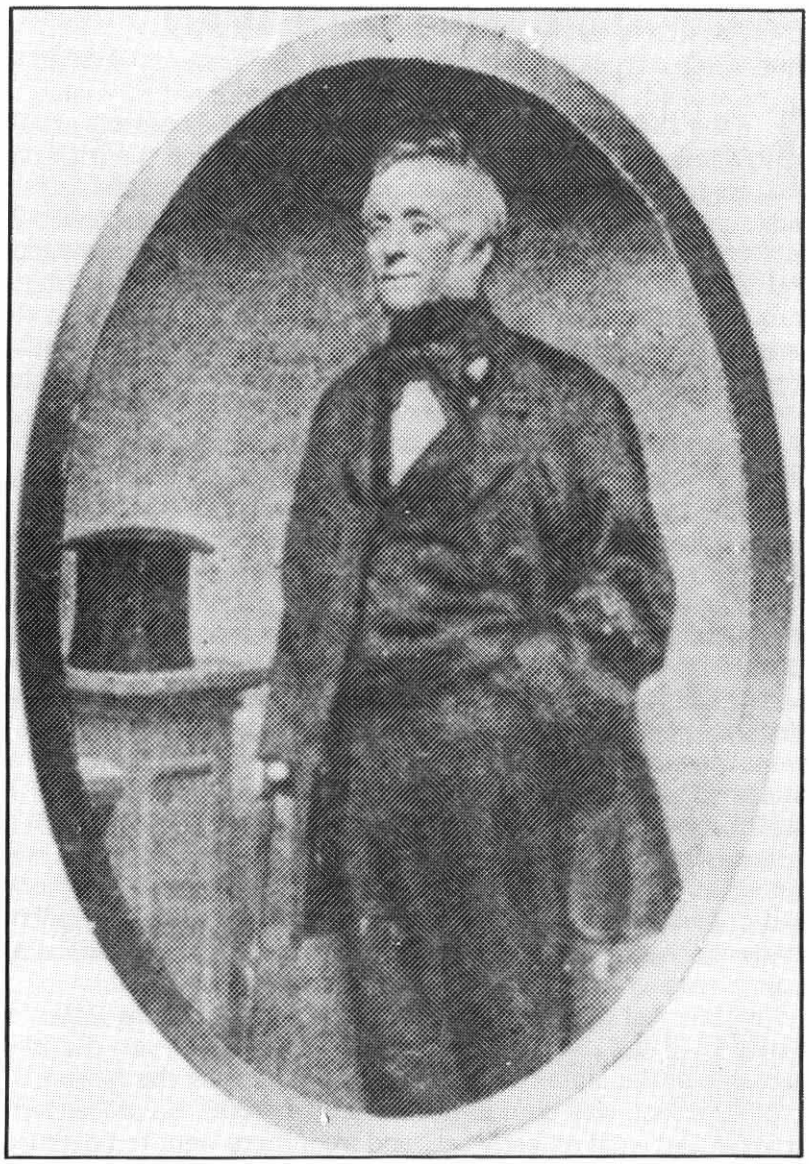
My son, I loved our native land with energy and pride
Until a blight came on the land, and sheep and cattle died,
The rent and taxes were to pay, I could not them redeem,
And that's the cruel reason why I left old Skibbereen.

It's well I do remember that bleak December day
The landlord and the sheriff came to drive us all away,
They set my roof on fire with their demon yellow spleen,
And that's another reason why I left old Skibbereen.

It's well I do remember the year of forty-eight,
When I arose with Erin's boys to fight against the fate,
I was hunted through the mountains for a traitor to the Queen,
And that's another reason why I left old Skibbereen.

Oh, Father dear, the day will come when vengeance loud will call,
And we will rise with Erin's boys and rally one and all,
I'll be the man to lead the van beneath our flag of green,
And loud and high we'll raise the cry: 'Revenge for Skibbereen!'

Source: Patrick Galvin. *Irish Songs of Resistance*. New York: Oak Publications, 1962, pp. 46. Permission pending.



Dr. Daniel Donovan (1808-1877) — it was he, perhaps more than any other person, who helped to focus world attention on Skibbereen and district in 1847 and 1848. His 'Diary of a Dispensary Doctor' in the "Southern Reporter" newspaper during 1847 and 1848, as well as his contributions to various medical journals — "Lancet", the "Dublin Journal of Medical Science" and the "Dublin Medical Press" — give us detailed and vivid accounts of the state of affairs in this area during the famine.

