



# Unit 1: The Great Irish Famine

*Junior Cycle Worksheets*

## UNIT 1:

# THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE

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The year is 1841. The population of Ireland has increased from 2.5 million in 1750 to 8.2 million. About 10,000 wealthy landlords – known as the Protestant Ascendancy – own most of Ireland's agricultural land. Each landlord had a large estate which he divided his land into farms and rented them out to tenant farmers.

### YOUR TASK

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- Step 1:* The teacher will assign an identity to each student. You may be an Anglo-Irish Landlord, a Large Tenant Farmer, a Small Tenant Farmer or a Cottier.
- Step 2:* Find the relevant *Character Autobiography* in this Worksheet and read it carefully, underlining anything you find interesting or surprising.
- Step 3:* When you are familiar with your character, you should find the other students in the class with the same identity and form groups of Landlords, Cottiers etc.
- Step 4:* Each group should appoint a chairperson to oversee the discussion. Together, you should discuss how to fill in the *Character Profile Sheet* for your character.
- Step 5:* Once each group has completed their character profile, your teacher will help you to form new groups of four. Each of these new groups will include one Landlord, one Large Tenant Farmer, one Small Tenant Farmer and one Cottier. All members of the group will contribute to the discussion as the character they created in their original identity groups.
- Step 6:* The group discussion, with the Landlord as the chairperson, will have two parts.
- Part A)** Group members introduce themselves in character, giving information about their lives and explaining the keywords and the symbol on their Profile Sheet to the other students.
- Part B)** Working together as a group, fill in the ***Forecasting the Famine*** worksheet. Remaining in character, each group member adds at least one thing that concerns them about the future and why. Taking into consideration the concerns of all of the characters, suggest what might happen in the future ("Predicted Outcome") if those concerns become a reality.



## CHARACTER 1: ANGLO-IRISH LANDLORD

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The year is 1841. I am an Anglo-Irish landowner which 7,000 acres in County Kerry. My family first settled here during the time of the Plantations in the 17th century. I was educated in London and took a grand tour around Europe before inheriting the estate from my father in 1841. Like many wealthy landowners, I am an absentee landlord, preferring to spend most of my time in London. Rental income from my Irish estate provides me with enough money to fuel my business interests in England. Since the Act of Union in 1801, Ireland has been ruled directly from the parliament in London and I attend Westminster as a Member of Parliament. I am always careful to vote in favour of any law that protects my interests as a landlord.

When in Ireland, I live in great comfort in my country residence. Built in 1772, the Great House is a large luxurious mansion surrounded by beautiful lawns, a kitchen garden and acres of woodland for hunting. It is the physical representation of my status as a landlord. I employ a sizeable household staff including housemaids, a butler and a governess for the six children. Local labourers work on the demesne farm where I keep an extensive herd of cattle - both dairy and beef - as well as sheep and pigs.

As I am rarely in Ireland, I employ an efficient land agent who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the estate. He collects the rents twice a year in May and November, and keeps 5% of the money he collects. He also draws up the leases and ensures that the tenants obey the terms of their agreements. If they do not, it is my land agent who carries out the evictions.

Since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the demand for Irish agricultural exports to Britain has fallen steadily. The tenant farmers cannot get the same prices for their grain and are struggling to pay their rents. This concerns me, as I have enormous debts since borrowing money to make improvements to the Great House. My accountant advises me that many years of sub-dividing my land into increasingly smaller farms has prevented agricultural improvement and devalued my property. He thinks I should reverse the process by evicting some of the smaller tenants to increase farm sizes. This is called 'consolidating' my estate.





## CHARACTER 2: LARGE TENANT FARMER

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I am a large tenant farmer and rent 100 acres of land in County Kerry. I can trace my family back to before the Penal Laws when they were wealthy Catholic-landowners in this area. I live very comfortably with my wife and seven children in a good stone farmhouse with five rooms. An orchard surrounds the house and I have recently added stables.

I add to my income by acting as a middleman. Middlemen divide their rented land into smaller parcels of land and rent them out at a profit. I am not really concerned about improving the land or the houses as I make a sizeable income from sub-letting. This allows me to pay rent, pay taxes and employ two servants. I hope that my landlord doesn't follow the example of other landlords who are getting rid of middlemen to end subletting and consolidate their estates.

On my own 40 acres of rented land, I keep livestock and grow potatoes, wheat and barley. Recently, grain prices have fallen and I am concentrating less tillage (crop growing) and more on pasture (grazing land for cows and sheep). There is a large supply of cheap labour in the area and I employ agricultural labourers to help with planting and harvesting my crops. I sell the grain and butter at the market but keep the potatoes to feed my family and my pigs. Most of our meals also include meat - either boiled or mixed with vegetables in a broth - and the cows provide a plentiful supply of milk.

My three sons are growing up quickly and because the industrial revolution never reached Ireland, they have little opportunity to find work anywhere but in agriculture. Like many of my neighbours, I plan to divide my land among my three sons so that they will have farms of their own. Many say that this practice of sub-division leads to smaller farms with lower incomes and encourages marriage at a young age. This in turn increases the population placing greater pressure on the land. Nonetheless, a father must provide for his sons and I don't wish to see them emigrate to England or America.



### CHARACTER 3: SMALL TENANT FARMER

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I am a tenant farmer like my father before me. I live with my family in a three-room farmhouse on 12 acres of land in County Kerry. I practice subsistence farming, which means growing just enough food to pay my rent and feed my family. The explosion in population since the eighteenth century has led to an increased demand for land in a county where the majority of people live in the countryside. This subdivision of land into smaller and smaller farms has led to many small tenant farmers like me, particularly on the west coast of Ireland.

Occasionally, we eat meat and vegetables, but our main crop is the potato, which grows plentifully in even the worst types of soil. It is not surprising that the potato has become the staple diet of the poor, as it is a cheap, tasty and highly nutritious vegetable and well suited to the damp Irish climate. By the 1830s, one-third of the population of Ireland – nearly 3 million people – relied on potatoes for over 90 percent of their calorie intake.

My five sons keep careful watch on our potato crop and cheer when the distinctive flat green leaves begin to appear above the soil. They also help with the harvesting every October. 12-year old Liam enjoys unearthing the reddish-brown tubers that grow on stems beneath the ground. He and his brothers shake off the soil and sort the potatoes into wicker baskets. We eat some of them immediately and store others in the loft for the autumn, but most are stored in a deep pit in the ground and covered with rushes and clay. These are eaten during the winter and spring months. We also use them to seed new potatoes for the following year. It is said that the Irish consume seven million tons of potatoes every year, but the system works, and the potato will sustain us as long as the crop doesn't fail.

