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THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE CURRICULUM



A curriculum for all subjects, based on the New York State learning standards, using primary sources, literature, dance and music, mathematics, history, science, art and theatre, geography, economics, government, career development, and technology

Our Great Irish Famine logo is the bronze and stone sculpture by Fred Conlon called *Faoin Sceach* [FWEEN Skack, Under the Hawthorn]. It stands in the famine graveyard in Sligo. Conlon wrote this description of *Faoin Sceach*:

This Bronze Tree stands as a symbol of dignity. It marks the final resting place of the unnamed dead of this area who perished in the Great Famine of 1845-1847. An Gorta Mór (The Great Hunger) was like a never-ending winter. Its chill of desolation brought hunger, disease, and death. In Ireland the lone tree or *Sceach* was held in a position of high importance from early Celtic mythology to recent times. The boulder stones surrounding the base allude to ancient forms of burial.

We are grateful to the County Sligo Famine Commemoration Committee and its Chairman, Joe McGowan, for permission to use *Faoin Sceach* as our Great Irish Famine Curriculum logo. We are grateful to Martin and Joyce Enright who brought us to see *Faoin Sceach* in Sligo in 1999.

Maureen Murphy



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An Chomhairle um an gCartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives Advisory Council

Dear Teacher Colleagues,

On behalf of the Advisory Committee to the Great Irish Famine Project Curriculum it is my pleasure to introduce this model for teaching the New York State Learning Standards, a pedagogy that has been developed for a multicultural environment. Over the last year and a half I have represented the Advisory Committee visiting field sites in Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island where the Great Irish Famine (GIF) curriculum has been tested. I also participated with some one hundred students from four schools who contributed to the Great Irish Famine Museum Project at Hofstra University.

I audited the Annual Conference of the Hofstra New Teachers Network during which teachers who have worked with sample lessons made presentations. On that occasion two members of the Advisory Committee, Professor Robert Scally, Academic Director of New York University's Ireland House and New York Assemblyman John J. McIneny shared their hopes for confronting the problem of world hunger by examining the Great Irish Famine and learning from it in the context of human rights. Listening to them and to the teachers and students I believe that the Great Irish Famine Curriculum is an appropriate model for an understanding of a famine-stricken people's right to access food, and for an examination of strategies of aid and relief to regions visited by famine.

My wish is that teachers of New York schools who will use this curriculum may find its contents a source of ideas and inspiration for their students and a tool for their own pedagogical skills. I look forward to hearing further evaluations. My debt of gratitude to Professor Maureen Murphy and to Professor Alan Singer of Hofstra University's School of Education for developing the curriculum is incalculable in terms of my own enrichment and that of Irish people, survivors of the Great Irish Famine. My thanks and appreciation go to them and to all who have helped in this project.

With warm wishes,
Yours sincerely,

Margaret Mac Curtain

Margaret Mac Curtain

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Acknowledgments

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum was the work of many hands. On behalf of the Hofstra team it is a pleasure to thank the following people for their help in realizing this project:

United States Congressman Joseph Crowley and former New York State Senator Michael Hoblock had the vision to see that the most appropriate way to honor those who suffered during the Great Irish Famine was to educate the students in the schools of New York State with lessons in humanity about hunger and homelessness. Assemblyman Steven Sanders, Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee, Speaker Sheldon Silver, and Majority Leader Joseph Bruno brought this initiative to the floor of both houses. The American-Irish Legislators Society of New York and its Past President, former Assemblyman Richard Keane, provided key support for the legislation. That legislation brought the study of the Great Irish Famine into the New York State Human Rights Curriculum and provided the opportunity to develop this curriculum.

We appreciate the strong interest and support of Governor George Pataki who signed into law the amendment to Section 801 (1) of the Education Law and who shares his own Irish roots with many New Yorkers. We appreciate the help of Governor Pataki's staff: particularly his former Counsel the Honorable Michael Finnegan, Liaison Jack Irwin, Assistant to the Governor for Irish Affairs, and Kevin Dempsey, Director of Community Relations. A thank you goes to Jeff Cleary for his continuing interest in the project throughout his tenure as a member of the Governor's staff and as the Managing Director of the Leinster Association of North America, Inc.

We were fortunate to have an Advisory Committee appointed by the New York State Department of Education. Chaired by Dr. Margaret MacCurtain, O.P., Chair of the Advisory Board of the Irish National Archives, the Committee included distinguished scholars of the Great Irish Famine from Ireland and the United States: Dr. Mary E. Daly (University College, Dublin), Dr. James S. Donnelly (University of Wisconsin), Dr. Margaret Kelleher (National University of Ireland, Maynooth), Noel Kissane (Keeper of Manuscripts, National Library of Ireland) Dr. Joseph Lee (University College, Cork and New York University), Assemblyman John J. McEneny (New York State Assembly), Dr. Kerby Miller (University of Missouri, Columbia), Dr. Cormac O'Gráda (University College, Dublin), Dr. Kevin O'Neill (Boston College), Peter Quinn (Time Warner Communications), and Dr. Robert J. Scally (New York University). Their willingness to share their work with us and to read through drafts of *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* has helped us to create a document that is informed by the highest standard of current scholarship.

In addition to his work on the Advisory Board, Dr. Kerby Miller shared his collection of emigrant letters with us. Mary Daley and Noel Kissane read the text closely and offered corrections and editorial changes. Margaret MacCurtain visited school sites, worked with students, and assisted in editing of *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*. Board members MacCurtain, McEneny and Scally participated in the Hofstra Great Irish Famine Museum and Teachers' Conference at Hofstra University on Dec. 3-4, 1999.

The work on images of suffering in Irish and Indian famine literature by Margaret Kelleher was essential for the international context for this curriculum. She was generous with her wide knowledge of nineteenth century Irish literature and she, too, read drafts and made suggestions for additional (and better) readings. Myread Gallagher, O.P., gave us Irish curriculum materials and suggested how they might be used appropriately with elementary and middle school students. Mary Helen Thuente of Indiana University-Purdue University at Ft. Wayne advised us about children's literature as well as about nineteenth century Irish history. Catherine B. Shannon of Westfield State College and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst shared the Great Irish Famine materials she has used in her courses, and Karl Bottigheimer of SUNY-Stony Brook reviewed an early draft of the curriculum. Robert G. Lowery, editor of *The Irish Literary Supplement*, was endlessly helpful about design and content. For the story the Irish in America we are always indebted to the pioneering work of Lawrence J. McCaffrey, Professor Emeritus of History at Loyola University, Chicago, and Charles Fanning at Southern Illinois University. Robert Rhodes, Professor Emeritus of English and Irish Literature at SUNY, Cortland, was an early and ongoing mentor in all things Irish.

We are grateful for two specialists in Elementary Education Language Arts: Louise S. O'Rourke, former principal of the Franklin Avenue School, Valley Stream, and Judith Singer of Long Island University-Brooklyn, who provided valuable additions to the elementary school level methods and materials. Victor Jacarino, Chair of English at Herricks Middle and High Schools and Past President of the New York State English Council, reviewed the curriculum in terms of the English Language Arts Learning Standards and helped conceptualize how teachers could use *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* to teach the learning standards. Lawrence Frohman of West Nyack High School brought his background in European history to the Great Irish Famine and prepared introductory readings for teachers. We had advice about music from David Loddengaard, Director of Riverhead and from our Hofstra colleague Bruce Torf. Roberta Raymond of the Edward E. Murrow High School and Dorothy Sypher of Hofstra University were the dance consultants.

While virtually every major Irish-American organization has expressed interest and encouragement in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, some provided particular assistance to the project. Under the dynamic leadership of Ann Garvey, the American Irish Teachers Association worked closely with Cheryl Harrington-Lukacs, staff of former Assemblyman Crowley on the legislation proposal. Long-standing AITS friends: Steve Burke, Eileen Folan, John Garvey, Rosemary Lombard, and Deborah Shea heard the earliest version of the curriculum and were generous in their encouragement and support. Dr. Kevin Cahill, President General of the American Irish Historical Society, placed the resources of the Society at our disposal and Executive Directors Paul Rupert and later William Corbert and librarian Phyllis Brugnotti were helpful with suggestions. Dr. Robert J. Scally offered the hospitality of Glucksman Ireland House for our teleconference with members of the Advisory Board in New York and in Dublin. Their International Conference on Hunger (May 19 and 20, 1995) significantly influenced our thinking about teaching the Great Irish Famine in the context of world hunger and homelessness.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians have had a long commitment to educational programs about the Irish experience in the United States. We are grateful for their counsel and for long conversations about the progress of the curriculum. Historian Mike McCormack has been especially helpful. We thank the Ladies AOH for the gift of books to field sites when we started to test individual lessons. Linda Cronin, New York State LAOH Historian, was extremely helpful in facilitating that gift. We thank members of the Irish-American community who sent us famine materials: Lauren Haggerty, James Mullen, Rose-Ann Rabatoy, and Patricia Jameson Sammartano.

We are grateful for the interest and support of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland: The Irish Ambassador Seán O hUiginn, and Bernadette O hUiginn, Ambassador Daithi O'Ceallaigh and Antoinette O'Ceallaigh. Irish Consul General Barry Robinson and the staff of the Offices of the Irish Consul General in Boston and New York were always helpful. We particularly thank Margaret Corrigan and Brenda Carmichael. The British Consul in Boston, George Fergusson, assisted us in contacting experts in Northern Ireland.

In Ireland a number of institutions supported the development of *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*. The staff of the Irish National Archives and the National Library of Ireland helped us locate resources. We had helpful advice from Catherine Marshall of the Irish Museum of Modern Art and from Máire Bourke and Sheila Breathnach-Lynch of the National Gallery of Ireland. The Department of Irish Folklore faculty Seamus O'Catháin, Patricia Lysaght, and Ríonach Uí hOgáin advised us about the Great Irish Famine in oral tradition. We also thank University College Dublin for facilitating our teleconference meeting between the Irish and the American Advisory Board members. Donla uí Bhraonáin of Fiontar, Dublin City University advised about translations from Irish and untangled computer problems in Ireland. At the University of Limerick Liam 'O'Dochartaigh made a number of helpful suggestions. The best one was that Eugene O'Brien, a faculty member in his department, use his senior pupils at St. Brigid's National School to develop a pilot project linking his classroom with a New York State school to share the study of Irish immigration to the United States. The happy results have been a collaboration between St. Brigid's and Patricia McGivern's class at South High School in Valley Stream, New York.

Another friend to the project was Annette Honan of Trócaire, the Irish famine relief organization founded in 1973 to help the poor of developing countries. Three of the lessons in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* are lessons that Trócaire developed as part of its educational program. We use them with their permission and our thanks. Irish

friends took us to famine sites and we especially thank Louise Farrell for a memorable trip to the Callan workhouse and Éilis McDowell for being a companion and consultant on many famine-related excursions.

Martin and Joyce Enright arranged for a visit to see “Faoin Sceach” (FWEEN Skack, Under the Hawthorn), Fred Conlon’s sculpture in the famine graveyard at the site of the old workhouse. The work was commissioned by the County Sligo Famine Commemoration Committee. Impressed by the power and dignity of the image, we asked Joe McGowan and his committee for permission to adopt “Faoin Sceach” as our logo.

We have enjoyed the institutional support of Hofstra University. We have been gratified by the personal interest and support of the Chairman of the Hofstra University Board of Trustees, John J. Conefrey, and by the encouragement and enthusiasm of our President, Dr. James M. Shuart. The Provost, Dr. Herman Berliner, and Dean of the School of Education and Allied Human Services, Dr. James J. Johnson, have been generous in providing resources to the project. Associate Dean Penelope Haile first brought the notice of *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* Grant to our attention and has been an unfailing source of good counsel.

Associate Provost for Grants and Research Howard Negrin and Assistant Provost for Grants and Research Sophia Kaloulidis helped us prepare the grant application. Richard Bennett of the Office of Planned Giving and Hofstra’s liaison was a valuable source of advice. The Academic Computer Center provided resources, and we thank Associate Provost for Information Systems Eugene Ingoglia, Director of Academic Computing Anneliese Payne, and Edward Brenglia. James Screven and Alina Vinitoky, our education technology team members, have designed our Great Irish Famine website. Dean of Library Services Dan Rubey and his staff of the Reference Department, including Professors Domenica Barbuto, Eleana Cevallos, and Janet Wagner, facilitated our research. Linda Merklin and her staff in the Editing Office provided secretarial support preparing materials for lessons and for field trials. As always, Diana Ben-Merre and Karin Spencer were valuable editorial advisors.

We are particularly indebted to our students and colleagues, particularly to the members of the Hofstra New Teachers Network, who discussed the curriculum with us, field-tested and evaluated lessons, and participated with their students in presentations of the curriculum at professional meetings. They include:

Neil Shapiro	Albany City School District
Constance Vallis Hill	Albany City School District
Jennifer Debler	Baldwin Union Free Sschool District
Nina Wolfe	Bay Shore Union Free Sschool District
Gayle Meinkes-Lima	Brentwood Union Free Sschool District
Michael Maiglow	New York City Community SD #19 IS 292, Brooklyn
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Rhea McDougal	Brookhaven-Comsewogue Union Free Sschool District
Alice Van Tassel	Floral Park-Belrose Union Free Sschool District
Jill Vickers	Ticonderoga Central School District
Barbara Sobolewski	Great Neck Union Free Sschool District
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Abby Lasky	Herricks Union Free Sschool District
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Cheryl Smith	Hicksville Union Free School District
Jennifer Palacio	Long Beach City School District
Darren Luskoff	Mineola Union Free School District
Susan Kelly	New Hyde Park-Garden City Union Free School District
Robert Kurtz	Oyster Bay-East Norwich City School District
Rachel Gaglione	New York City Community School District #24: IS 119, Queens
Michael Alpinar	New York City Community School District #29: IS 238, Queens
Roseanne Mitchell	New York City Community School District #24: IS 73, Queens
Dennis Mooney	Benjamin Cardoza High School. Queens
Stu Stein	Benjamin Cardoza High School. Queens
Rozella Kirchgassner	Law Government and Community Service Magnet High School, Queens
Michael Pezone	Law Government and Community Service Magnet High School, Queens
Jewella Lynch	Roosevelt Union Free School District
Leroy Franklin	Roosevelt Union Free School District
Kevin Bracht	Uniondale Union Free School District
Lynda Costello	Uniondale Union Free School District
James Hughes	Uniondale Union Free School District
Stephanie Hunte	Uniondale Union Free School District
Linda Barone	Utica City School District
Nicole Williams	Westbury Union Free School District
Ellen Fantuzzi	West Islip Union Free School District
Kim Alvarez	Valley Stream 24 Union Free School District
Patricia Mc Givern	Valley Stream 24 Union Free School District
Arlene Ryan	Valley Stream 24 Union Free School District

A team of final reviewers read the final draft and made valuable suggestions:

Mary Carter	Hofstra University
Steven Golberg	Past President of the New York State Council for the Social Studies
Susan Golberg	Past President of the New York State English Council
John Osborne	North Salem School District
Barbara Searle	Past President of the New York State English Council
Professor Anna M. Stare	Department of Secondary Education, SUNY Oneonta
John Walsh	Former Chair of English, Benjamin Cordoza High School and Editor of the Irish Cultural Society of Garden City Area's <i>Hedgemaster</i>
Professor Paul Jermette	Department of Education, Niagara University

We have benefited from the valuable feedback we have received from presentations to colleagues in the American Conference for Irish Studies, the Association of Teachers of Social Studies, the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures, the Long Island Social Studies Council, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Social Studies, the New York State English Council and the New York State Council for the Social Studies. We thank the Director of the Office of Multicultural Education of the New York City Board of Education, Evelyn B. Kalibala, and her associate Eileen Neeson, for inviting us to participate in their Multicultural Education Institute Series *Human Rights Issues: A Standards-Driven Approach*.