Source: Source: Pat Cleary and Philip O'Regan. *Dear Old Skibbereen*. Skibbereen: Skibbereen Printers, 1995. pp. 28. Used with permission of the editors.

The Black Prophet

There is to be found in Ireland, and, we presume, in all other countries, a class of hardened wretches, who look forward to a period of dearth as to one of great gain and advantage, and who contrive, by exercising the most heartless and diabolical principles, to make the sickness, famine, and general desolation which scourge their fellow-creatures, so many sources of successful extortion and rapacity, and consequently of gain to themselves. They are country misers or moneylenders, who are remarkable for keeping meal until the arrival of what is termed a hard year, or a dear summer, when they sell it out at enormous or usurious prices...

About half a mile from the residence of the Sullivan's lived a remarkable man of this class, named Darby Skinadre. In appearance he was lank and sallow, with a long, thin, parched-looking face, and a miserable crop of yellow beard.

Skinadre, on the day we write of, was reaping a rich harvest from the miseries of the unhappy people. In a lower room of his house he stood over his scales, weighing out with a dishonest and parsimonious hand, the scanty pittance which poverty enabled the wretched creatures to purchase from him. There stood Skinadre, like the very Genius of Famine, surrounded by distress, raggedness, feeble hunger, and tottering disease, in all the various aspects of pitiable suffering, hopeless desolation, and that agony of the heart which impresses wildness upon the pale cheek, makes the eye at once dull and eager, parches the mouth, and gives to the voice of misery tones that are hoarse and hollow.

There he stood, striving to blend consolation with deceit, and, in the name of religion and charity, subjecting the helpless wretches to fraud and extortion. Around him was misery, multiplied into all her most appalling shapes. Fathers of families were there, who could read in each others' faces, too truly, the gloom and anguish that darkened the brow and wrung the heart. The strong man, who had been not long before a comfortable farmer, now stood dejected and apparently broken-down, shorn of his strength without a trace of either hope or spirit; so woefully shrunk away too, from his superfluous apparel that the spectators actually wondered to think that this was the large man, of such powerful frame, whose feats of strength had so often heretofore filled them with amazement. But, alas! What will not sickness and hunger do?

It is impossible, however, to describe the various aspects and claims of misery which presented themselves at Skinadre's house. The poor people flitted to and fro, silently and dejectedly, wasted, feeble, and sickly—sometimes in small groups of twos and threes, and sometimes a solitary individual might be seen hastening with earnest but languid speed, as if the life of some dear child or beloved parent, of a husband or wife, or perhaps, the lives of a whole family, depended upon his or her arrival with food ...

At this precise period, the state of the country was frightful beyond belief; for it is well known that the mortality of the season ... was considerably greater than that which even cholera occasioned in its worst and most malignant ravages. Indeed the latter was not attended by such a tedious and lingering train of miseries as that which, in so many woeful shapes, surrounded typhus fever. The appearance of cholera was sudden, and its operations quick, and although, on that account, it was looked upon with tenfold terror, yet for this very reason the consequences which it produced were by no means so full of affliction and distress, nor presented such strong and pitiable claims on human aid and sympathy as did those of typhus. In one case the victim was cut down by a sudden stroke, which occasioned a shock or moral paralysis both to himself and the survivors that might be almost said to neutralize its own afflictions. In the other, the approach was comparatively so slow and gradual, that all the sympathies and afflictions were allowed full and painful time to reach the utmost limits of human suffering.

In fact, Ireland, during the season, or rather the year we are describing, might be compared to one vast lazar (leper)-house filled with famine, disease and death. The very skies of heaven were hung with the black drapery of the grave, for never since, nor in the memory of many before it, did the clouds present shapes of such gloomy and funeral import. Hearses, coffins, long funeral processions, and all the dark emblems of mortality were reflected, as it were, on the sky, from the terrible works of pestilence and famine which were going forward on the earth beneath it.

Source: William Carleton. "The Black Prophet (1847)" in Peter Gray. *The Irish Famine*, New York: Abrams, 1995. pp. 169-170. Permission pending.