Even though I pay the rent, we are not secure. I am a tenant-at-will, which means that I don't have the security of a lease and we could be evicted at any time. In the meantime, I am reluctant to make any improvements to the house or the land because, by law, these improvements will become the property of the landlord and I will not receive compensation if we are evicted. If that happens, we will have to seek shelter with neighbours or join the ranks of the cottiers and landless labourers who travel from farm to farm looking for work.



## CHARACTER 4: COTTIER/AGRICULTURAL LABOURER

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I am a cottier in Kerry and they call us 'the poorest of the poor'. I rent a tiny patch of land – or conacre - from the tenant farmer. As part of our agreement, I am required to work as a labourer on the farmer's land. I receive at a set wage, which goes towards my rent. I have heard that there are more cottiers in Munster than in any other province in Ireland.

My family and I live in a small one-room cabin with mud walls and my wife and five children sleep on a large bundle of straw on the clay floor. A hole cut in the thatched roof serves as our chimney. We rely on the potato as our main source of food. It is also easy to grow on small patches of poor land using lazy beds. In the springtime, I use a simple spade to dig long parallel trenches about three feet apart. In between the trenches, I pile a mixture of manure, seaweed and crushed seashells collected by my wife and children. Lastly, I insert seed potatoes into the mixture and cover it with the surrounding sods of earth. The lumper has become the most popular variety of potato because it produces the biggest crops with the least amount of manure. One acre of lazy beds can produce almost 6 tonnes of potatoes – enough to feed my family for almost a year.

The average breakfast for a cottier in Kerry is 4lbs of potatoes and one pint of skimmed milk for breakfast and the same for dinner. The women and children have smaller portions. We generally boil the potato or cook them on the embers of the fire and eat them with our fingers. Sometimes we add flavour with 'kitchen' (dried seaweed boiled down with the potatoes).

My daughter calls July and August, the 'waiting months'. This is the time before the new potatoes are ready for harvesting and the remaining stocks are at their worst. During these months our meals are usually reduced from two to one per day. If times are particularly difficult, my wife and children resort to begging along the roadside. Without the protection of a lease, I could be evicted at any time, and it has become increasingly difficult for cottiers to find land. We may have to seek refuge at the local workhouse. The terrible living and working conditions in the workhouses are designed to discourage everyone except the most desperate from entering. It would be the very worst scenario for my family.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Wife's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's names: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Acres: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tenants : \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Servants: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Yearly Profit: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Basics

Keywords:  
Landlord in pre-Famine Ireland

Symbol

Lifestyle

Concerns



Description of my House:

Number of Rooms:

Typical Pastimes:

Typical Diet :

The three things that worry me about the future are ....

1.

2.

3.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Wife's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's names: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Acres: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tenants : \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Servants: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Yearly Profit: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Basics

**Keywords:** Large Tenant Farmer  
in pre-Famine Ireland

Symbol

Lifestyle

Concerns

Large Tenant Farmer

Description of my House:

Number of Rooms:

Typical Pastimes:

Typical Diet :

The three things that worry me about the future are ....

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Wife's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's names: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Acres: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tenants : \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Servants: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Yearly Profit: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Basics

**Keywords:** Small Tenant Farmer  
in pre-Famine Ireland

**Symbol**

**Lifestyle**

**Small Tenant Farmer**

**Concerns**

**Description of my House:**

**Number of Rooms:**

**Typical Pastimes:**

**Typical Diet :**

**The three things that worry me about the future are ....**

1.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address(es):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Wife's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Children's names:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Acres:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Tenants :** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Servants:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Education Level:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Yearly Profit:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Keywords:**

**The Basics**

**Symbol**



**Lifestyle**

**Concerns**

**Description of my House:**

**Number of Rooms:**

**Typical Pastimes:**

**Typical Diet :**

**The three things that worry me about the future are ....**

1.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

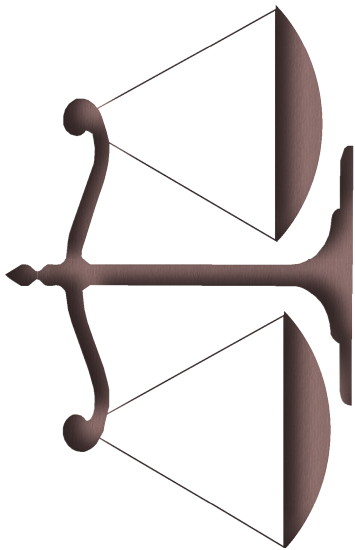
\_\_\_\_\_

USE A PENCIL TO CONNECT THE CHARACTERS  
TO THE CORRECT HOUSE





# Forecasting the Famine



- 1. Remaining in character *[who]*, each group member writes down at least one thing that concerns them about the future *[what]*, and reason for the concern *[why]*.
- 2. Taking into account everyone's concerns, discuss what might happen in the future if each concern becomes a reality *[predicted outcome]*

| WHO? | WHAT? | WHY? | PREDICT THE FUTURE |
|------|-------|------|--------------------|
|      |       |      |                    |
|      |       |      |                    |
|      |       |      |                    |
|      |       |      |                    |

# The Kerry Evening Post

VOL LXXV.

TRALEE, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14th, 1849

SINGLE PAPER: SIXPENCE

## THE POOR LAW AND THE FAMINE

The ruinous and demoralising Poor Law, and the protracted famine, still do their work together this nineteenth century of civilisation, witnessing calmly the process by which legislative enactments [laws] reduce a nation to pauperism ... Let us, as an example, examine a few of the statistics of both ... First, let us glance at the helpless, hopeless masses of pauperism thronging three unions - only three! - in the county of Cork. The following is furnished [provided] as ordinary intelligence by the *Cork Constitution*:

**MACROOM UNION** - Last week there were 3,227 paupers in the Macroom workhouse and temporary workhouse. There were 34 deaths during the previous week in the workhouses. There were 404 infirm paupers on outdoor relief ... **MIDLETON UNION**- Last week the number received relief in the Middleton workhouse was 2,100, and in the Youghal temporary workhouse 900.

**CORK** - On Saturday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, there were 6,222 paupers in the Cork Union Workhouse. The number decreased the two following days to 6,203; it increased the next four days to 6,315, and it decreased the next two days to 6,185. On Tuesday the number amounted 6,258.

Nearly 13,000 paupers in three unions in a single Irish county! Oh happy island that can afford such a beautiful specimen of the effects of Imperial [British] government.