We thank Richard P. Mills, New York State Commissioner of Education, James A. Kadamus, Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Continuing Education, Roseanne DeFabio, Assistant Commissioner for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and Dr. George Gregory, Supervisor of Educational Programs. We were fortunate in having Mary Daley, Executive Director of the New York State Summer Institutes, as the New York State Education Department liaison to the project. Her knowledge and enthusiasm, and her help in getting the curriculum into production, were critical to the success of the program. Dr. Anne O'Brien Carelli brought her curriculum expertise to *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, working with Jan Christman, Diane Lang, and James Rebbitt to produce the final text.

We are grateful to the staff of the New York State Library, particularly to Associate in Curriculum and Instruction Patricia Webster who suggested how to make the curriculum and its resources most useful to school library and resource personnel. The staff of the Map Division provided copies of period maps of Albany and Buffalo for the curriculum.

An early adviser and source of encouragement was Professor Adele M. Dalsimer of Boston College. We dedicate this work to her memory.

The authors have made every effort to acquire permission for the copyrighted material used in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*. We welcome notice from others who hold the rights to materials and who have not been acknowledged.

Maureen Murphy
Alan Singer
Maureen McCann Miletta
Great Irish Famine Curriculum Project

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Curriculum Contents

WHAT DO THE ERIE CANAL, UNION SOLDIERS, THE QUAKERS, ANNIE MOORE, AND FREDERICK DOUGLASS HAVE TO DO WITH THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE?

The Great Irish Famine in the mid 1800s may not appear at first glance to be an historical event that can lead to weeks of student discussions and learning activities. It seems to be a moment in history that touched the Irish people alone. It seems to be about a potato blight that resulted in the sudden disappearance of a food source for one small country, causing economic and social disaster for Ireland. It seems to be worth mentioning in a textbook, but not complex enough for an entire curriculum.

How could a famine in Ireland have a long-term effect on world politics? Was it really an event that changed the course of history in the United States? Why is it still an emotionally-charged controversy that has resulted in debates that continue today?

For those unfamiliar with the details of the history of the Great Irish Famine, this curriculum will reveal a major turning point in world history. Study of the Great Irish Famine will not only raise the awareness of students about a significant historical event, but will give them opportunities to debate political and economic issues, critique paintings, literature, and primary sources, design charts and maps, create posters, serve as a grant review board, present dramatic dialogues, and learn about the worldwide impact of a catastrophic event in one small country. *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* is filled with learning experiences for grades 4-12 in art, mathematics, geography, history, technology, drama, literature, science, technology, music, economics, and family and consumer science. For every activity there are performance indicators related to the New York State Social Studies and English Language Arts Learning Standards.

As students participate in the learning experiences, they will not only be moving toward meeting the New York State learning standards, but will be developing much broader knowledge of how a famine in Ireland had dramatic historical impact. This curriculum addresses such questions as:

How could a newspaper editorial in Britain inspire Native Americans in the United States?

Is it ethical to steal food if you are starving?

How did Franklin D. Roosevelt's economic policies compare to Peel's and Russell's?

Why do families hold a "wake" when someone dies?

What causes starvation in Somalia today?

How are the Civil War, the Erie Canal, and Ellis Island connected?

How should a nation provide relief for the poor?

How do paintings depict the emotions of a traumatic event in world history?

Who were Countess Kathleen O'Shea, Mother Jones, and Maria Edgeworth?

What were Albany, Brooklyn, and New York City like during Irish emigration?

What can we learn about the famine from Seamus Heaney and Frederick Douglass?

HOW TO USE THE CURRICULUM

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum is a menu of 150 activities designed to be taught individually or in a cluster.

The 150 Activities are designed to provide guidance to teachers in identifying objectives, planning activities, and assessing progress of students as they move towards meeting the New York State Learning Standards. Just by looking through the handouts, or by studying the poster included in the curriculum, teachers will discover a gold mine of new and challenging activities to implement in their classrooms.

Each activity contains:

- Background Information for the Teacher
- Resources, including Handouts and Suggested Readings
- Student Learning Objectives
- Related New York State Learning Standards
- Performance Indicators
- Dimensions of Learning, including Intellectual Skills
- Classroom Activities
- Assessment Option
- Teacher Reflection with additional ideas and comments
- Additional Learning Experiences (for more advanced or younger students)

Included in the curriculum is a poster-sized chart that can be used as a reference for finding the activities that will meet the goals of the teacher.

The curriculum can be approached in a number of different ways. The following options demonstrate that teachers can use the curriculum when they know the topic they wish to teach, or when they have determined the objective of a lesson, or when they are addressing a specific learning standard.

Option #1

- Select a New York State standard that you want to cover in your instruction.
- Review the activities, looking at the Standards sections.
- Study the poster included in the curriculum, looking under headings that pertain to the standards, such as Geography, Mathematics/Science/Technology, United States/New York History, or Arts.

Option #2

- Identify the focus of your lesson, such as writing essays using primary sources, or studying a piece of literature.
- Use the poster included in the curriculum to identify activities that match your focus.

Option #3

- Study the handouts included with each activity and identify resources that pertain to the objectives of your lesson.
- Look for primary sources, illustrations, political cartoons, and other materials.

Option #4

- Identify the Intellectual Skills that you would like to emphasize in your lesson, such as critical thinking, drawing conclusions, multiple perspectives, reflection, etc.
- Review the activities, looking at the Dimensions of Learning section.

Option #5

- See Clusters of Activities in the Table of Contents for activities that are related.

Option #6

- Find the columns titled Essay Question, Primary Sources, or Research Project that are on the poster included in the curriculum.

Option #7

- If you would like to use differentiated instruction, look at the poster included in the curriculum and find the column titled Differentiated Instruction. Identify the Activities that have handouts that have been modified.

Option #8

- Choose an activity you think your students will enjoy!

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRICULUM SECTIONS

Each activity in this curriculum has the following sections:

BACKGROUND

This section provides background information for the teacher. It includes historical information and facts that may be useful in introducing the activity.

It is important that teachers read the essays in the beginning of the curriculum that give more detailed background information about the Great Irish Famine.

RESOURCES

This section is divided into three parts:

HANDOUTS

Handouts are located at the end of each activity and include maps, primary sources, articles, letters, etc.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

For further background and student research.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

If needed (e.g., art supplies, board notes, etc.)

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This section describes the overall objectives of the activity. The section is linked to the Learning Standards and the Performance Indicators (see below).

STANDARDS

The New York State learning standards that are most relevant to the activity are listed.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

As students participate in the Learning Experiences, their performance will indicate if they are achieving the objectives of the activity and are meeting the New York State standards.

The Performance Indicators listed in this section describe what teachers can look for when teaching the activity. Modifications in instruction can be made to assure that students are achieving the objectives.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

The primary emphasis in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* is on the learning dimension *Intellectual Skills*. The Intellectual Skills that are cultivated in the activity are listed.

Multi-Disciplinary approaches also are listed so that teachers in social studies can share instruction with English language arts, music, science, and other subject areas.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

This section describes the classroom discussions, writing exercises, group projects, and other recommended learning experiences.

Teachers can select the learning experiences that seem appropriate, and also can refer to other curriculum activities on the same subject. (For example, there are two activities about the Erie Canal, and teachers can combine the learning experiences.)

ASSESSMENT OPTION

In this section, a suggested assessment is written for the student, including essay questions, journal assignments, story suggestions, and other forms of evaluation.

Teachers are encouraged to design their own forms of assessments that match the learning experiences and are linked to the performance indicators and objectives.

TEACHER REFLECTION

This section describes results of field tests of the Learning Experiences, as well as additional ideas that the teacher may want to consider when planning and implementing the activity.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Occasionally an activity will contain suggestions for additional learning experiences for either more advanced or younger students.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE

Essential books for elementary/middle Schools

Fiction

Conlon-McKenna, Martita. *Under the Hawthorn Tree*. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1990. ISBN 0-86278-206-6. In the first of the trilogy of prize-winning novels about the O'Driscoll children who are orphaned by the Great Irish Famine, they have to make their way across the country to two great-aunts they don't know, and they must try to avoid the workhouse.

Wildflower Girl. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1991. ISBN 0-86278-283-X. In the sequel to *Under the Hawthorn Tree*, Peggy, youngest of the O'Driscolls, sets off at age 13 for a new life in America. What awaits her in Boston? Will she ever see her brother and sister again?

Fields of Home. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1996. ISBN 086278-509-X. In the last book of the trilogy, the O'Driscolls' lives are again uncertain. It is the time of the land war, and Eily's family may lose their farm. Michael's future is uncertain when Castletaggart, the big house where he works, burns. In America, Peggy is faced with the choice between a safe life as a servant in Boston and a wagon train west with her new husband and other Irish immigrants. Will they ever own their own fields of home?

Fitzpatrick, Marie-Louise. *The Long March: The Choctaw's Gift to Irish Famine Relief*. Choctaw editing and foreword by Gary WhiteDeer. Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words, 1998. ISBN 0-86327-644-X. In 1847, the Choctaw people gave \$170 to the Irish poor. In this story the young Choctaw Choona must decide whether he supports this generous gesture. In reaching his decision, Choona learns about the history of his own people's Long March and the loss his own family suffered. Facing his people's past, he understands the contribution to Irish famine relief is an affirmation of Choctaw values.

Hilts, Len. *Timmy O'Dowd and the Big Ditch*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988. ISBN 0-15-332993-9. Timmy O'Dowd's father is in charge of a section of the Erie Canal in western New York State. His grandfather, who had helped to build the canal, lives with Timmy's family. When Timmy's cousin from New York comes to visit, Timmy is not sure he likes Dennis, but when there is a breach in the canal it is Dennis' solution that saves the day.

Timmy learns a valuable lesson about appreciating differences. The book includes a history ("The Erie Canal: Then and Now"), a glossary and a useful bibliography.

Lally, Soibhe. *The Hungry Wind*. Dublin: Poolbeg, 1997. ISBN 1-85371-717-7. The Great Irish Famine destroys Marya and Breege Gilbride's world. Their father dies, they are evicted and they have to go to the workhouse where they are separated from their mother and younger brother who perish with fever. The workhouse master who has abused one young inmate threatens Marya. When the Workhouse Board of Guardians decides to join a scheme to send Irish workhouse girls to Australia, Marya and Breege have a opportunity to start a new life and perhaps be reunited with their uncle who was transported for stealing food for his hungry family. Do they have the courage to go?

Loughrey, Eithne. *Annie Moore: First in Line for America*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1999. ISBN 1-85635-245-5. When Annie Moore's parents and older brother Tom emigrated from Cork, Annie and her younger brothers Phillip and Anthony stayed with an aunt and uncle until their parents were settled and could send for them. Annie and the boys arrive aboard the *Nevada* on Jan. 1, 1892, the day the new immigrant station at Ellis Island opens. Annie is the first steerage passenger to step off the ferry and is rewarded with a \$10 gold piece. When Annie and her brothers join their family, they find that life is very hard in America. Annie goes to work and makes her way. While Annie Moore was a real person, her statue stands at the Ellis Island ferry landing, the story is fiction based on the historical conditions of the Irish in New York in the mid-nineteenth century.

McKeown, Arthur. *Famine*. Ill. Josip Lizatovic. Dublin: Poolbeg, 1997. ISBN 1-85371-505-1. A title in Poolbeg's Easy Reader series, *Famine* is the story of Joe Campbell, a farmer and weaver who lives with his daughter Maggie and their little dog Sal near the market town of Ballymena. When the Great Irish Famine comes, Joe decide to leave his farm and emigrate to Virginia, where his uncle settled earlier. Readers of *Famine* will share Joe and Maggie's journey to America aboard the *Electra*.

Patterson, Katherine. *Lyddie*. New York: Puffin Books, 1991. Among the things Lyddie learns when she goes to work in the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, is to look beyond the stereotype of a group. When

Brigid MacBride joins the mill girls and says she finds the work hard, Lyddie says, "They be such fools, those Irish." Readers will find that Lyddie's opinion changes and the two girls become friends.

Vard, Colin. *Trail of Tears: Key to the Past 3*. Dublin: Mentor Press, 1997. ISBN 0-947548-81-5. This is the third in a series of time travel books which make Irish history come alive to young readers. Grainne finds herself in famine-wracked Ireland. She witnesses evictions, fever, and the poorhouse before joining her friend Diarmuid and his family on the *Londonderry* heading for the port of New Orleans. Diarmuid dies of fever en route, so Grainne and a friend head for Arkansas aboard a riverboat. Her friend is murdered and Grainne is befriended by a Choctaw chief named Thomas LeFlore who names Grainne "Mali ia" which means Carried by the Wind. She confronts the Choctaws' Trail of Tears march from Vicksburg and sees that their dispossession and suffering is similar to that of the Irish. The Choctaws give Grainne \$170 for the poor Irish and her return ticket to Dublin.

General Background

Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine*. New York: Discoveries, Harry Abrams, Inc., 1995. ISBN 0-8109-2895-7. While *The Irish Famine* appears in a small format, this is a richly illustrated short introductory history of the Great Irish Famine by a contemporary Great Irish Famine historian. *The Irish Famine* traces hunger in Ireland from before the famine to the current Irish attitudes about the Great Irish Famine, including Ireland's record for humanitarian action to fight homelessness. The book has a documents section that includes contemporary accounts of Ireland before and during the Great Irish Famine, contemporary and modern literature about the Great Irish Famine and a summary of the historical debate about the Great Irish Famine.

Kinealy, Christine. *This Great Calamity. The Irish Famine 1845-52*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rhinehart, 1995. ISBN 1-57098-140. Kinealy argues the Great Irish Famine was neither inevitable nor unavoidable and considers the forces that shaped the famine and how those forces interacted. She is particularly concerned with famine relief efforts, their concept and their implementation.

Kissane, Noel. *The Irish Famine. A Documentary History*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995. ISBN 0-907328-24-5. This collection of contemporary documents of the Great Irish Famine provides insight into the knowledge, opinions and feelings about hunger and homelessness in Ireland. Organized chronologically into thematic sections, the author provides a short introduction to each topic followed by the documents and material:

charts, graphs, maps and illustrations that help to explain the texts. The book's last section on the aftermath of the Great Irish Famine concludes with "The Irish Famine and World Hunger," an excerpt from President Mary Robinson's address to the International Conference on Hunger organized by Glucksman Ireland House in 1995. The book includes a Great Irish Famine chronology.

Litton, Helen. *The Irish Famine: An Illustrated History*. Minneapolis MN: Irish Books and Media, 1994. ISBN 0-86327-427-7. This is an extremely useful short introduction to the Great Irish Famine. Primary source material include: a map, eye-witness accounts, charts, engravings, reproductions of records, reports, and notices. There also are some colored reproductions of paintings and drawings and a bibliography.

O'Cathaoir, Brendan. *Famine Diary*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999. ISBN 071652655-7. This book first appeared as a series of Famine Diary columns in the pages of *The Irish Times* between 1995 and 1997. For his columns O'Cathaoir compiled an account of the Great Irish Famine from contemporary sources: letters, diaries and particularly from regional newspapers that documented events from the first report of the blight in September 1845 to an estimate of famine dead at the end of 1847. Each entry provides an overview of a famine-related topic as it was reported in various locations throughout the country. Readers can see the crisis deepening and only bleakness ahead. O'Cathaoir has added notes, a bibliography, an introduction, and an epilogue that brings the Great Irish Famine events up to 1851. Professor Joe Lee has contributed the foreword. This is a valuable book for students working with timelines and chronologies.

Essential Books for Middle/Senior High School Students

Daly, Mary E. *The Famine in Ireland*. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press for the Dublin Historical Society, 1986. ISBN 0-85221-108-2. In her short, prize-winning introduction to the Great Irish Famine, a book in a series of student paperbacks for high school students, teachers and the general reader, Daly provides an overview of Ireland before the Famine, during the Famine and the Famine legacy. It is both succinct and highly readable. Her analysis argues for careful consideration to be given to regional differences in matters such as public works funding and landlord response. Such local differences are themselves warnings to avoid oversimplifying the explanation of famine causes and conditions.

Donnelly, James S. *The Great Irish Potato Famine*. New York: Sutton Publishing, 2001. ISBN 0-7509-2632-

5. Donnelly's comprehensive account of the Great Irish Famine integrates economic, political, and social history in a major contribution to the study of the Great Irish Famine and to the history of the 19th century Ireland. The author evaluates current scholarship about the Great Irish Famine in a concluding chapter titled "Constructing the Memory of the Famine, 1850-1900." The book's 16 color and 100 black and white illustrations make it especially valuable for classroom use.
- Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine*. New York: Discoveries, Harry Abrams, Inc., 1955. ISBN 0-8109-2895-7. While *The Irish Famine* appears in a small format, this is a richly illustrated short introductory history of the Great Irish Famine by a contemporary Great Irish Famine historian. *The Irish Famine* traces hunger in Ireland before the famine to the current Irish attitudes about the Great Irish Famine, including Ireland's record for humanitarian action to bring relief to those suffering from hunger and homelessness. The book has a documents section that includes contemporary accounts of Ireland before and during the Great Irish Famine and a summary of the historical debate about the Great Irish Famine.
- Kelleher, Margaret. *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* Cork: Cork University Press, 1997. ISBN 1-85918-078-7. This is a bold new inter-disciplinary analysis of contemporary literary and artistic evidence about the Great Irish Famine and the Bengali Famine of 1943-44 to argue that there is a pattern of female imagery, images of helplessness and hopelessness. These female images become the metaphors for their sorrowing people, the way to "express the inexpressible."
- Kennedy, Liam, Paul S. Ell, E.M. Crawford and L.A. Clarkson, *Mapping the Great Irish Famine: A Survey of the Famine Decades*. Dublin: Four Courts, 1999. ISBN 1-85182-353-0. The book is a study of the Great Irish Famine that traces famine events in the context of demographic and economic data using charts, tables, illustrations and maps as well as text. It provides excellent examples of how to use such resources to explain events like the Great Irish Famine. It will be valuable help to students learning to use these kinds of resources.
- Killen, John, ed. *The Famine Decade: Contemporary Accounts 1841-1851*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1995. ISBN 0-85640-560-4. This collection of primary source documents organized chronologically and illustrated with charts, drawings and cartoons is a very useful Great Irish Famine source book for teachers and students. *The Famine Decade* documents the deepening crisis, the contemporary knowledge available to deal with the crisis and the attitudes of those who had the responsibility to administer relief and those who voluntarily took on the roles of care-givers.
- Kissane, Noel. *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995. ISBN 0-907328-24-5. This collection of contemporary documents of the Great Irish Famine provides insight into the knowledge and opinions about hunger and homelessness in Ireland. Organized chronologically into thematic sections, the author provides a short introduction to each topic followed by the documents and material: charts, graphs, maps and illustrations that help to explain the texts. The book's last section on the aftermath of the Great Irish Famine concludes with "The Irish Famine and World Hunger," an excerpt from President Mary Robinson's address to the International Conference on Hunger organized by Glucksman Ireland House in 1995. The book includes a Great Irish Famine chronology.
- Litton, Helen. *The Irish Famine: an Illustrated History*. Minneapolis, MN: Irish Books and Media, 1994. ISBN 0-86327-427-7. This is an extremely useful short introduction to the Great Irish Famine. Primary source material include: a map, eye-witness accounts, charts, engravings, reproductions of records, reports and notices. There also are some colored reproductions of paintings and drawings and a bibliography.
- McCaffrey, Lawrence J. *The Irish Diaspora in America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976. ISBN 0-253-33166-8. This pioneering study of the Irish in America begins with the history of Ireland to the rise of Irish nationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. Then McCaffrey traces mid-nineteenth century Irish immigrants from their arrival as famine refugees living in the slums of port cities to middle class suburbia. He pays special attention to Irish urban politics and the role of the G.I. Bill in creating the upwardly mobile Irish.
- Miller, Kerby A. *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. ISBN 0-19-503594-1. Miller's thesis in his magisterial study of nineteenth century Irish emigration is that more emigrating Irish saw themselves as political and economic exiles than people drawn to new opportunities in North America. Miller makes extensive use of immigrant letters and other writings and folklore collected from emigrants and their families.
- Mokyr, Joel. *Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1800-1845*. London: 1985 ISBN. This is a challenging text for teachers and students with strong backgrounds and interests in economics. It is a brilliant economic analysis that has had a significant impact on contemporary famine historians.
- Morash, Chris. ed. *The Hungry Voice: The Poetry of the Irish Famine*. Foreword by Terence Brown.

Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989. ISBN 0-7165-2437-6. This anthology of poetry written at the time of the Great Irish Famine is valuable for its record of the response of writers to the famine tragedy around them. Some of the poems were published only in the newspapers of the times and were gathered with other work for the first time by the editor. Morash's introduction provides the historical context for the collection and notes for the texts. As Terence Brown observes in his foreword, *The Hungry Voice* gives the reader "access to the imagination of a disaster."

Nicholson, Asenath. *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*. ed. Maureen Murphy. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998. ISBN 1-874675-94-5. This is the account of an American woman who ran her own relief operation in Dublin during the worst winter of the Great Irish Famine. She then traveled around the country doing what she could for the suffering poor. Her eyewitness account of famine conditions is one of the most significant documents we have of those defining moments in Irish history. Biographical introduction, notes and index.

O'Cathaoir, Brendan. *Famine Diary*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999. ISBN 071652655-7. This book first appeared as a series of Famine Diary columns in the pages of *The Irish Times* between 1995 and 1997. For his columns O'Cathaoir compiled an account of the Great Irish Famine from contemporary sources: letters, diaries and particularly from regional newspapers that documented events from the first report of the blight in September 1845 to an estimate of famine dead at the end of 1847. Each entry provides an overview of a famine-related topic as it was reported in various locations throughout the country. Readers can see the crisis deepening and only bleakness ahead. O'Cathaoir has added notes, a bibliography, an introduction, and an epilogue that brings the Great Irish Famine events up to 1851. Professor Joe Lee has contributed the foreword. This is a valuable book for students working with timelines and chronologies.

O'Flaherty, Liam. *Famine*. Dublin: Wolfhound, 1984. ISBN 0-86327043-3. Hailed by his contemporary Seán O'Faoláin as "the best historical novel to date," *Famine* is the story of three generations of Kilmartins living in the west of Ireland during the Great Irish Famine. It is written on a heroic scale and O'Flaherty's gifts for narrative and characterization have been admired by critics; some contemporary historians, however, fault his oversimplified interpretation of the events of the time. All agree *Famine* is a major Irish novel.

O'Gráda, Cormac. *The Great Irish Famine*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989. ISBN 0-7171-1731-6 Cormac O'Gráda, Director of the Centre for Economic

Research at University College, Dublin, has written extensively about the Great Irish Famine. This book introduces an understanding of the Irish economy before the famine: poverty, promising trends in food processing, (milling), banking and transportation, and the danger of dependence on a single food source. Like Daly, O'Gráda argues for the importance of regional studies. O'Gráda provides a useful glossary of economic terms and an annotated bibliography.

Póirtéir, Cathal, ed. *Famine Echoes*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995. ISBN 0-7171-2314-6. Póirtéir has mined the archives of the Department of Irish Folklore at University College, Dublin, for accounts of the Great Irish Famine from oral tradition collected in 1935 and 1945 from the children and grandchildren of famine survivors. The chapters are organized thematically. The editor's introduction "Folk Memory and the Famine" discusses the way that oral tradition can provide insights into social history.

The Great Irish Famine. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995. ISBN1-85635-111-4. This collection of essays is based on a series of radio talks by an international group of Great Irish Famine experts: Kevin Whelan, "Pre and Post-Famine Landscape Change," S.J. Connolly, "The Great Famine and Irish Politics," David Dickson, "The Other Great Irish Famine," E. Margaret Crawford, "Food and Famine," Laurence M. Geary, "Famine, Fever and the Bloody Flux," Peter Gray, "Ideology and the Famine," Christine Kinealy, "The Role of the Poor Law during the Famine," Mary E. Daly, "The Operations of Famine Relief, 1845-57," Irene Whelan, "The Stigma of Souperism," James S. Donnelly, Jr., "Mass Eviction and the Great Famine," David Fitzpatrick, "Flight from Famine," Patrick Hickey c.c., *The Famine in Skibbereen Union (1845-1851)*, Tim P. O'Neill, "The Persistence of Famine in Ireland," Cathal Póirtéir, "Folk Memory and the Famine," Margaret Kelleher, "Irish Famine in Literature," Cormac O'Gráda, "The Great Famine and Today's Famine."

Quinn, Peter. "The Tragedy of Bridget Such-a-One," *American Heritage* (December 1997), 37-51. Peter Quinn's Great Irish Famine essay has been so popular with field site colleagues that it has been added to the book list of recommended readings. Quinn's discussion of the way the Irish diaspora changed Ireland and the United States is informed by the author's wide range of reading in the Irish and the Irish American experience. He concludes the Great Irish Famine was central to Irish American identity and that Irish immigrants challenged the United States to fulfill its destiny to be, in Herman Melville's terms, "not a nation so much as a world."

Scally, Robert James. *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, & Emigration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. ISBN 0-19-505582-9. This is a beautifully written study of the Great Irish Famine in Ballykilcline, a village of 500 people in the Irish midland County Roscommon. Scally begins his book by explaining the complicated land ownership arrangements in rural Ireland before the famine: the landlord's concept of ownership as law and the tenants' allegiance to traditional entitlements, obligations and customs of communal ownership. In 1847 the Crown Commissioners decided to evict the tenant families living on the Mahon estate and to send them in five groups on the road to emigrant ships in Liverpool. Their dispossession and diaspora is the subject of Scally's study.

Swords, Liam. *In Their Own Words. The Famine in North Connacht 1845-49*. Blackrock: The Columba Press, 1999. ISBN 1856072479. This is a collection of contemporary accounts from one of the areas most desolated by the Great Irish Famine. The voices include those of landlords and merchants who used the famine as an opportunity to profit themselves and those who risked their own welfare and even their lives to do what they could to save the suffering poor. The book is arranged chronologically and thematically; the accounts are cross-referenced by location. There are illustrations, a series of documents that show such things as public works, relief subscriptions and passenger lists, a bibliography and an index.

Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Great Hunger*. New York: Harper and Row, 1962. Historians have faulted the author's simplistic analysis of the Great Irish Famine that assigns blame for famine suffering to Sir Charles Trevelyan, but all acknowledge the book is the most compelling narrative of the famine.

Clusters of Activities

Ireland Today

Ireland Today
Meet the Irish
Dance in Ireland: The Walls of Limerick
Making a St. Brigid's Cross
Ireland's National Game
Hurler Christy Ring: Ireland's Greatest Athlete
The Long March: Where is Ireland?

The Potato

How to Grow Potatoes
The Amazing Potato
A Diet of Potatoes: Is it a Healthy Diet?
Preparing a Potato Feast
Folk Songs From Two Traditions: The Irish and African-American

Irish History: an Overview

A Chronology of Irish History Through 1949
Daniel O'Connell: Irishman of the Millennium
Why Was There a Famine in the 1840s?
How Did Ireland Change After the Great Irish Famine?
Hunger in Ireland After the Great Irish Famine
The Great Irish Famine and the Quest for Irish Independence
Hunger as a Political Weapon
Language and the Great Irish Famine

Ireland before the Great Irish Famine

A Diet of Potatoes: Is it a Healthy Diet?
The Home Life of the Irish
Dance in Ireland: The Walls of Limerick
Folk Songs From Two Traditions: The Irish and African-American
Daniel O'Connell: Irishman of the Millennium
Pre-Famine Housing Conditions in Ireland
The Employment Problem in Pre-Famine Ireland
Itinerant Workers in Ireland Before the Great Irish Famine
Food Shortages Before the Great Irish Famine
Travelers in Pre-Famine Ireland
View of Economists
Belfast Becomes an Industrial City
Characteristics of a Colony: Ireland and the Colonial Experience
Was Ireland a British Colony in the 19th Century?