But again, in Clare, in one union, the Ennis Union; out of a population of about 67,000, we learn from the last meeting of the [Poor Law] guardians, reported in

the *Clare Journal*, that there are no less than 23,500 supported by the rates ... So much for the admirable working of the admirable Poor Law ... Now for its twin-destroyer, the famine.

### DEATHS FROM STARVATION

(from the *Fermanagh Reporter*)

A poor man of the name of Maguire, unable to make out life at home, came to Enniskillen last week to seek work, leaving his children at home behind him. The poor man was so unsuccessful in his endeavours to find employment, that he could not send his children any food, and the neighbours denied them; the consequence was the death of two of them - one on Saturday morning, and another the same evening, a boy of 12 years of age. They were, we understand, a horrid spectacle - with skin like parchment! They were buried in an old box, used as a make-shift coffin, and with their filthy rags on to supply the place of shrouds."

(from the *Erne Packet*)

On Monday a man was found on the side of the Dublin road, and having been removed to the workhouse by the police, he died in a few minutes. It is stated that the man's name was Henry Armstrong, and was from the neighbourhood of Maguiresbridge. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "died from starvation".

(from the *Clare Journal*)

Thomas Whitestone Esq. held an inquest on this body of James O'Brien, at Lahinch. After the examination of Dr. Finucane, and several other witnesses, the jury returned as their verdict that James O'Brien came by his death from "destitution and exposure to cold."



THE WORKHOUSE AT CLIFDEN IN COUNTY GALWAY

[Source: Illustrated London News, 1849]

(from the *Nenagh Guardian*)

We have to record in our publication of to-day another victim to starvation - another human being deprived of life from want of food. Within the last five weeks, five or six persons have died of absolute starvation in this union - a union rich in mineral wealth and in the fertility of its soil; and from the pauperised condition and the general distress of the people many more may be expected to perish from the same cause. God only knows where the present deplorable state of things will end. The victim in the present instance was a woman of the name of Winifred Mackey, aged about thirty-six. She was found by the police of Ballymackey, lying on the side of the road, at the dead of night, a cold stone as her pillow, a handful of straw as her bedding, the canopy of heaven as her ceiling and ... her last exclamation was for "food!, food!."

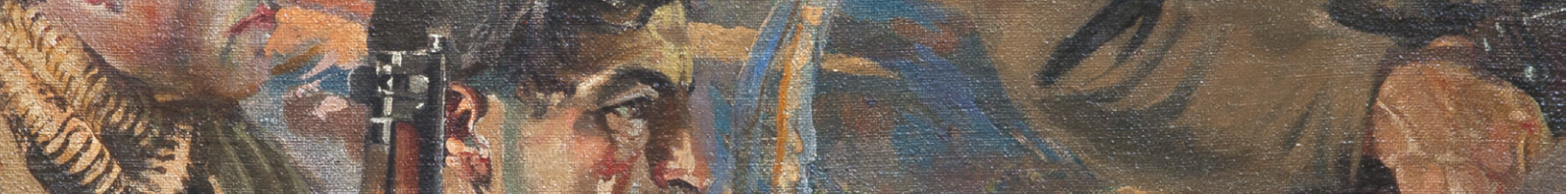
And what is the great and comprehensive measure that is announced by her Majesty's Ministers as a remedy for the frightful state of things disclosed in this one day's

statistics of the Poor Law and the Famine? With the whole means of the Treasury, the whole credit of the country at their disposal, and with their fellow beings dying in hundreds of starvation's slow and horrible agonies, what large and generous proposals do they make?

A loan of 50,000, a paltry, inadequate, miserable loan, and yet a loan opposed, bitterly opposed, by the English Members. Sir James Graham, indeed supported the grant, but on condition, that it should be last loan given to that insatiable beggar [Ireland] ...

Thus speaks our bold and able contemporary, the *Freeman's Journal* on this subject :- "Ireland pays into the united exchequer about five million of pounds annually. Less than one million of this is spent upon all the Irish establishments - the other four millions go towards paying the interest upon the debt contracted for English war, and supporting the English navy and the English army- in a word, towards swelling the greatness and fortifying the strength of the English empire."





## DICTIONARY WORK

Some of the words used in 19th century newspapers have fallen out of everyday use.

*Step 1:* In pairs, use a dictionary to find the meaning of each of the words from the article listed below.

*Step 2:* In the space provided write the word (synonym) that we would be more likely to use today.

(1) Ruinous: -----

----- Modern Word -----

(2) Protracted: -----

----- Modern Word -----

(3) Pauper: -----

----- Modern Word -----

(4) Shroud: -----

----- Modern Word -----

(5) Destitution: -----

----- Modern Word -----

(6) Deplorable: -----

----- Modern Word -----

(7) Perish -----

----- Modern Word -----

(8) Paltry -----

----- Modern Word -----

*Step 3:* In the space below, list any other unfamiliar words in the article. Use your dictionary to discover what they mean.

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## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where and when was Document A created?

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2. Is Document A a primary or secondary source? Explain your answer.

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3. In your opinion, does the building in the drawing look like a welcoming place? Give two reasons for your answer.

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4. What Cork workhouses are mentioned in the newspaper article?

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5. According to the journalist, what was the total number of 'paupers' in 3 unions in County Cork?

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6. What is the journalist's opinion about the support offered by the British Government? Explain your answer.

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7. Would you describe this journalist as objective? Give 3 reasons for your answer.

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8. Imagine that you are an artist working for the *Illustrated London News*. You have been asked to draw a scene showing the effects of the Famine in Ireland. Which of the four anecdotes (stories) from the *Fermanagh Reporter*, the *Erne Packet*, the *Clare Journal* and the *Nenagh Guardian*, would you choose to draw?

***In your copy book either:***

**(a)** Explain why you chose that particular story and describe the details you would highlight in the drawing.

**(b)** Draw your chosen scene and label the important aspects of the drawing.

Jan. 23, 1847

The only difficulty I find in renewing my diary is to find language to describe the everyday increasing misery, frightful distress and fearful scenes, which are of such common occurrence in this neighbourhood, as scarcely to attract notice. Legions of half-naked, starving people parade the streets of this town, from morning until night ... Starvation is stamped upon every countenance; men that were once athletic thrust out their fleshless hands to implore assistance, and the cry of 'I am starving' is dinned into your ears by hosts of starving women and dying children.

The sufferings of the poor from cold are more poignant, if possible, than from hunger. The people are at this moment in the commencement of what are generally the two most severe months in this climate almost literally

naked and without any prospect whatever of being able to procure even the most ordinary articles of dress.

When such is the condition of the poor who are able to leave their homes, some idea may be formed of those who, from sickness, are confined to their own miserable cabins. Disease is in every hovel, and death in every hamlet...

To a stranger, it may seem extraordinary that, in a Christian country, such horrors would be allowed to occur; but our farmers are almost in as bad a condition as the labouring classes, and our gentry are nearly pauperised by the affliction, which will soon press as heavily on them as any other in the community. It is only by the British government and the English people that our miseries can be assuaged ...

### - Document B-

Extract from the famine diary of Doctor Daniel O'Donovan, Dispensary Doctor Skibbereen, West Cork, Jan 1847. (*Belfast Chronicle*, 1 February, 1847)

### - Document C -

Boy and Girl at Caheragh, *The Illustrated London News*, 20 February 1847. The artist James Mahony visited west Cork in the early months of 1847. He hoped that published sketches like this one depicting a forlorn boy and girl searching for potatoes on the road to Drimoleague, would make the suffering of the poor known to the charitable public.





TO THE EDITOR OF THE CORK EXAMINER

Skibbereen, 23rd May 1847

Dear Sir - In my accustomed walk through the parish of Creagh, my attention was arrested by the ruins of whole villages. I was particularly anxious to learn the cause of so much desolation, and for that purpose I sought the information of the few that yet lingered amid the ruins of their unhappy dwellings. They appeared content to perish of hunger in the vicinity of their homes, rather than take shelter in a workhouse.

The townland of Highfield, in the parish of Creagh, is the property of Robert Delacour Beamish, Esq., of Cork. A few days [ago] these proscribed victims were visited by the Rev. Summerest Townsend and Mr. Lovel, agent and under agent to Mr. B., for the purpose of clearing these lands of the tenants. On that day, and sometime prior, they succeeded in turning out [twenty-one] families.

[One was] the Widow Ganey, with seven in her family. They ascended the roof and commenced stripping off the thatch [.....which] they soon accomplished, the agent looking on during the execution of this new mode of ejectment, and promising a ticket for admission to the workhouse, but he departed without performing his promise...

I remain, Sir, very respectfully yours,

**JEREMIAH O'CALLAGHAN**

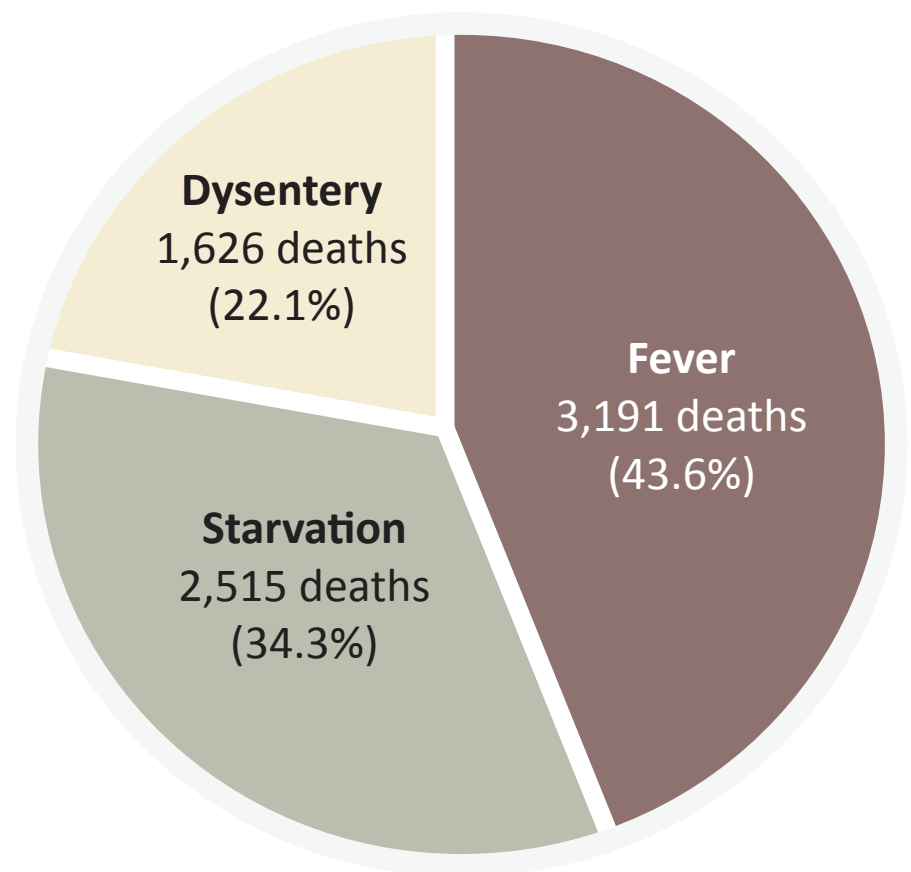
**- Document D -**

Extract from a letter to the editor of the *Cork Examiner* by special correspondent in Skibbereen, Jeremiah O'Callaghan. He sent regular accounts of terrible conditions in west Cork to the newspaper. His dispatches from the area were often picked up and carried by other newspapers in Ireland and England.

**- Document E -**

Pie chart showing the causes of death in the six parishes in the Union of Skibbereen, Sept 1846-Sept 1847.

**Source:** John Crowley, William. J Smyth and Mike Murphy eds, *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*, Cork University Press, 2012, p. 378