The Great Irish Famine: Elementary/Middle

A Famine Timeline
Mapping the Potato Blight
The Long March (six activities)
Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Potato Blight
Bad News from the Village: Famine in Rural Ireland
Nothing to Eat: *Under the Hawthorn Tree*
Irish Quakers
Soup Kitchens Then and Now
Soyer Soup
Soup Kitchen Journals
Famine Food: American Indian Corn
Making History come Alive through Dramatization
"An Old Woman of the Roads": Eviction and Homelessness in Ireland
The Boy Who Fought Back
New York State Response to the Great Irish Famine
Heroes of the Great Irish Famine
Remember Skibbereen: The Skibbereen News Hour

The Great Irish Famine: Causes and Conditions

Why Was There a Famine in the 1840s
Demographic Data and the Great Irish Famine
Causes of the Great Irish Famine
The Great Irish Famine: An Ecological Tragedy?
A Call for Help in 1846: The Rush Letter
Viewing the Famine as Judgement on the People of Ireland
Responses of the Peel and Russell Governments
The *London Times* Writes About the Great Irish Famine
Mourning the Dead: Custom and Tradition
Remember Skibbereen: The Skibbereen News Hour

The Great Irish Famine: Relief Programs

Public Employment Programs: Russell and Roosevelt
Public Works Projects: Conditions For the Poor
British Government Treatment of the English Working Class
Diverting Resources During the Great Irish Famine
Lady Wilde and "The Famine Year"
The Great Irish Famine: An Act of Genocide?
Maria Edgeworth's Analysis of the Famine
The Irish Poor Law
Designing Relief Legislation
The Irish Workhouse System

Afraid of the Workhouse
An Ejected Family: Illustrating Eviction During the Great Irish Famine
Stealing Food: A Crime or a Failure of the System?
Did James Hasty Murder Major Denis Mahon?
Food Exports During the Great Irish Famine
Interpretations of the Great Irish Famine: Written and Visual Wave of Evictions
British Famine Relief Policy: A Moral Challenge to Civil Law
How History Becomes Poetry: Making Poems From Prose
Asenath Nicholson: Shaper of History
New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine
Creating Broadsheets and Posters for the Irish Relief Committee
The Greatest Possible Good: Famine Grants
Irish Medical Officers and the Great Irish Famine

Irish and African-Americans

Folk Songs From Two Traditions: The Irish and African-American
Daniel O’Connell: Irishman of the Millennium
Frederick Douglass Describes Irish Poverty
Irish Friends and Frederick Douglass’ Freedom Travelers in Pre-Famine Ireland
Asenath Nicholson: Shaper of History

The Irish Economy in the 19th Century

Pre-Famine Housing Conditions in Ireland
Pre-Famine Model Landlords
Irish Land Ownership Before the Great Irish Famine
The Employment Problem in Pre-Famine Ireland
Itinerant Workers in Ireland Before the Great Irish Famine
View of Economists
Why Is It Important to Be Counted?
Why Was There a Famine in the 1840s?
Demographic Data and the Great Irish Famine
Viewing the Famine as Judgement on the People of Ireland
Responses of the Peel and Russell Governments
The *London Times* Writes About the Great Irish Famine
Public Employment Programs: Russell and Roosevelt
Public Works Projects: Conditions For the Poor
Diverting Resources During the Great Irish Famine
Food Exports During the Great Irish Famine
The Irish Brigade in the American Civil War
The New York City 1863 Draft Riots

Government and the Great Irish Famine

Why Is It Important to Be Counted?

Characteristics of a Colony: Ireland and the Colonial Experience
Was Ireland a British Colony in the 19th Century?
Viewing the Famine as Judgement on the People of Ireland
Responses of the Peel and Russell Governments
Public Employment Projects: Russell and Roosevelt
British Government Treatment of the English Working Class
Diverting Resources During the Great Irish Famine
The Great Irish Famine: An Act of Genocide?
The Irish Poor Law
Designing Relief Legislation
The Irish Workhouse System
An Ejected Family: Illustrating Eviction During the Great Irish Famine
Stealing Food: A Crime or a Failure of the System?
Food Exports During the Great Irish Famine
Wave of Evictions
British Famine Relief Policy: A Moral Challenge to Civil Law
Immigration Policy and the Irish
The New York City 1863 Draft Riots
Spin Doctoring: Using Language to Manipulate Information
Hunger in Memory: Reflecting on Events Like the Great Irish Famine

Hunger

What Do We Know about Hunger?
Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Potato Blight
Nothing to Eat: *Under the Hawthorn Tree*
Famine Food: American Indian Corn
Stealing Food: A Crime or a Failure of the System?
Stories of Famine Generosity
Proverbs and Famine Stories
Hospitality Rewarded: People Helping Others
Hunger in *Angela’s Ashes*
Hunger as a Political Weapon
Hunger and Hope in *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Poor People*
Ghosts in *Strange Children*
The Role of Charities in Fighting Poverty
Famine in Somalia
Famine in the World Today
Developing Awareness of Hunger
Remember Skibbereen: The Skibbereen News Hour

Rescuers

Irish Quakers
Soup Kitchens Then and Now
Soyer Soup
Soup Kitchen Journals

The Boy Who Fought Back
 New York State Response to the Great Irish Famine
 Heroes of the Great Irish Famine
The Long March (six activities)
 Maria Edgeworth's Analysis of the Famine
 Asenath Nicholson: Shaper of History
 New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine
 Creating Broadsheets and Posters for the Irish Relief Committee
 The Greatest Possible Good: Famine Grants
 Mother Jones: An Immigrant's Role in the American Labor Movement
 Stories of Famine Generosity
 Proverbs and Famine Stories
 Hospitality Rewarded: People Helping Others
 The Countess Kathleen O'Shea
 Michael Longley's Elegies for Children
 Famine in Somalia
 Developing Awareness of Hunger

The Literature of the Great Irish Famine

Lady Wilde and "The Famine Year"
 Interpretations of the Great Irish Famine: Written and Visual
 British Famine Relief Policy: A Moral Challenge to Civil Law
 How History Becomes Poetry: Making Poems From Prose
 The Campbells Leave County Antrim
Lyddie: The Irish in New England Mill Towns
 The Journey of Irish Workhouse Girls to Australia
 Preparation for Emigration
 The Emigrant's Trunk
 The American Wake
 Dance as Communication
 Irish Domestic Servants in America
 The Irish Brigade in the American Civil War
 Irish Stereotypes in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*
 The Influence of Poverty in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*
 The Countess Kathleen O'Shea
 Famine Memory in Seamus Heaney's "At a Potato Digging"
 Folk Memory in "The Hungry Grass"
 Place in Poetry of the Great Irish Famine
 Famine Anecdotes in Brendan Kennelly's "My Dark Fathers"
 Language and Identity: James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Seamus Heaney's "Traditions"
 Michael Longley's Elegies for Children
 Historical Context for *Angela's Ashes*

Hunger in *Angela's Ashes*
 Hunger and Hope in *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Poor People*
 Ghosts in *Strange Children*

Art and the Great Irish Famine

Meet the Irish
 The Home Life of the Irish
 Ireland's National Game
 Daniel O'Connell: Irishman of the Millennium
 Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Potato Blight
 Heroes of the Great Irish Famine
The Long March: Creating Murals
 Interpretations of the Great Irish Famine: Written and Visual
 Creating Broadsheets and Posters for the Irish Relief Committee
 Mourning the Dead: Custom and Tradition
 St. Brendan the Navigator: The First Irish Visitor
 The Campbells Leave County Antrim
 Monuments to Young Emigrants
 Public Monuments: Remembering the Past
 Creating Monuments to the Past
 Poetry and Painting in "At a Potato Digging"

Music and the Great Irish Famine

The Amazing Potato
 Traditional Songs About the Irish Potato
 Dance in Ireland: The Walls of Limerick
 Folk Songs From Two Traditions: The Irish and African-American
 St. Brendan the Navigator: The First Irish Visitor
 The Campbells Leave County Antrim
 Ballads: Writing the Emigrant's Experience
Kilkelly: A Ballad as Social History
 Irish Stereotypes in Paddy Songs
 Music of the Great Irish Famine

Public Speaking/Debate

Did James Hasty Murder Major Denis Mahon?
 Remember Skibbereen:
 The Skibbereen News Hour
 The Erie Canal: Then and Now
 The Irish Brigade in the American Civil War

Drama

Meet the Irish
 The Amazing Potato
 Ireland's National Game
 Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Potato Blight
 Making History Come Alive Through Dramatization
 Immigrants at Ellis Island: Radio Drama

Dance

Traditional Songs About the Irish Potato
Dance in Ireland: The Walls of Limerick
Dance as Communication

Simulations

Irish Friends and Frederick Douglass' Freedom
Pre-Famine Housing Conditions in Ireland
Irish Land Ownership Before the Great Irish Famine
Was Ireland a British Colony in the 19th Century?
Mapping the Potato Blight
Bad News from the Village: Famine in Rural Ireland
Irish Quakers
Public Works Projects: Conditions for the Poor
Designing Relief Legislation
Did James Hasty Murder Major Denis Mahon?
New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine
The Greatest Possible Good: Famine Grants
Irish Medical Officers and the Great Irish Famine
Remember Skibbereen: The Skibbereen News Hour
Who was on the *Jeanie Johnston*?
The Impact of Irish Immigration on Port Cities
Public Monuments: Remembering the Past

Science and Technology and the Great Irish Famine

How to Grow Potatoes
The Amazing Potato
A Diet of Potatoes: Is it a Healthy Diet?
Preparing a Potato Feast
Irish Land Ownership Before the Great Irish Famine
Belfast Becomes an Industrial City
What Do We Know about Hunger?
Soyer Soup
Famine Food: American Indian Corn
Demographic Data and the Great Irish Famine
The Great Irish Famine: An Ecological Tragedy?
Diverting Resources During the Great Irish Famine
Irish Medical Officers and the Great Irish Famine
The Importance of the Erie Canal
The Erie Canal: Then and Now
The Campbells Leave County Antrim
The Route of the *Jeanie Johnston*
The Journey of Irish Workhouse Girls to Australia
The Impact of Irish Immigration on Port Cities

The Irish Diaspora: Elementary/Intermediate

St. Brendan the Navigator: The First Irish Visitor
The Importance of the Erie Canal
Irish Immigrant Life in Albany in 1852
Chain Immigration: A Buffalo, New York /Irish Example
The Campbells Leave Country Antrim

The O'Connor Family Comes to New York
Ballads: Writing the Emigrant's Experience
Kilkelly: A Ballad as Social History
Who was on the *Jeanie Johnston*?
The Route of the *Jeanie Johnston*
The Irish in New York City in 1855
Irish Stereotypes in Paddy Songs
Lyddie: The Irish in New England Mill Towns
Irish Emigrants to Australia
The Journey of Irish Workhouse Girls to Australia
The Irish Diaspora Is Our Story
Annie Moore: Ellis Island's First Immigrant
Language and the Great Irish Famine

The Irish Diaspora: Intermediate/Commencement

Emigration From Ireland Before the Great Irish Famine
The Impact of Irish Immigration on Port Cities
Immigrants at Ellis Island: Radio Drama
Preparation for Emigration
The Emigrant's Trunk
The American Wake
Dance as Communication
Irish Domestic Servants in America
Monuments to Young Emigrants
The Irish Brigade in the American Civil War
The New York City 1863 Draft Riots
How the Irish Contributed to Life in America
Mother Jones: An Immigrant's Role in the American Labor Movement
Irish Stereotypes in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*
The Influence of Poverty in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*
Language and the Great Irish Famine

Mapping Lessons

Ireland Today
The Amazing Potato
Mapping the Potato Blight
The Long March: Where is Ireland?
The Importance of the Erie Canal
The Route of the *Jeanie Johnston*
The Irish in New York City in 1855

The Workhouse and its Legacy

Irish Emigrants to Australia
The Journey of Irish Workhouse Girls to Australia
The Irish Poor Law
The Irish Workhouse System
Afraid of the Workhouse

Homelessness

"An Old Woman of the Roads": Eviction and Homelessness in Ireland
The Irish Poor Law

The Irish Workhouse System
Afraid of the Workhouse
An Ejected Family: Illustrating Eviction During the
Great ` Irish Famine
Interpretations of the Great Irish Famine: Written and
Visual
Wave of Evictions
The Impact of Irish Immigration on Port Cities

Surveys

Meet the Irish
Daniel O'Connell: Irishman of the Millennium

Consumer/Family

A Diet of Potatoes: Is it a Healthy Diet?
Preparing a Potato Feast
Traditional Songs About the Irish Potato
Soyer Soup
Famine Food: American Indian Corn
The Journey of Irish Workhouse Girls to Australia

KINDS OF STUDENT WRITING IN THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE CURRICULUM

There are over 80 different kinds of writing used by students when they participate in the learning experiences of the Great Irish Famine Curriculum. The activities where teachers can find the various kinds of writing are indicated below.

Art Criticism

An Ejected Family: Illustrating Eviction During the Great Irish Famine
Public Monuments: Remembering the Past
Poetry and Painting in “At A Potato Digging”

Biographies

Heroes of the Great Irish Famine

Boasts

Ireland’s National Game

Bookmaking

New York State Response to the Great Irish Famine
New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine
Historical Context for *Angela’s Ashes*

Bumper Stickers

Why Is It Important to Be Counted?

Buttons

Why Is It Important to Be Counted?

Cartoon Strip

Ireland’s National Game

Children’s Books

The Irish Diaspora Is Our Story

Commercials

The Amazing Potato

Cookbooks

Preparing a Potato Feast

Debate

Mother Jones: An Immigrant’s Role in the American Labor Movement

Democratic Dialogues

The Great Irish Famine: An Act of Genocide?
The Role of Charities in Fighting Poverty

Dialogues

Asenath Nicholson: Shaper of History
How Did Ireland Change After the Great Irish Famine?

Dramatic Dialogues

Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Potato Blight
“An Old Woman of the Roads:” Eviction and Homelessness in Ireland

Epigraph

The Route of the *Jeanie Johnston*

Editorials

Mother Jones: An Immigrant’s Role in the American Labor Movement
Developing Awareness of Hunger

Essays

[Note: Many of the activities suggest essay topics in the assessment section.]

Essay-Cause and Effect

Mourning the Dead: Custom and Tradition
The Great Irish Famine: A Symbol for Human Rights Activities

Essay-Characterization

Irish Stereotypes in *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*
The Influence of Poverty in *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*
Hunger and Hope in *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Poor People*

Essay-Compare/Contrast

The Home Life of the Irish
Folk Songs From Two Traditions: The Irish and African-American
Pre-Famine Model Landlords
The Great Irish Famine: An Ecological Tragedy?
Public Employment Programs: Russell and Roosevelt
Interpretations of the Great Irish Famine: Written and Visual

The American Wake
Irish Stereotypes in Paddy Songs
The Journey of Irish Workhouse Girls to Australia
Hunger in *Angela's Ashes*
Language and Identity: James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Seamus Heaney's "Traditions"

Essay-Critical Lens

How History Becomes Poetry: Making Poems From Prose
Preparation for Emigration

Essay-Data Based Essay

The Great Irish Famine: An Act of Genocide?
The New York City 1863 Draft Riots

Essay-Descriptive

Dance as Communication

Essays-Literary Analysis

Famine Memory in Seamus Heaney's "At a Potato Digging"
Folk Memory in "The Hungry Grass"
Famine Anecdotes in Brendan Kennelly's "My Dark Fathers"
Place in Poetry of the Great Irish Famine
Ghosts in *Strange Children*

Essays-Persuasive

Soyer Soup
Heroes of the Great Irish Famine
Causes of the Great Irish Famine
Food Exports During the Great Irish Famine
The Great Irish Famine and the Quest for Irish Independence

Essays-Point of View

Irish Friends and Frederick Douglass' Freedom
Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Potato Blight
Afraid of the Workhouse

Eulogy

The Irish Brigade in the American Civil War

Family History

Who was on the *Jeanie Johnston*?