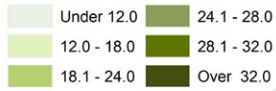


|       | FOCUSES ON WHAT EFFECT(S) OF THE FAMINE? | MOST INTERESTING / SURPRISING WORD(S) OR FACT(S) | MOSTLY FACTS OR MOSTLY OPINION? | LEVEL OF RELIABILITY   |
|-------|--|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Doc A |  |  |                                 | <div><div>12345</div><div>Reliable</div><div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div></div><div>Unreliable</div></div> <div>Because: -----</div> <div>-----</div> <div>-----</div> |
| Doc B |  |  |                                 | <div><div>12345</div><div>Reliable</div><div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div></div><div>Unreliable</div></div> <div>Because: -----</div> <div>-----</div> <div>-----</div> |
| Doc C |  |  |                                 | <div><div>12345</div><div>Reliable</div><div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div></div><div>Unreliable</div></div> <div>Because: -----</div> <div>-----</div> <div>-----</div> |
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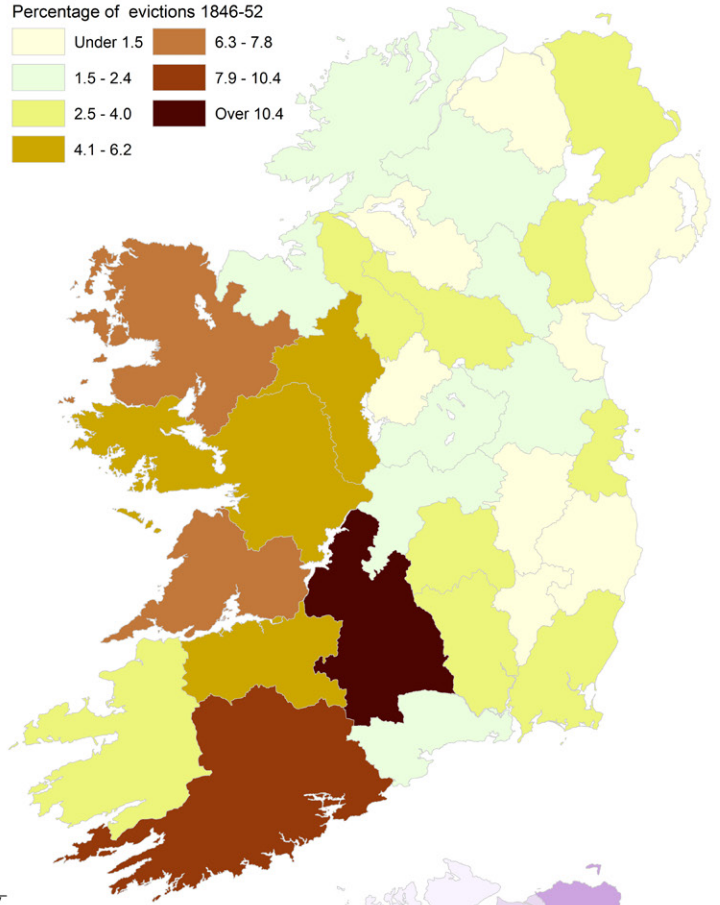
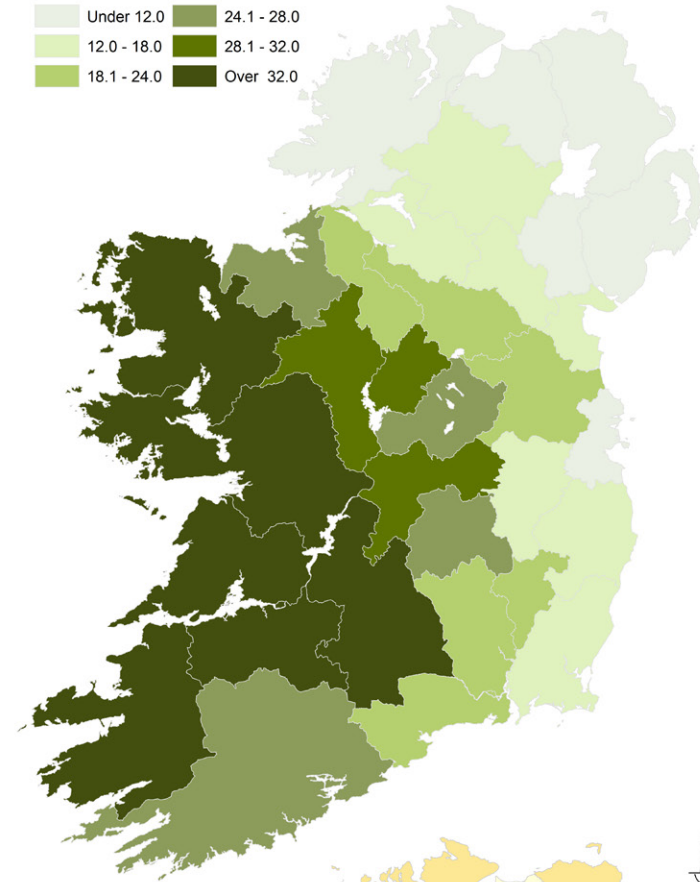
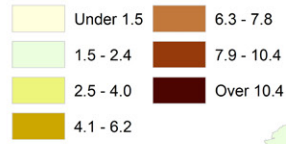
**- Document F-**

Maps showing four of the most devastating consequences of the Great Famine

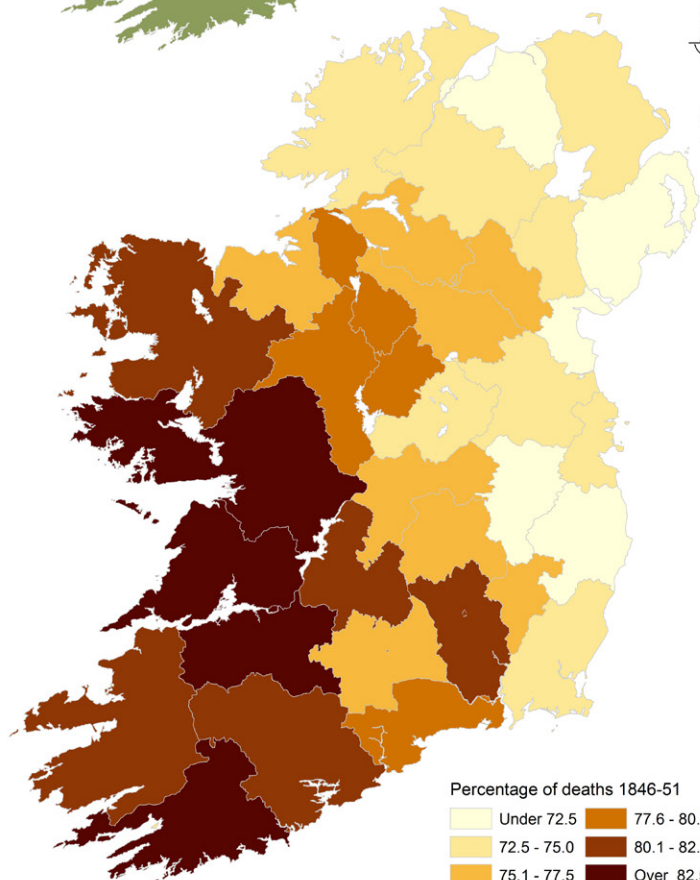
Percentage decline in holdings 1847-53



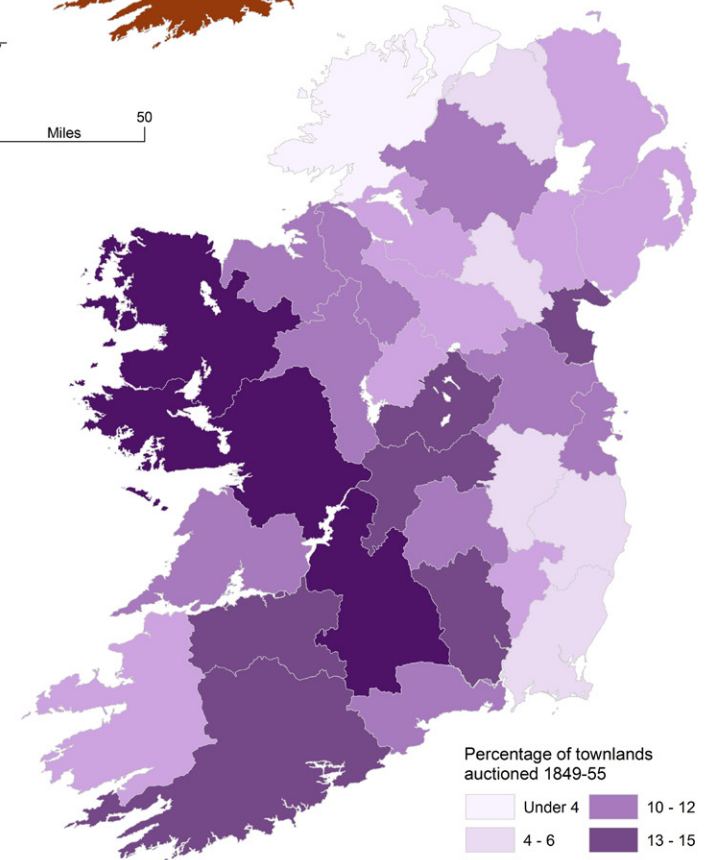
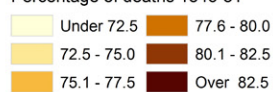
Percentage of evictions 1846-52



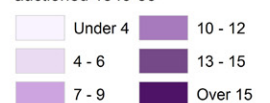
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Percentage of deaths 1846-51



Percentage of townlands auctioned 1849-55



MAP A: PERCENTAGE REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF HOLDINGS OVER 1 ACRE, 1847-53.

By 1853, the landscape of Ireland had been utterly transformed. The Famine years saw the rapid disappearance of almost 93,000 holdings of 1-5 acres in size. If you include the smallholdings under 1 acre in size, the number increases to 300,000. Smallholdings of 5-15 acres declined by almost 40% between 1845 and 1951. The north and east of the country lost far fewer smallholdings than the south and west where the loss was enormous. County Clare lost a staggering four out of every 10 farms (42.4%). Eviction by landlords was not the only reason for the enormous decline in smallholdings during the famine. Other people abandoned their homes to seek relief elsewhere or to emigrate. In other cases, entire families were wiped out by death.

MAP B: PERCENTAGE OF EVICTIONS, 1846-1852

During the Famine, Irish landlords and their land agents engaged in a campaign of mass evictions. After 1847, the amount of money that Irish landlords were required to pay in Poor Law taxes increased. The more tenants on a landlord's estate, the higher his tax. This was a strong motive for many landlords, already carrying large debts, to clear their land of their smallest properties - those valued at £4 or less per year. These evictions occurred most frequently in the more remote, poorer regions of the country where the practice of subdividing the land into smaller and smaller holdings had been at its highest. It is estimated that over 100,000 families (approximately half a million people) were evicted throughout Ireland during the Famine years. Some were forced into workhouses, some managed to emigrate but many others died. Not surprisingly, the famine evictions left behind many bitter memories in Irish rural communities.

MAP C: PERCENTAGE OF DEATHS AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL DEATHS 1846-51

Approximately 1 million men, women and children perished during the Famine. Some died of starvation, others of nutritional deficiencies, but the great majority were swept away by infectious diseases – typhus, fever, dysentery and cholera. Diseases spread as hungry people collected around food depots and soup kitchens or were crowded together in workhouses. The west and south of the country suffered the highest numbers of famine fatalities.

MAP D: PERCENTAGE OF TOWNLANDS AUCTIONED, 1849-55

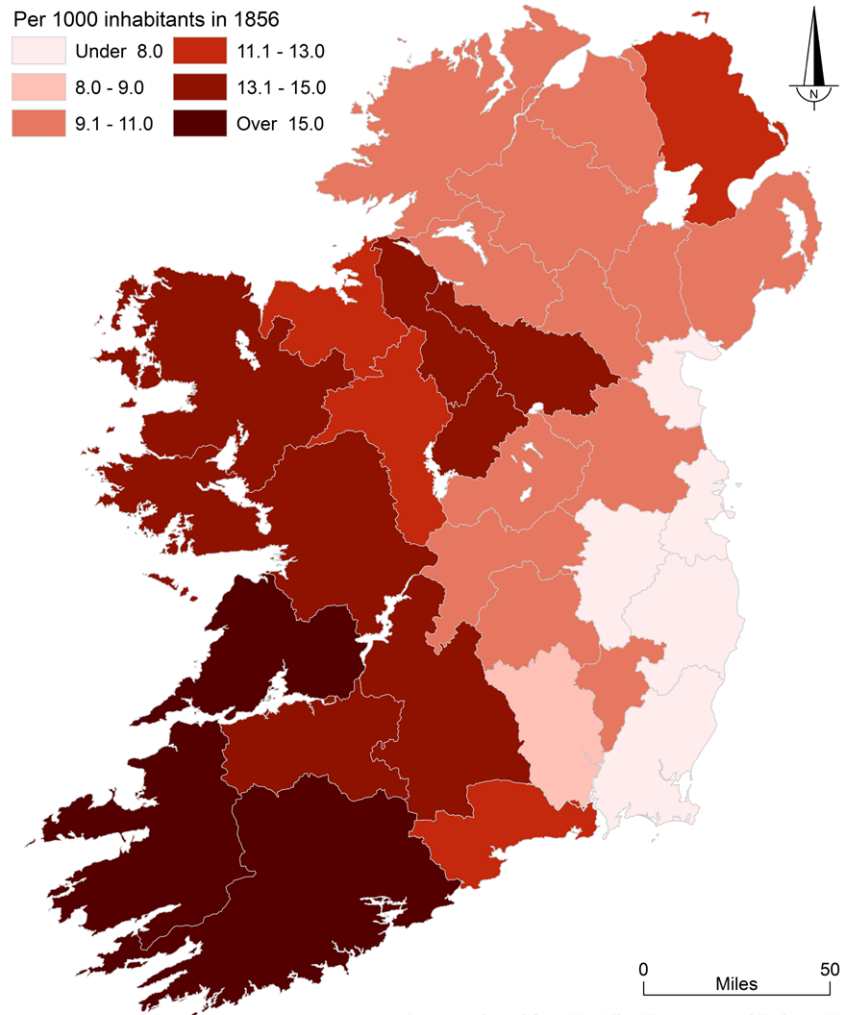
Even before the Famine, many landlords had large debts. These debts grew even larger during the Famine due to unpaid rents, higher Poor Law taxes and in some cases, heavy spending on relief schemes to help the victims of the Famine. In July 1849 the government passed the Encumbered Estates Act, which established a commission with great powers to sell landlords' property in order to clear their debts. The map shows the percentage of land in each of the 32 counties sold through the Encumbered Estates Courts.