Heritage Sheets

Irish Immigrant Life in Albany in 1852
Chain Immigration: A Buffalo, New York/Irish Example

Inscriptions

Monuments to Young Emigrants
Creating Monuments to the Past

Interpretation of Art

Dramatic Monologues: The Discovery of the Potato Blight

Interviews

Folk Memory in "The Hungry Grass"

Journals

Soup Kitchens Then and Now
Creating Monuments to the Past

Kids Page

What Do We Know About Hunger?

Legislation

Designing Relief Legislation

Letters of Advice

Bad News from the Village: Famine in Rural Ireland
The O'Connor Family Comes to New York
Preparation for Emigration
Irish Emigrants to Australia

Letter of Appeal

Creating Broadsheets and Posters for the Irish Relief Committee

Letter with Information

The Long March: Where is Ireland?

Letter to an Official

Immigration Policy and the Irish

Letters to the Editor

The *London Times* Writes About the Great Irish Famine
New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine
The Great Irish Famine and the Quest for Irish Independence
Famine in the World Today

Letters to Family

Irish Domestic Servants in America

Letters of Nomination

Public Monuments: Remembering the Past

Letter/Simulation

British Famine Relief Policy: A Moral Challenge to Civil Law

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

Letter of Thanks

New York State Response to the Great Irish Famine
New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine

Lists

Hospitality Rewarded: People Helping Others
Annie Moore: Ellis Island's First Immigrant

Memoranda

Mapping the Potato Blight
Diverting Resources During the Great Irish Famine
The Irish Workhouse System
Irish Medical Officers and the Great Irish Famine

Narrative

The Long March: The Choctaw Council

Observations

How to Grow Potatoes

Pamphlets

Why Is It Important to Be Counted?
Developing Awareness of Hunger

Picture Books

St. Brendan the Navigator: The First Irish Visitor
Hospitality Rewarded: People Helping Others

Playwriting

Making History Come Alive Through Dramatization

Poems: Answering Poems

British Government Treatment of the English Working Class
The Great Irish Famine and the Quest for Irish Independence
Relief After the Great Irish Famine

Poems: Athletes

Hurler Christy Ring: Ireland's Greatest Athlete

Poems: Bio-Poems

Frederick Douglass Describes Irish Poverty
A Call for Help in 1846: The Rush Letter

Poems: Ballads

Ballads: Writing the Emigrant's Experience

Poems: Broadsheets

Creating Broadsheets and Posters for the Irish Relief Committee

Poems: Haiku

Food Shortages Before the Great Irish Famine

Poems: Journey Poem

A Call for Help in 1846: The Rush Letter

Poems: Pyramid Poem

How History Becomes Poetry: Making Poems From Prose

Poems: Response Poem

Asenath Nicholson: Shaper of History
The Irish Brigade in the American Civil War

Poems and Painting

Famine Memory in Seamus Heaney's "At a Potato Digging"

Poems: Rewriting Form

Place in Poetry of the Great Irish Famine

Poems: Tributes

Itinerant Workers in Ireland Before the Great Irish Famine

Political Cartoons

The Erie Canal: Then and Now

Position Paper

New Yorkers Provide Relief During the Great Irish Famine
The Role of Charities in Fighting Poverty

Post Cards

Immigrant Life in Albany in 1852

Posters

Why Is It Important to Be Counted?
Creating Broadsheets and Posters for the Irish Relief Committee

Predictions

Irish Land Ownership Before the Great Irish Famine
The Employment Problem in Pre-Famine Ireland
The Campbells Leave County Antrim

Proclamations

Hunger in Memory: Reflecting on Events Like the Great Irish Famine

Promises

Hunger in Memory: Reflecting on Events Like the Great Irish Famine

Proposals

The Irish Workhouse System

Proverbs

Proverbs and Famine Stories

Radio Scripts

Immigrants at Ellis Island: Radio Drama

Reports

A Chronology of Irish History Through 1949

Soup Kitchens Then and Now

Emigration From Ireland Before the Great Irish Famine

Chain Immigration: A Buffalo, New York/Irish Example

The Irish in New York City in 1855

Reports of Current Events

Spin Doctoring: Using Language to Manipulate
Information

Developing Awareness of Hunger

The Great Irish Famine: A Symbol for Human Rights
Activities

Scenario

The Impact of Irish Immigration on Port Cities

Sequel

Nothing to Eat: *Under the Hawthorn Tree*

Short Stories

How Did Ireland Change After the Great Irish Famine?

Skits

Bad News From the Village: Famine in Rural Ireland

Speeches

Was Ireland a British Colony in the 19th Century?

The Irish Workhouse System

Story Boards

The Campbells Leave County Antrim

Story Quilts

The O'Connor Family Comes to New York

Storytelling

The Long March: The Choctaw and the Great Irish
Famine

Surveys

Why Is It Important to Be Counted?

Television Public Service Ads

Why Is It Important to Be Counted?

Television

Remember Skibbereen: The Skibbereen News Hour

LITERATURE IN THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE CURRICULUM

The following excerpts from literature can be found in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*.

Autobiography

Behan, Brendan. *Borstal Boy*
Browne, Noel. *Against the Tide*
Douglass, Frederick. *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass My Bondage and My Freedom*
Hannan, Gerard. *Ashes. The Real Memoir of Two Boys*
McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*
O'Flynn, Christóir. *There is an Isle. A Limerick Boyhood*
O'Laoghaire, Fr. Peadar. *My Own Life*

Biography

O'Faoláin, Sean. *King of the Beggars: Daniel O'Connell and the Rise of Irish Democracy*

Diaries

Mitchel, John. *Jail Journal*
Strutt, Charles, in R. Reid and C. Morgan. *'A Decent Set of Girls': The Irish Famine Orphans of the Thomas Arbuthnot*

Drama

Friel, Brian. *Dancing at Lughnasa Philadelphia, Here I Come!*
O'Neill, Eugene. *Long Day's Journey into Night*
Synge, John Millington. "Riders to the Sea"
Yeats, W.B. "Cathleen ní Houlihan"

Essays

Orwell, George. "Politics and the English Language"
Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal," *The Drapier Letters*,
Whitman, Walt. "After First Fredericksburg," *Specimen Days*

Fiction

Branson, Karen. *The Potato Eaters*
Carleton, William. *The Black Prophet Valentine M'Clutchy. The Irish Agent*
Chandar, K. "I Cannot Die, The Man with a Thorn in his Conscience"
Conlon-McKenna, Marita. *Fields of Home Under the Hawthorne Tree Wildflower Girl*

Denenberg, Barry. *So Far from Home The Diary of Mary Driscoll*
Devi, Mahasweta. "Strange Children"
Edgeworth, Maria. *Castle Rackrent*
Faulkner, William. *Intruder in the Dust*
Fitzpatrick, Mary Louise. *The Long March: The Choctaw's Gift to Irish Famine Relief*
Harrell, Beatrice. *Longwalker's Journey: A Novel of the Choctaw Trail of Tears*
Hilts, Len. *Timmy O'Dowd and the Big Ditch*
Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
Lally, Soibhe. *The Hungry Wind*
Loughrey, Eithne. *Annie Moore. First in Line for America*
McKeown, Arthur. *Famine*
Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*
Melville, Herman. *Redburn: His First Voyage*
O'Cadháin, Máirtín, "The Year 1912"
O'Conaire, Padraic. "Put to the Rack"
O'Flaherty, Liam. *Famine*
"Going into Exile"
"Poor People"
"The Touch"
"Two Lovely Beasts"
Patterson, Katherine. *Lyddie*
Quinn, Peter. *Banished Children of Eve*
Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*
Stephens, James. *Hunger*

Folklore

Gregory, Augusta. *The Kiltartan Books*
Heaney, Marie. "The Boyhood Deeds of Cuchulainn"
Yeats, W.B. "The Countess Kathleen O'Shea"

Nonfiction

Bartoletti, Susan. *Growing Up in Coal Country*
Lord, Walter. *A Night to Remember*

Poetry

Anonymous. "A Vision of Connacht in the 19th Century"
Bishop, Elizabeth. "The Map"
Blake, William. "The Chimney Sweeper"
Boland, Eavan. "That the Science of Cartography is Limited"
Bryant, William Cullen. "A Poem for Cinque"
Crane, Stephen. "War is Kind"

Colum, Padraic. "An Old Woman of the Roads"
"The Stonebreaker"
Davis, Thomas. "Lament for the Death of Eoghan Ruadh
O'Neill"
"The West's Asleep"
Dickinson, Emily. "Hope is a thing with Feathers"
Heaney, Seamus. "At a Potato Digging"
"For the Commander of the *Eliza*"
"Traditions"
Howe, Julia Ward. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"
Kavanagh, Patrick. "The Great Hunger"
Kennelly, Brendan. "My Dark Fathers"
MacDonagh, Donagh. "The Hungry Grass"
Mahon, Derek. "'To Mrs. Moore at Inishannon'"
Maud, Caitlín. "Bobby Sands"

Murphy, Richard. "Kylemore Castle"
Ní Dhomhnaill, Nuala. "The Language Question" (trans.
P. Muldoon)
O'Connell, Eileen. "A Lament for Art O'Leary"
O'Suilleabháin, Eoghan Ruadh. "Friend of My Heart"
O'Tuama, Seán. "Christy Ring"
Subbiah, Shanmuga. "Ask the Belly"
Wilde, Jane Francesca. "The Famine Year"
Yeats, W.B. "The Second Coming"

Speeches

Davis, Thomas. "The Young Irishman"
Lincoln, Abraham. "The Gettysburg Address"
Pearse, Patrick. "Oration at the Grave of O'Donovan
Rossa"

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DISCOGRAPHY

Tributes

Heroes of the Great Irish Famine

The Brendan Voyage. An Orchestral Suite composed by Shaun Davey. Uilleann Pipes Played by Liam O'Flynn. Cassette 4 TA 3006. Tara Records, 5 Tara Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Dancing at Lughnasa. Music composed, arranged, and produced by Bill Whelan. Sony Music Entertainment. SK 60585.

Famine Remembrance. Patrick Casside. Windham Hill Records"

"The Famine Song," *Songs of Ireland*. Mary O'Hara. Tradition LP 1024.

An Gorta Mór. Written and narrated by Mike McCormack. Copies available of tape and booklet from AOH National Secretary, 31 Logan Street, Auburn, NY 13021 (\$9.95 + \$3 handling).

Kilkelly, *Kilkelly*. Moloney, O'Connell, and Keane. 48248-10722. Green Linnet Records Inc., 43 Beaver Brook Road, Danbury, CT 06810.

Long Journey Home. Produced by Paddy Moloney. CD BGM 09026-68963-2. Various artists. Tracks include: "Emigration Theme," "Skibbereen," "White Potatoes," "Famine Theme."

Out of Ireland: The Story of Irish Emigrants to America. Produced by Mick Moloney and Paul Wagner. Shanachie 79092. Soundtrack to the *Out of Ireland* video.

"St. Brendan's Fair Isle," *Uncommon Bonds*. Mick Moloney and Eugene O'Donnell. 48248-10534. Green Linnet Records Inc., 43 Beaver Brook Road, Danbury, CT 06810.

"Thousands are Sailing," *Thousands are Sailing. Irish Songs of Immigration*. Planxty. Other artists sing other Irish immigration songs. Shanachie. 16351-78252-6.

"Van Diemen's Land," *Rattle and Hum*. U-2. Island 422-842-299-4.

"The West's Awake," *The First Hurrah*. The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem. Columbia LP CS 8965.

"The Wild Colonial Boy," *The Boys Won't Leave the Girls Alone*. The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem. Columbia LP CS 8709.

"The Work of the Weavers," *The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem*. Columbia LP CL 1648.

"Zombie," *No Need to Argue*. The Cranberries. Island Records.

FAMINE VIDEOS

- When Ireland Starved.* Famine documentary produced by Radharc Film Productions in Dublin. Distributed by Celtic Video, 141 E. 33rd St., New York, NY10016.
- Did Your Brother Come from Ireland? A Documentary.* 50 min. Written and produced by Mick Moloney. Distributed by the Center for Traditional Music and Dance, 200 Church Street, Room 303, New York, NY 10013-3831. traditions@ctmd.org
- Irish-Americans.* 30 min. Multicultural Peoples of North America Video. Library Video Company. D 6678.
- Irish-American Heritage.* 25 min. American Cultures for Children Video. 1997. Library Video Company. DK6655.
- The Irish in America.* 2 cass. 50 min. New Video Group. Boxed set. ISBN 0-7670-0078-1. Order #: AAE 15305.
- The Irish in America: From Emerald Isle to the Promised Land.* 2 cass. 100 min. Set order 11462EB.
- The Irish in America: Long Journey Home.* 4 parts. 6 hours. Lennon Documentary Group, 1997. PBS.IRIA-DXO-F9A cc. Companion book IRIA 951-F9A.
- The Irish in America Series.* 2 vols. 100 min. Library Video Co. DD0964.
- Irish Homecoming.* 64 min. Rego RV 918 V.
- Journey to America.* Produced by Charles Guggenheim. 60 min. 1989. AME1-210-FXA.
- Out of Ireland.* 111 min. Shanachie #948. ISBN 1-56633-169-2. American Focus, 1994. PBS OUIR-DXO-F9A.
- Irish Dance.* 2 cassettes, color. 60 min. Stagestep. VHS V544
- The films below require previewing. Some sequences may not be suitable for student viewers.
- Angela's Ashes.* 146 min. 1999. ISBN 0-7921-6304-4.
- Dancing at Lughnasa.* 94 min. 1998. VHS 02853.

Background Readings and Student Activities

Why is it important to study the Great Irish Famine?

Maureen Murphy, Maureen McCann Miletta, and Alan Singer
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Maureen Murphy was the Director and lead writer on The Great Irish Famine Curriculum team, assisted by Associate Directors Maureen McCann Miletta and Alan Singer. Curriculum materials were assembled, written, and field tested by members of the Hofstra Social Studies and English Educators, the Hofstra-Herricks Partnership, the Hofstra New Teachers Network, and a multinational team of historians, literary scholars and teachers.

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In 1997, the people of Ireland and of Irish descent around the world observed the 150th anniversary of the worst year (1847) of the Great Irish Famine, a catastrophe precipitated by a fungus that destroyed the potato harvests of 1845, 1846, 1848 and 1849. To mark the Great Irish Famine commemoration in New York State, the state legislature voted that studying the famine in Ireland be included in the Human Rights curriculum required in the state's public schools. The curriculum already included the study of slavery in the Americas and the European Holocaust.

The State Education Department selected the Hofstra University Department of Curriculum and Teaching to coordinate the development of Learning Experiences and instructional materials for grades 4 through 12, that are designed within the framework of the New York State Learning Standards. In addition to copies forwarded to all New York State school districts, the final curriculum eventually will be available on the internet, and as a CD-ROM.

The consequences of the Great Irish Famine altered more than the course of Irish history; the Irish diaspora changed the shape of world history, especially that of the United States, Canada, Australia and England. In the 1990 federal census, 44 million Americans voluntarily reported their ethnicity as Irish. Irish immigrants and Irish-Americans have made significant contributions to every phase of American life, including politics, labor, sports, religion, arts, entertainment, and business. They produced American mayors, governors and presidents. They invented the submarine and discovered the Comstock Lode. They earned more Congressional Medals of Honor than any other ethnic group, and they helped build the American labor movement. They wrote about the American dream, and they lived it. Irish immigrants have also known discrimination,

poverty and hunger, and the harrowing details of their lives have been described by Irish-American writers.

New York State is especially proud of its Irish heritage. In 1855, 26 percent of the population of Manhattan had been born in Ireland. By 1900, 60 percent of the population was of Irish descent. Today, thousands of New Yorkers trace their ancestry to famine-era immigrants who helped develop the infrastructure, the economy, and the social and political institutions of our state.

The Great Irish Famine occurred in a period where England, countries in continental Europe, and the United States were developing industrially and as modern states. The famine challenged the British government, international humanitarian organizations and philanthropic private individuals to provide aid to massive numbers of poor Irish, many living in remote areas, who were suffering from starvation and famine-related disease. The degree to which those involved responded continues to draw praise and condemnation more than a century later. The ideas they debated about the responsibility of government are still being discussed today.

Studies of the Great Irish Famine suggest that famine-related deaths and the accompanying mass emigration were the result of multiple causes, including a food shortage, the lack of individual resources to obtain food, and the failure of the government to adequately regulate markets and provide sufficient support. It is important to note that the economy of England in the 1840s was probably roughly equivalent to the economy of Indonesia today; however, it was the most advanced economy of its time. Economic conditions in Ireland were probably very similar to those contemporary Somalia.

One of the most vexing questions about the Great Irish Famine is the question of the availability of food. The Irish historian Mary E. Daly has calculated that by 1846 there was a significant food shortage with sufficient provisions for only five or six million of Ireland's population of over eight million. While there is no question there were serious food shortages, other commentators have argued that starvation was more the result of the inability of the poor to purchase existing food. Significantly, the 1998 Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen has presented the same case for the Indian famines of the 1940s.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to study the Great Irish Famine is that hunger and homelessness are still with us; that there is want in a world of wealth. The famine's legacy has affected the psyches of the Irish and the Irish of the diaspora teaching us that distress and dislocation have long-term consequences on its victims and their descendants. The lessons of the Great Irish Famine have a claim on our fundamental humanity; they remind us that we have an opportunity to help our neighbors who face similar suffering. Students studying the Great Irish Famine in the context of other famines will develop a better understanding of the factors which contribute to famine in today's world and may, as a result, become actively concerned about the human right to adequate nourishment.

In addition, the Great Irish Famine provides a case study when exploring social concepts such as culture, religion, economics, scarcity, democracy, citizenship, public policy, and demographics and issues in science such as nutrition and the environment. Language arts lessons consider the literature of the Great Irish Famine and other famines in a comparative context and explore the way that the Great Irish Famine continues to provide themes, metaphors and symbols for contemporary Irish writers. The arts explore the visual, musical and dramatic representations of the Great Irish Famine. Overall, the curriculum enables students to examine and understand the intersection of art, music, and literature with science, culture and history.

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum and the New York State Learning Standards

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum is designed specifically to encourage the exploration of key concepts and develop critical skills outlined in the New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies.

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

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.

The study of Irish immigration to the United States and New York before, during and after the Great Irish Famine will: a) contribute to student understanding of the development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context; b) illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time; and c) involve learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups in United States and New York State history. Studying the Irish experience and comparing it to the experiences of other groups will help students to better understand the problems confronting immigrants and the

achievements of ethnic minorities throughout United States history.

Standard 2: World History

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.

The study of the history of Ireland and Ireland's relationship with Great Britain, political conflicts, religious issues, the impact of the potato and the Columbian exchange on life in Ireland, the causes, responses to, and results of the Great Irish Famine and the study of events in Ireland in the context of other global catastrophes will: a) contribute to student understanding of world cultures and civilizations, including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs and traditions; b) facilitate an examination of the human condition, the connections and interactions of people across time and space, and the ways different people view the same event or issue from a variety of perspectives; c) help students understand time frames and periodizations, make it possible to examine themes across time and within cultures, and focus on important turning points in world history; d) involve learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups to world history and civilizations. In addition, the use of primary source historical documents, charts, graphs, literature, art, and music and a focus on historical complexity and multiple perspectives will enhance skills of historical analysis, including the ability to investigate differing and competing interpretations of the theories of history, hypothesize about why interpretations change over time, explain the importance of historical evidence, and understand the concepts of change and continuity over time.

Standard 3: Geography

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.

The study of the global migration of people and products, especially the impact of the potato and the Columbian exchange on life in Ireland and Irish emigration before, during and after the Great Irish Famine, an exploration of the Irish environment and its impact on historical events in Ireland and the world, and an examination of the relationship between demography, geography, resources, and historical events will: a) illustrate the essential elements in geographic analysis: understanding the world in spatial

terms, places and regions, physical settings (including natural resources), human systems, environment and society and the use of geography; and b) enhance the ability of students to ask and answer geographic questions; analyze theories of geography and acquire, organize, and analyze geographic information.

Standard 4: Economics

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 non-market mechanisms.

The study of the economic history of Ireland, including changing land ownership patterns, agricultural production by landless tenants, tenant-landlord relationships, Ireland's relationship with Great Britain, the development of economics as a social science influencing public policy decisions, and the short-and long-term impact of public policy decisions on economic markets, the allocation of food resources, relief plans, human hunger, and human survival will: a) contribute to student understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world; and b) enhance the ability of students to make informed and well-reasoned economic decisions in daily and national life.

Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship and Government

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

The study of the history of Ireland and its relationship to Great Britain, including the absence of democracy and home rule, repeated Irish rebellions against British authority and public policy debates before, during and after the Great Irish Famine will: a) contribute to student understanding of civics, citizenship and government, and basic civic values (such as justice, honesty, self-discipline, due process, equality, majority rule with respect for minority rights, and respect for self, others, and property); b) involve learning about political systems, the purposes of government, and civic life, and the differing assumptions held by people across time and place regarding power, authority,

governance, and law; and c) enhance the ability of students to probe ideas and assumptions, ask and answer analytical questions, take a skeptical attitude toward questionable arguments, evaluate evidence, formulate rational conclusions and develop and refine participatory skills.

The Great Irish Famine is designed to support student mastery of the Learning Standards for the English Language Arts.

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts and ideas; discover relationships, concepts and generalizations, and use knowledge generated from oral, written and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply and transmit information. Students' study of the Great Irish Famine will involve research projects and presentations; they will work individually and collectively to gather evidence from a variety of sources, to evaluate primary source documents, to discover relationships and to develop concepts and generalizations about the materials. Students will write persuasively about topics using their research to support their arguments, developing appropriate rhetorical structures and presenting their information and interpretation clearly, concisely and comprehensibly.

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression. Students will read and listen to oral, written and electronically produced texts and performances. They will draw on their own experiences to develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical and cultural dimensions that the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.

Students will respond to the literature of the Great Irish Famine, making reference to the literary elements in the text and connections with their personal knowledge and experience. They will examine the way that the Great Irish Famine experience continues to provide themes, metaphors and symbols for contemporary Irish and Irish-American writers and will identify different levels of meaning in the works. Students will consider Irish famine literature and write about the texts in terms of the different cultural settings, pointing out similarities and differences. Students will write their own responses to the famine texts: stories, poems,

plays and literary essays; they will also produce books of stories and poems about Ireland for younger children.

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments about experiences, ideas, information and issues.

Students will develop essays, position papers, speeches and debates about the Great Irish Famine in the context of the wider challenges of hunger and homelessness. They will analyze issues, ideas, texts and experiences and support their positions with well-developed arguments that make effective use of details and supporting evidence.

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use their social communications with others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

Students will use effective speech to interact with community members while participating in a hunger or homelessness community service activity. They will participate in an electronic discussion group, an e-mail exchange with Irish counterparts involving exchanges about the topics of the Great Irish Famine and immigration. Students will develop the persona of a famine-era character and write a series of letters to readers of the *New York Tribune*.

Because *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* Guide includes a number of interdisciplinary cultural projects, it supports student mastery of the Learning Standards for the Arts.

Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

Students will create and compose original work in their media: dance, music, theatre and visual arts. Student musicians will compose original works and perform musical works composed by others. Student actors will create and perform theatrical pieces, as well as perform in dramatic works composed by others. Students of the visual arts will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes and metaphors.

Activities and projects related to *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* provide opportunities for dance students to learn traditional Irish dances and to choreograph their own works based on traditional forms; musicians to perform Irish traditional music and to learn techniques such as fiddling styles and sean nós singing; theatre students to perform monologues which express the experiences of different characters in a famine village, and artists to develop an idea for a work of art that would be a memorial to famine victims of the Great Irish Famine or another famine.

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

Students will know about the materials and resources appropriate to their media. Students will become familiar with the collections: archival, print and electronic material in the students' fields. Students will pay particular attention to the technologies available to practitioners in each arts area.

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum provides opportunities for dance students to research particular styles of Irish dancing, for music students to collect data on Irish traditional music groups in the United States, for theatre students to form a production team to work to carry out the artistic concept of a director who is working with a new play on a hunger or homelessness theme, and for visual arts students to exhibit their famine pieces in a group show and write the descriptive material.

Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

Students will reflect on, interpret and evaluate works in their media using the appropriate critical language and will demonstrate their understanding of principal elements in their media by framing their responses in terms of critical concepts.

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum will provide opportunities for dance students to develop their own aesthetic responses to Irish dance; for music students to analyze a traditional Irish "seisiún" (informal music session), for theatre students to compare live theatre with film performances of Irish plays, and for visual arts students to respond to and analyze contemporary Irish visual arts that commemorate the Great Irish Famine.

Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

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.

Students will study media in a world cultural context and will understand how past and present cultures are expressed through the arts. They will explore the role the arts play in the lives of a people.

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum provides opportunities for dance students to study the way movement is used in different cultural settings, including Irish set dancing at American wakes; for music students to examine how Irish traditional music and the African-American spiritual shared certain musical elements in songs that expressed their group sense of sorrow; for theatre students to explain how Irish-American ethnic theatre supported or undermined Irish acceptance in America; and for students of the visual arts to see the gendered relationship between the visual and the literary representations of the Great Irish Famine and other famines, such as the Indian famines of the 1940s.

The Great Irish Famine (1845-52): An Historical Introduction

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The main goal of *Teaching the New York State Standards With The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* is to make accessible to public school students in New York State the history of the Great Irish Famine in the context of Irish history and culture. The curriculum writers have prepared Learning Experiences that have a variety of activities, handouts, and audio-visual materials, drawn from the best and most up-to-date historical scholarship. Their work has been reviewed by teams of historians and literary scholars in Ireland, as well as in the United States. This section offers an historical introduction providing teachers with a brief summary of events during the famine years.

Much is still not known about the human impact of the Great Irish Famine and debate continues about the interpretation of certain events. Even the dates assigned to the Great Irish Famine vary. The 1845-1852 dates chosen for the curriculum are based on Joel Mokyr's work on famine-related deaths (1983). Teachers can explain to students that history involves both research and constant re-evaluation. Selected historical sources are provided at the end of this essay.

The Great Irish Famine was a human catastrophe precipitated by a potato blight, a fungus that destroyed the harvests of 1845, 1846, 1848, and 1849. As a result of the ensuing famine, the official population of Ireland declined from 8,175,124 in 1841 to 6,552,385 in 1851, a loss of over 1.6 million people, to famine-related deaths and emigration. The official numbers are only an estimate, probably under-reporting the actual number of people who lived in Ireland in 1841, and minimizing the impact of the famine on the Irish people. Many of Ireland's poorest and most vulnerable residents, people on the west coast and in the interior, especially Gaelic speakers, were either skipped over by census enumerators or avoided being counted. These people disappeared without leaving any permanent record. Even using the official census count, one person in four disappeared between 1841 and 1851.

What was the cause of the Great Irish Famine? The famine that accompanied the failure of the potato crops was rooted in Ireland's troubled history as a colony of Great Britain. After the unsuccessful Irish rebellion of 1798, a rebellion inspired in part by the success of the American Revolution, the Act of Union of 1800 established a closer relationship between Great Britain and Ireland. Thereafter, Ireland was governed directly

by the United Kingdom parliament at Westminster (London). While Ireland elected representatives to parliament, Catholics were effectively excluded.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Irish politics was dominated by Daniel O'Connell, who helped secure some civil rights for Catholics and other religious minorities, including the right to serve in parliament. O'Connell was unsuccessful, however, in his campaign for the repeal of the Act of Union. An important O'Connell legacy was his parish-based organizational strategy that became the model for Irish constitutional nationalism and American urban ward politics.

Political events in this period masked more serious demographic and economic problems. Some 10,000 English and Irish landlords, many of whom were absentees, owned nearly all the Irish land which they rented out through a system of tenants and sub-tenants. During the Napoleonic wars, there was a strong demand for grain and for agricultural laborers. In response, the Irish population increased quickly; people, especially poorer people, married relatively young, and fathers distributed the right to their rented land among their sons. By 1841, nearly half of the Irish (45%) lived as tenants, sub-tenants or non-documented homesteaders on holdings of less than five acres. In the poorest, more desolate and densely populated areas of the west, the percentage was even higher. The pressure for land and food drove the Irish poor onto more and more marginal land. Fuel came from turf harvested from the surrounding bogs. Eventually the word "bog" became associated with poverty, and poor Irish were derisively called "bog-trotters."