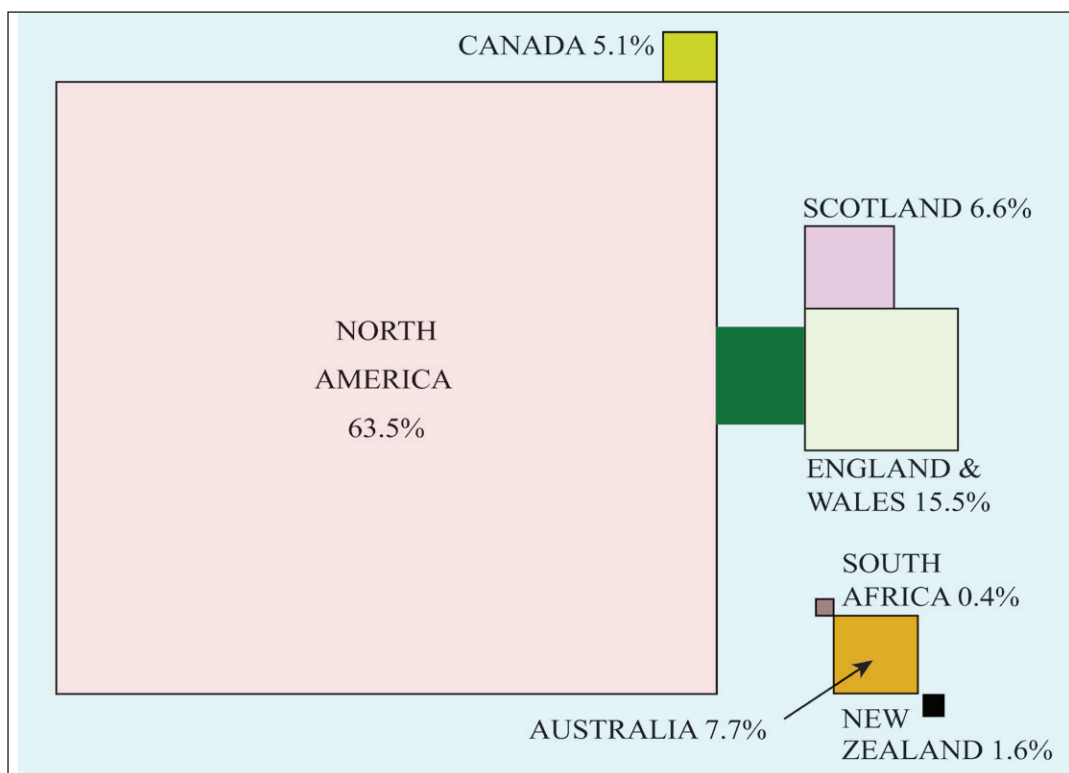
**- Document G-**

This map highlights the intensity of emigration from each county in the half-century after the Famine. Even before the Famine emigration from Ireland was high. As the famine intensified after 1846, the exodus from Ireland became an unstoppable flood. Close to a million desperate Irish people emigrated to overseas countries between 1846 and 1851. A further half million had left Ireland by the end of 1852. By 1891, four out every ten of the total Irish-born population were then living abroad.

John Crowley, Donal O Drisceoil and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, Cork University Press, 2017



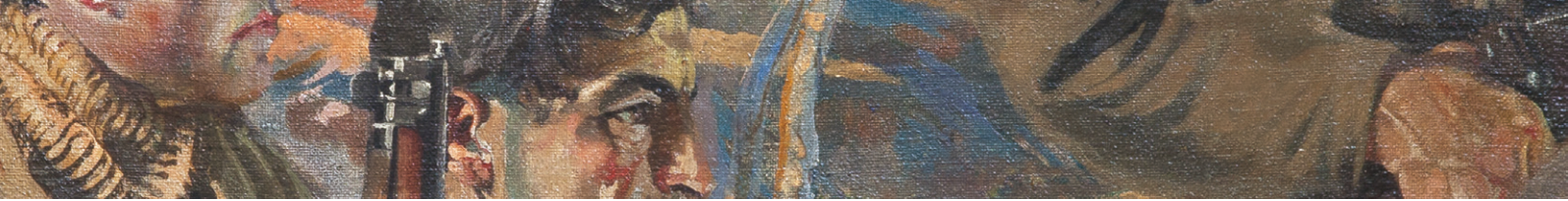
Source: Adapted from K. Miller 'Emigrants and Exiles' p576



**- Document H-**

Map showing the percentage of Irish emigrants living in different countries by 1901.

John Crowley, Donal O Drisceoil and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, Cork University Press, 2017



## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

### DOCUMENT F: MAPS AND CAPTIONS

1. What two counties in Ireland saw the highest level of evictions between 1846-1852?

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2. How does Map A support the claim that '*the cottier class was almost wiped out by the Famine*'?

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3. Can you suggest one reason for the loss of so many smallholdings in County Kerry, 1847-1853?

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-----

4. What were the three main causes of death during the Famine?

(1) -----

(2) -----

(3) -----

5. What four Irish counties recorded the highest 'excess' death rates [*deaths from famine-related causes*] during the famine?

-----

6. Can you suggest why these four counties may have had the highest death rates?

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7. What three counties in Ireland saw the greatest percentage of land auctioned, 1849-1855?

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8. Based on the *all* the maps and captions in Document F, why do you think that the percentage of land auctioned in County Tipperary was so high?

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## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

### DOCUMENTS G-H: MAPS AND CAPTIONS

9. According to the caption for Doc G [*Emigration Map*], approximately how many Irish people emigrated to overseas countries between 1846 and 1851?