Apart from the agricultural sector of the economy, there were few regular employment opportunities for Irish workers, an economic imbalance that contributed to later problems. Irish businessmen could not compete with British manufacturing concerns that were beginning to dominate world markets. The domestic textile industry, which had been a major source of rural income in the eighteenth century, suffered a major decline. In 1815, when grain prices dropped after peace was restored with France, the agricultural market became depressed and there were no alternative sources of employment to replace it. Visitors to Ireland before the famine, like the American traveler Asenath Nicholson, observed how desperate the Irish were for regu-

lar (rather than seasonal) employment. Nicholson met many Irish who had been to America, had children in America or who hoped to go to America. Pre-famine emigrants were generally artisans (often displaced textile workers), farmers, servants or unskilled laborers who left Ireland for better economic opportunities in the booming economies of Lancashire in England and of the east coast of the United States. Many of the pre-famine Irish laborers in New York State worked digging the Erie Canal system and building the state's railroad network. Many women entered domestic service. Both Irish men and women also entered the rapidly expanding textile industry in the mill towns of New York and New England.

Under normal circumstances, the Irish cottiers, agricultural laborers and their families, lived on a monotonous but nutritious diet of potatoes and buttermilk. But no year was ever really normal. In pre-famine Ireland, there regularly were periods of want, the "hungry months" of summer before the new potato crop came in. There had also been a major famine in 1741 and, periodically, other crop failures. In all of those cases, however, healthy potatoes returned the following season and life continued as usual. While these earlier experiences should have provided some warning that a sustained period of crop failure could happen, the government and the country at-large were quite unprepared for the catastrophe that occurred when the potato crop failed four times in five years from 1845 to 1849. While the potato failed elsewhere in Europe, only the Irish relied on it as their principal source of food. Indeed, they relied primarily on only one kind of potato, a particularly high-yield variety called the "lumper."

The potato blight was reported first in Ireland in the *Dublin Evening Post* on Sept. 9, 1845. Almost overnight, healthy green fields of potatoes turned black and there was an overpowering, sickening sweetish smell of rot. The cause, unknown at the time, was a fungus called *phytophthora infestans* which caused blight. It probably arrived in Europe from North America where there had been blight in Maine in 1842. The blight spread quickly through Holland and Belgium to Ireland.

The first official Irish response to the potato blight was to try to estimate the extent of the damage. Police were instructed to report the losses weekly; experts were asked to investigate the situation, and an official committee was convened to assess the extent of the crop failure and to suggest possible remedies for what the government thought would be a short-term problem.

As the blight spread throughout the country, British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel authorized the purchase of American Indian corn, a commodity that did not interfere with the protected English agricultural market. Peel also appointed a committee to administer a government relief

plan that supplemented that which was provided under the 1838 Poor Law Relief Act.

In January 1846 the government enacted its first famine relief measure, a Public Works Bill that authorized small-scale, county-based, relief projects. In March 1846 a bill for the construction of piers and harbors was passed to encourage the fishing industry. These measures gave work to able-bodied men, women and boys from afflicted households, but offered no assistance to the elderly, to the infirm or to young children. In response to the outbreak of infectious diseases like typhus, the government directed local Poor Law Guardians to designate separate facilities as fever hospitals and dispensaries and to segregate the sick. At the time there was no effective treatment for famine-related diseases.

In April, 1846, Government food depots were established in areas of great need, particularly in the west and south-west. In June, Parliament repealed the Corn Laws, the legislation that protected the United Kingdom's markets from cheaper imported grain. This last action was unpopular in Peel's political party and precipitated the collapse of his government.

Lord John Russell, whose family owned land in Ireland, replaced Robert Peel as Prime Minister in June, 1846; he would remain in office for the duration of the famine. By the summer and fall of 1846, it was clear that the disaster precipitated by the potato blight had become a famine. The 1845 infestation destroyed thirty percent of the potato crop and the fall 1846 crop was almost a total failure. As in earlier emergencies, people tried to cope with rising food prices by selling their livestock and their possessions, even their clothing. During this period thefts of food also were reported.

Under Russell, the government returned to a relatively orthodox laissez-faire economic policy in Ireland. It did not intervene to prevent speculators from profiting from food shortages, nor did it prohibit the diversion of grain from the food supply to distilleries nor did it block the export of grain from Ireland to England. While some individuals no doubt profited from the lack of government regulation, Cormac Ó Gráda's analysis of contemporary economic data suggests that no group—merchants, money lenders, or landlords—benefited much during the years of the Great Irish Famine itself.

There was opposition to Russell's policies in Ireland, such as a food riot when a shipload of oats left Youghal on September 25, 1846; however, active Irish resistance to the British government's failing policies was never more than scattered. The extent of Irish resistance to the British government's famine policy is a question that continues to puzzle historians as well as sociologists studying historical patterns of passive acceptance by victims of policies that obvi-

ously threaten their very survival. In Ireland at the time of the famine this may have been because the Irish people, who had survived similar agricultural cycles in the past, believed they could weather this storm. Another explanation is that after centuries of colonial domination the Irish accepted their status as a subject people unable to influence government decisions. Whatever the case, no one was able to anticipate two more years of crop failure. Eventually, the strongest tended to emigrate while others grew ever weak and either concentrated on daily survival or lost hope and succumbed.

In an effort to provide a temporary solution to famine suffering, the Russell government passed a new Poor Law for Ireland. It was based on the assumption that Ireland would be held responsible for Irish relief. The law authorized relief projects financed by treasury loans that would be repaid by local Poor Law Rates (taxes) levied on the landlords of each union (district). The impact of the new law was limited. Only the poorest were eligible for relief work. The wages on the work projects were kept at or below market level so they would not compete with private employers. Poorer districts often lacked resident landlords willing or able to apply for and support the work. When public works projects were put into operation, wages were insufficient to meet the rising cost of food. The work projects also prevented able-bodied members of households from farming, fishing, or developing other food sources. Finally, conditions were made even more unbearable by the unusually severe winter of 1846-47, a winter of perishing cold, snow and icy winds.

As it became clear that the government response was inadequate, private relief organizations mobilized to meet the famine crisis. A number of prominent Irish Quakers met in Dublin on November 1, 1846 and founded the Central Relief Committee (CRC) of the Society of Friends. They set up soup kitchens where a quart of nourishing soup was available for a penny. Soup tickets could be purchased and distributed to the poor. In this private effort there was little of the demeaning bureaucracy that characterized government programs. The CRC's practical and generous intervention is still remembered today, and the Irish government issued a stamp in their honor during the 1997 famine commemoration year. The Irish Quakers, many of them abolitionists who had previously worked with their American counterparts in the struggle to end slavery, used their contacts to bring the news of Irish suffering to the United States where American Quakers set up their own relief committees. Irish emigrants and other people of good will used the CRC as a channel to send contributions of food, money and clothes to Ireland.

The Quakers tended to channel relief funds to local Protestant clergy who often had wives and children to help with relief efforts. In many places Protestant and Catholic

clergy worked cooperatively; however some evangelical Protestant missionaries in Ireland, like Rev. Edward Nangle of Achill, Co. Mayo, regarded the famine as an opportunity to win converts with food. While this type of proselytism remained vivid in Irish folk memory, the reality was that most conversions were temporary.

The role of the Roman Catholic Church in famine relief involved priests working among the poor of their parishes while their bishops appealed for famine relief from Irish immigrants abroad and from Catholics in Europe. On March 25, 1847, Pope Pius IX issued his encyclical *Praedecessores Nostros*, which called on the world's Roman Catholics to pray for those suffering from the famine and to contribute funds to relieve the Irish poor. As the famine continued, the voice of the Irish hierarchy grew increasingly critical of the British government's response to the crisis, particularly its toleration of eviction of tenant farmers unable to pay the rent.

The General Relief Committee (GRC) of the City of New York, convened in February 1847 and coordinated other American aid to Ireland. The GRC sent \$250,000 to Ireland, much of the money raised from generous New Yorkers from all over the state. The committee also received a donation from the Choctaw nation, who collected \$170 for the Irish poor.

Despite the help from abroad, death raged during the winter of 1846-47, especially in the south and west of Ireland where the high price of food, the lack of local resources and employment, and the region's distance from alternative food sources intensified the suffering. By 1847, the British public was aroused by the press reports of the famine, especially accounts in *The Illustrated London News* with their graphic illustrations. On January 1, 1847, British merchant bankers and philanthropic individuals formed the British Association for Relief of Extreme Distress in Remote Parishes of Ireland and Scotland. They established a special fund to feed children on a diet of 10 ounces of bread and a half pint of meat or fish soup per day.

At the end of January 1847 the Russell government enacted a series of limited interventions which were insufficient to meet the crisis of a year that has come to be remembered as "Black '47." The measures included temporarily suspending duties on imported grain until the next potato harvest, substituting soup kitchens for the public works projects, and permitting direct relief to the elderly, the infirm, the sick poor, and women with two or more dependents. Able-bodied workers also could receive aid for a limited period of time.

The government and its officials continued to misread the gravity of the situation. The government continued to maintain that Ireland's poor were Ireland's problem and that local landlords should be responsible for funding relief pro-

grams. The 1847 Poor Law Relief Act (Ireland) carried the Gregory Clause, a provision that excluded people who lived on more than one-quarter acre of land from government assistance. In effect, this law also provided landlords with a legal justification for the eviction of tenants.

Another remedial measure, the Temporary Relief Act (the Soup Kitchen Act), while a humanitarian departure from the government's previous practice, was woefully inadequate for a hungry and weakened population struggling to survive the second winter of the famine. Enacted in February 1847, it was not operational until March. A model soup kitchen was opened in Dublin in April, but the soup kitchen for County Galway's Clifden Union was delayed until the middle of May 1847. Once again, those most in need came last.

The quality of government soup became the subject of satiric ballads because it was less nutritious than the soup offered by the Quakers. Inadequate as they were, the soup kitchens did feed three million people, and the Irish considered them an improvement over overcrowded workhouses, where families were separated and people were treated like prisoners. By the spring of 1847, the workhouses had become death houses, especially for women and children who perished from dysentery and infectious diseases which killed care-givers—doctors, clergy, landlords and workhouse personnel—as well as the poor.

By 1847, local landlords, even those most willing to aid starving tenant farmers, found it difficult to pay the Poor Law tax rates. The Poor Law did not distinguish between resident landlords who used their own means to provide employment and relief to their tenants and the absentee landlords who ignored the crisis. All were charged the same rate. While he was critical of the entire landlord system, the Irish revolutionary John Mitchel distinguished between the responsible resident landlord and the absentee.

Unable to collect their rents, an increasing number of landlords resorted to evicting tenants who had fallen into arrears. On some estates, landlords used the famine as an excuse to consolidate land holdings and to clear off their tenants with programs of assisted emigration. The number of families served with eviction notices (1846-48) and actually evicted (1849-54) numbered 188,346, an estimated 974,930 people (5 persons per household). While mass evictions did not begin with the Great Irish Famine, most of the 19th century evictions took place during the famine decade. A haunting image in Irish folk memory is the specter of evicted tenants dying of starvation or disease—at least 974,930 of them—and their little cabins destroyed so they could not move back in. Evicted with no place to go, many of the homeless and landless sought refuge in makeshift shelters in ditches alongside the roads.

While some migration to the United States, Canada, England, and Australia was promoted and even assisted by landlords, most emigrants had to make their own way to new lands; as a result, it was generally the able-bodied Irish with some resources who left. In their weakened state, many died of fever en route, prompting the renaming of emigrant ships as "coffin ships." Thousands also died in a make-shift fever hospital in Grosse Isle, Quebec, in the St. Lawrence River. Famine immigrants crowded into Boston, Philadelphia and New York where they worked at unskilled labor and endured anti-Irish and anti-Catholic nativism. By the time of the 1850 United States census there were 961,719 Irish-born residents, 42.8 percent of the foreign-born population.

While 1847 is regarded as the worst year of the famine, the crisis was not over. The 1847 potato crop was healthy, but scant, owing to the scarcity of seed and the employment of able-bodied workers on the public works projects. The government pressed the Quakers to continue their soup kitchens, but their resources and workers were exhausted. They closed their soup kitchens in July, 1847 and spent the rest of the famine working on projects to encourage employment. Declaring the famine "over," Treasury Under-Secretary Charles Trevelyan, the official in charge of famine relief policy, closed the government soup kitchens from October 1, 1847.

The government's declaration, while suffering was still wide-spread, prompted collective responses by Irish religious leaders and nationalist politicians. Roman Catholic bishops met in Dublin and issued their strongest statement criticizing the government for putting the rights of property before the rights of human life. On November 2, 1847, Major Denis Mahon, whose efforts to clear tenant farmers off his estate had started before the famine, was assassinated; he was one of a half dozen landlords who were killed in the winter of 1847-1848. The official response to Mahon's death was a call to protect landlords and their middlemen from a tenantry that was viewed as desperate and lawless.

In 1847, Daniel O'Connell died. By the time of his death, two years of famine had seriously weakened support for his politics of constitutional nationalism. In early 1848, the nationalist John Mitchel, who indicted government laissez-faire economic policies with the words, "Ireland died of political economy," began to call for an armed rebellion. In July, 1848, the nationalist Young Irelanders, who had split with O'Connell over the question of the use of physical force, staged a brief and unsuccessful rebellion near Ballinacorney, County Tipperary. The leaders of the rebellion were convicted of treason and transported to Tasmania. Among the leaders who would play a significant role in United States history was Thomas Francis Meagher who in 1852 escaped to America where he became a journalist and

a member of the New York Bar. During the American Civil War, Meagher recruited New Yorkers for an Irish Brigade that took heavy casualties in December 1852 at the Battle of Fredericksburg. By the end of the war, Meagher was a brigadier-general. He was later appointed acting governor of the Montana Territory.

The gallantry of units like the Irish Brigade helped to reduce anti-Irish nativism; as the losses in Irish regiments mounted however, the Irish community became hostile to the war, especially to the 1863 draft law with its provision that drafted men could purchase substitutes for \$300, an option beyond the resources of poor Irish immigrants. Irish bitterness against the law erupted in the July 1863 draft riots in New York City that lasted five days and made a scapegoat of the city's African-American population; eleven African Americans were killed by rioters and an orphanage for Black children was destroyed by fire. Order was finally restored by New York City police and the military, which included many Irish soldiers.

The fall of 1848 was made more miserable with the recurrence of cholera and an acceleration in evictions. The government passed the Encumbered Estates Act to facilitate the sale of lands by landlords who were bankrupted by the famine. Many landlords preferred to sell out rather than be pressed to support the poor; however, there were a few landlords like Mary Letitia Martin, the "Princess of Connemara," who inherited a heavily-mortgaged estate of 20,000 acres, spent large sums on relief and employment, defaulted on her mortgage, and lost her land. Almost destitute, like thousands of Irish, she emigrated to New York where she died in childbirth in 1850. The new landowners frequently evicted tenants to maximize the return on their investments. In 1849, there were 13,384 officially recorded evictions, twice the number from the previous year. This figure probably represents half of the actual number of those who were evicted.

By the 1850s, the Great Irish Famine had produced changes in Ireland that would alter the course of Irish and world history. In Ireland, the bottom third of the economic order consisting of poor people and the landless was largely removed. The potato remained a staple food for the Irish, but the rural population was no longer dependent on a single crop. While the decline of Irish as the country's spoken language did not begin with the famine, Irish-speaking areas were hardest hit and those casualties accelerated the silencing of the language in the Irish countryside. The practice of dividing land among all sons was replaced by a system of a single inheriting son and a single dowered daughter. The other siblings had little option except to emigrate. The Great Irish Famine altered the balance of the population with the result that afterwards there were much fewer landless families or families with very small holdings and

there was a relatively larger middle-class population with more conservative attitudes. Because of the important role the Irish played in shaping Roman Catholicism in the nineteenth-century United States, this conservative ethos came to predominate in the Catholic church in the United States.

A long term result of the Great Irish Famine was the nurturing of Irish nationalism, both among those who never accepted the Union between Great Britain and Ireland and those embittered by perceived British indifference to Irish suffering. In the early twentieth century, nationalists, supported by aid from Irish living abroad who considered themselves political or economic exiles, finally secured political independence and a democratic society for the majority of the Irish people.

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Addressing Controversial Historical Issues through the study of the Great Irish Famine

Maureen Murphy, Maureen McCann Miletta,
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Studying the Great Irish Famine provides teachers and students with an opportunity to explore controversial issues in global history. The approach taken in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* is to emphasize the complexity of history by presenting multiple perspectives about the causes and significance of events. Activities, questions, and handouts (primarily consisting of primary sources) are part of the Learning Experiences that encourage students to think, write and speak as historians, to analyze historical material, to question their assumptions, to gather and organize evidence before reaching conclusions, to discover connections between events, to recognize parallel developments that may not be directly related, and to realize that conclusions are subject to change as new evidence and more integrative theories emerge. As they study about the Great Irish Famine students should come to realize that historians do not have all the answers about the past or present and that they do not always agree.

The Great Irish Famine Curriculum gives students and teachers an opportunity to examine a number of essential social studies and historical questions that are also major components of the New York State Social Studies Learning Standards. Examples of essential questions include: a) “Are there historical or philosophical connections between Slavery and the African Slave Trade, the Great Irish Famine, and the European Holocaust, subjects that are focal points in the New York State Human Rights curriculum, but which happened in different eras?”; b) “What are the relationships between these events and broader historical developments?”; c) “What types of injustice and oppression constitute genocide?”; d) “Is there such a thing as human nature, and if so, what is it?”; e) “Why have some groups of people been victimized in the past?”; f) “How do people survive, resist, and maintain human dignity under inhumane circumstance?”; g) “Why do some people become rescuers while others collaborate with oppressors?”; h) “Should historians assign blame for historical events?”; i) “Should a focus for historians be identifying individuals or groups as villains or should it be examining the social, economic and political systems that generate human rights violations?”; j) “What criteria, if any, should be used to evaluate actions by individuals, groups, and societies?”; k) “Who should be considered citizens of a country and what rights and responsibilities should accom-

pany citizenship?”; l) “What are the relationships between history and geography?”; and, m) “When should the cause of a catastrophe be considered an act of nature and when should it be considered the responsibility of human institutions?”

Following is a discussion of some historical controversies that can help teachers think about issues related to the Great Irish Famine before they begin to examine specific lessons and documents.

A Point of View about History

The definition of history is complicated because it refers to a series of distinct but related ideas: (a) events from the past—“facts,” (b) the process of gathering and organizing information from the past—historical research, (c) explanations about the relationships between specific historical events, and (d) broader explanations or “theories” about how and why change takes place. In other words, history is simultaneously the past, the study of the past, explanations about the past, and explanations about human nature and the nature of society.

The pedagogy that informs the organization of the social studies lesson material in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* Guide draws on this broad understanding of history. It is not a list of facts to memorize, though it tries to incorporate a considerable amount of historical information. While we believe that drawing conclusions about the past is a vital part of the historical process, we try not to make a narrow ideological presentation. We hope the material in this guide allows room for widespread debate and promotes a broad dialogue on what makes us human and what is the responsibility of society.

To achieve these goals, the curriculum is document-based, and organized to promote an inquiry approach to learning history. Students and teachers can become historians, sifting through the past, examining different data and interpretations, and drawing conclusions based on a variety of evidence.

It is also recognized that teachers play a crucial role in the creation of curriculum because they choose the material that will ultimately be presented in their classrooms. Instead of dictating what should be taught, the curriculum offers teachers a broad range of primary source documents, interpretive passages, worksheets, literary resources, and individual and group projects.

Drawing Connections between Historical Events

Study of the Great Irish Famine is part of a New York Human Rights curriculum that includes study of Slavery in the Americas and the Atlantic Slave Trade and the World War II era European Holocaust. Part of the task confronting teachers is to help students examine potential connections and/or parallels between these historical events. This involves students in exploring theories of historical change and ideas about human nature, culture and civilization, the role of government, and the political and economic organization of societies.

A difficulty in making direct comparisons between these events is that they happened in different historical eras, had different goals, and occurred in different social and economic systems. While studying Slavery and the Atlantic Slave Trade, students need to examine and understand the magnitude and specific historical context of a system that between 1500 and the end of the nineteenth century, enslaved millions of Africans and transported them across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas where they and their descendants were defined as non-humans and were expected to provide free labor in perpetuity. Historians have argued that this system of human exploitation played a central role in European colonial expansion around the world and that the labor of enslaved Africans was crucial to the development of commercial capitalism and the start of the industrial revolution.

On the other hand, while the social, political, and economic conditions that contributed to both the Great Irish Famine and the European Holocaust had deep historical roots, these events happened in a much narrower time frame and a more restricted locale and had different impacts on the affected peoples. The first year of the Great Irish Famine was 1845, the last failure of the potato crop was in 1849, and famine-related deaths tapered off by 1852. The famine occurred in part of the United Kingdom, the most powerful and prosperous country during the early part of the industrial era, and while Ireland suffered from a severe population decline during this period, most of it was the result of emigration rather than death.

The European Holocaust is generally studied in connection with the growth of Nazi ideology and power in Germany prior to and during World War II. It was precipitated by a culturally, technologically and industrially advanced nation that in the middle of the twentieth century sought to exterminate an entire group of people.

A problem teachers should consider when comparing these events is that historians prefer to limit the use of historical terms to specific, relatively narrow, historical contexts. These distinctions may or may not be appropriate in elementary, middle or high school social studies lessons.

Examples of terms with complex and changing meanings that also have narrower technical definitions are racism and imperialism.

Racism is popularly used to define any form of prejudice or discrimination that is based on the belief that some hereditary groups are superior or inferior to others. In the United States during the era of slavery, enslaved Africans were defined as chattels, that is non-human forms of property, any person with a single African ancestor was considered non-white, and in the south, laws were passed to prevent manumission (the freeing of slaves). In Nazi Germany an effort was made to apply quasi-scientific notions of genetics and Social Darwinism to outlaw racial mixing between Aryans (Germans) and people who were deemed to be racially inferior, particularly Jews. In both situations, Africans and Jews were subject to severe restrictions and could not legally change their racial classification.

English observers of the Irish before and during the famine also described the Irish as an inferior race and often argued that their inferiority was the primary reason for the devastation caused by the famine. However, the focus in these documents tends to be on the culture, religion, and work habits of the Irish, rather than their biological heredity. Some observers even suggested that if the Irish renounced their way of life and lived like Englishmen, they would no longer be racially inferior. In this view of race, which is different from the ones employed in the United States during the era of slavery and in Nazi Germany, it is possible for individuals and entire groups to change their racial status. Students need to examine similarities and differences in the way the term racism is used in different settings and to decide where and when they believe it is applicable.

Imperialism generally is used to describe empire-building and the exploitation of one nation over another to obtain economic, military and political benefits. In its broadest sense it includes colonialism, the practice of creating permanent settlements in other lands, and mercantilism, the regulation of colonial economies to benefit the dominant power. It also has been used to describe the relationship between a dominant group that holds political power in a country and ethnic minorities who are subject to their power. Using this general definition, the term imperialism can be used to describe the historic relationship between England and Ireland.

Historians, however, tend to differentiate between forms of national domination, especially during different historical periods. The term imperialism and the designation "Age of Imperialism" are often reserved for describing the expansion of European influence in Africa and Asia as European nationalism and the needs of industrial economies spurred competition for markets and raw materials between 1870 and the start of World War I. Classroom teachers need to

consider whether making this type of distinction will be meaningful for their students, and if so, how best to address it.

Addressing the Political Debate

The meaning of the Great Irish Famine has been contested by political activists and historians from the 1850s to the present day. The Great Irish Famine has been the source of nationalist anger, a historical problem to be coolly dissected and demythologized, and a reminder of the realities of hunger and poverty in the modern world. Mary Robinson, the former President of the Republic of Ireland, argues that reflection on the Great Irish Famine should spur action to prevent similar catastrophes in the present and future. We hope *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* Guide will promote discussion about access to food and health care as human rights and an examination of the responsibility of governments to meet the needs of people in modern, democratic, industrial and post-industrial societies, topics that are fundamental parts of the New York State Social Studies Standards and the Economics and Participation in Government curricula.

A highly contentious political debate is over whether the government of Great Britain consciously pursued genocidal policies designed to depopulate Ireland through death and emigration. Explaining the causes of the famine and analyzing the impact of British policy have been complicated by continuing conflict over whether the six counties of Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom. While we do not believe that British policies during the Great Irish Famine meet the criteria for genocide established by the United Nations (1951) in a treaty signed by the United States, we believe it is a legitimate subject for discussion.

One way to approach the political debates is to explore the differences between the goals of political activists and his-

torians. The primary concern of activists is to win support for their political position in an effort to bring about political, social and economic changes in society. While historians also have political views and goals, their professional commitment requires that they examine events from multiple perspectives and that they hold themselves to a higher standard when they draw conclusions based on evidence. As students read excerpts from primary source documents and interpretations of the causes of the Great Irish Famine and the reasons for British policies, they need to consider the following questions: a) “Is this commentator writing as a political activist or an historian?”; b) “What is her/his point of view about the Great Irish Famine and other events in Irish history?”; c) “Does her/his point of view aid in their examination of events or interfere with their analysis?”; d) “How could the argument be made more effective?”; and e) “Can someone be impartial when researching and writing about a topic like the Great Irish Famine?”

The authors of the Great Irish Famine Curriculum acknowledge they have both individual and collective points of view, and they recognize that their views influence interpretations of famine history, as well as the way documents, organized lessons, and framed questions were selected. In general, it is believed the Great Irish Famine was the result of multiple causes, including a natural ecological disaster, rapid population growth, religious and cultural prejudice, a British imperial ideology that legitimized colonialism, government relief programs that were inadequate to the magnitude of need, and policies that favored English political and economic interests, especially the interests of emerging English industrial capitalism. To limit the impact of bias in the curriculum, international committees of historians, literary scholars, and educators, reviewed the package at different stages in its development. Hopefully, the documents will enable students to discuss alternative explanations and reach their own conclusions.

Significance of Religion

The United States has a long and valued tradition of a “wall of separation” between Church and State. This tradition, and the laws that support it, protects religious beliefs and church organizations from government regulations that might be used to stifle religious practice. They also prevent powerful religious groups from determining government policies, gaining unfair advantages, or stigmatizing families who choose not to believe.

In public education, the wall of separation has been redefined over the years. It now means that public schools cannot sponsor Bible readings or prayers and cannot present one set of religious beliefs as a norm that every moral person should follow. However, while public schools cannot teach religion, teachers are free to, and in some cases expected to, teach about religion.

Because of the importance of the wall of separation, many public school teachers hesitate to teach about religion. They fear that adherents to these beliefs might feel they are being presented incorrectly, or that people from other religious backgrounds, or people who reject all religions, will object to what their children are being taught. This presents a dilemma when teaching about Ireland and the Great Irish Famine, because the history and culture of Ireland cannot be separated easily from the religious beliefs of the people of Ireland. In many parts of the world, the mid-nineteenth century was a profoundly religious era when people were concerned about their salvation and that of others. While their beliefs were genuinely held, occasionally their zeal led them to adopt attitudes which today would be regarded as evidence of bigotry and religious prejudice.

These issues are addressed in *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* in two ways. First, the complexity of the matter of religion in famine historiography is acknowledged, and that complexity is examined in discussion of the way that Irish of different religious traditions responded to the famine crisis. Roman Catholic institutions, leaders, and practices played a major role in the daily life of most Irish, in resistance to British colonialism, and in providing support during the famine years. Common expressions, home ornaments, and even children’s toys like St. Brigid’s dolls have religious overtones. Rather than ignoring important aspects of Irish culture and history, the role of religion in Irish life should be examined. Students on all grade levels can use an examination of religion in Irish life to help them explore the role of religion in human history and why groups of people have often expressed their most fundamental values and beliefs through religion.

Second, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* pays tribute to rescuers from all religious denominations who aided in relief efforts. Some Protestant denominations, especially the Quakers, played a crucial role in providing famine

relief. While the authors believe that anti-Catholic prejudice played a major role in justifying injustice, lessons encourage students to explore the role of religious and cultural prejudice in the joint history of Ireland and Great Britain and to draw their own conclusions.

Validity of Sources

The historical reliability of some of the material presented in this curriculum is a challenge because of point of view, or because of clouded origins. Instead of removing these documents, teachers and students, can act as historians, to evaluate their validity and historical significance. For example, John Mitchel and Charles Trevelyan are political leaders who are either attacking or defending British government policies. Readers must take that into account when evaluating their explanation of events. Newspaper accounts also contain political and social biases.

Some famine journals’ authenticity have been challenged. Critics question whether Gerald Keegan’s diary, first published in 1895, is an actual historical account or a work of fiction. Because of the debate surrounding the Keegan diary, and because other better-established primary source documents are available for examination, we decided not to include excerpts from the Keegan diary.

Global Perspective

In designing the Great Irish Famine Curriculum, it was decided that a narrow focus on the events between 1845 and 1852 did a disservice to history, students, and the victims of the Great Hunger.

The historical narrative begins with the origins of Ireland and the Irish and early ties between Ireland and Great Britain. The curriculum makes it possible to include sections on Ireland in the study of the Columbian Exchange, the Protestant Reformation, colonialism, early industrialization, the Revolutionary world at the end of the 18th century, the development of modern economic thought, the growth of 19th century imperialism, 19th century trans-Atlantic migration, the origins of the modern state, and United States history.

Because of the importance of examining essential social studies and historical questions, connecting the history of Ireland to other events in the past and present, and exploring themes in the New York State social studies learning standards, the curriculum includes a section that addresses the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and other human rights issues in global history and the contemporary world.