-----

10. Using the information in the caption for Doc G, what *percentage* of the Irish population was living abroad by 1891.

-----

11. What three counties in Ireland saw **(a)** the highest levels of emigration and **(b)** the lowest levels of emigration between 1846 and 1851?

(a) -----i-----

(b) -----

12. Can you think of a reason why the locations shown in Doc H might have been popular destinations for Irish emigrants.

-----

13. Can you suggest 1 short term effect, and 1 long term effect of such high levels of emigration from Ireland?

(Short Term) -----

(Long Term) -----

14. Based on your examination of the five maps and the summaries in Documents F and G, choose **one** of the two tasks below:

- (a)** Write an account of the effects of the Famine ***in your own county***. This should include facts and statistics from Documents G-H as well as information discovered during your own research.

OR

- (b)** - Research the story of one emigrant ***from your own country*** who left Ireland during the Famine. Write three diary entries from the point of view of that person. The first should be written before they emigrated, the second should be written while on board the ship, and the third should be written after they reach their destination.





# THE GREAT FAMINE: KEY WORD BINGO

- Part A)

Step 1:

Working in pairs, cut out the boxes and match each key word to the correct definition.

Step 2:

Once you are satisfied with your matches, compare your worksheet with another pair of students.
- Part B)

Step 3

Remaining in your groups of four, choose twelve of the key words and place them randomly into the boxes of the Bingo Grid below. In the meantime, the teacher will nominate one student to act as the Bingo Caller.

Step 4:

Once every group is ready, the Bingo Caller will choose definitions at random and read them to the class. If your group thinks that the definition matches any of the words on your grid, you should use a highlighter or a coloured pen to mark the box.

Step 5:

The winner is determined when one group of players complete the winning bingo pattern. The pattern can be:  
**A)** A line of three words covered - vertical, horizontal or diagonal  
**B)** A full house (when all the words in the grid are covered)  
**C)** All the words beneath the symbol of the map are covered

| KEY<br>WORD | BINGO |  |
|-------------|-------|--|
|             |       |  |
|             |       |  |
|             |       |  |
|             |       |  |



# GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS: THE GREAT FAMINE

## ARREARS

EVERY PERSON LIVING WITHIN A LOCAL ELECTORAL DIVISION PAID THESE RATES FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE WORKHOUSE.

## POOR LAW ACT

THE NAME GIVEN TO THE SHIPS THAT CARRIED IRISH EMIGRANTS ESCAPING THE EFFECTS OF THE FAMINE. THEY WERE CROWDED AND DISEASE-RIDDEN

## BOARD OF GUARDIANS

THE CONDITION OF BEING VERY POOR AND WITHOUT RESOURCES

## POOR RATES

A LEGAL TERM FOR PART OF A DEBT. i.e., RENT THAT IS OVERDUE

## COFFIN SHIPS

A FAVOURED METHOD OF LAND DIVISION IN PRE-FAMINE IRISH SOCIETY WHEREBY LAND WAS DIVIDED INTO SMALLER PIECES

## CLEARANCES

THE ACT OF LEAVING ONE'S OWN COUNTRY TO SETTLE PERMANENTLY IN ANOTHER; MOVING ABROAD.

## CONACRE

AN ECONOMIC POLICY WHICH MEANT THAT GOVERNMENT DID NOT INTERFERE IN BUSINESS MARKETS OR THE ECONOMY IN GENERAL. IT PROVED DISASTROUS DURING THE FAMINE

## SUBDIVISION

WHEN THE IRISH POOR LAW ACT WAS INTRODUCED IN 1838, A BOARD OF GUARDIANS WAS ELECTED TO RUN THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORKHOUSES WITHIN EACH DESIGNATED AREA.

## COTTIERS

AN ANNUAL PAYMENT OF ONE TENTH OF PRODUCE, PAID TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH. THEY WERE GREATLY RESENTED BY ALL DENOMINATIONS.

## TITHES

A PLACE WHERE THE POOR AND DESTITUTE COULD FIND ACCOMMODATION AND SHELTER IN RETURN FOR CARRYING OUT BASIC DUTIES. CONDITIONS OF ENTRY INTO THE WORKHOUSE WERE STRICT AND IT WAS SEEN AS THE LAST RESORT.

## DESTITUTE

INTRODUCED FOR IRELAND IN 1838, THIS ACT ALLOWED FOR A SYSTEM TO SUPPLY RELIEF TO THE POOR.

## WORKHOUSE

A CLASS OF PEOPLE WHO GENERALLY OWNED LITTLE MORE THAN HALF AN ACRE OF LAND.

## EMIGRATION

ACCORDING TO THIS ACT, HOLDERS OF MORE THAN A  $\frac{1}{4}$  OF AN ACRE OF LAND COULD NOT BE DEEMED DESTITUTE AND ENTITLED TO RELIEF. RESULTED IN THOUSANDS OF IMPOVERISHED COTTIERS SURRENDERING THEIR LAND.

## FAMINE ROADS

PART OF THE WORK SCHEMES SET UP, THE POOR DID TOUGH PHYSICAL LABOR ALL DAY BUILDING THESE ROADS IN ORDER TO EARN MONEY TO BUY FOOD.

## EVICTON

LANDLORDS WERE REQUIRED TO PAY THE POOR RATE FOR THOSE WITH A HOLDING VALUED AT UNDER £4. AS THE FAMINE PROGRESSED, MANY LANDLORDS DECIDED TO CLEAR THESE TENANTS FROM THEIR ESTATES.

## POTATO BLIGHT

A SEVERE SHORTAGE OF FOOD, AS THROUGH CROP FAILURE OR OVERPOPULATION, CAUSING ILLNESS OR DEATH FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE.

## FAMINE

MEN WHO RENTED LAND FROM A LANDLORD AND IN TURN SUBLET THE LAND, OFTEN AT A HIGHER PRICE.

## MIDDLEMEN

A LANDLORD'S LEGAL REMOVAL OF A TENANT FROM HIS RENTAL PROPERTY. EVICTION MAY OCCUR WHEN RENT HAS NOT BEEN PAID.

## GREGORY ACT 1848

A DESTRUCTIVE FUNGAL DISEASE OF POTATOES WHICH CAUSES THE TUBERS TO ROT.

## LAISSEZ-FAIRE

TRANSLATION: TO LEAVE ALONE

A SYSTEM WHEREBY LAND WAS RENTED ON AN 'ELEVEN-MONTH' BASIS, WITH THE CONTRACT RENEWED FROM YEAR TO YEAR. IT GAVE THE TENANT NO LEGAL ENTITLEMENT TO THE HOLDING.

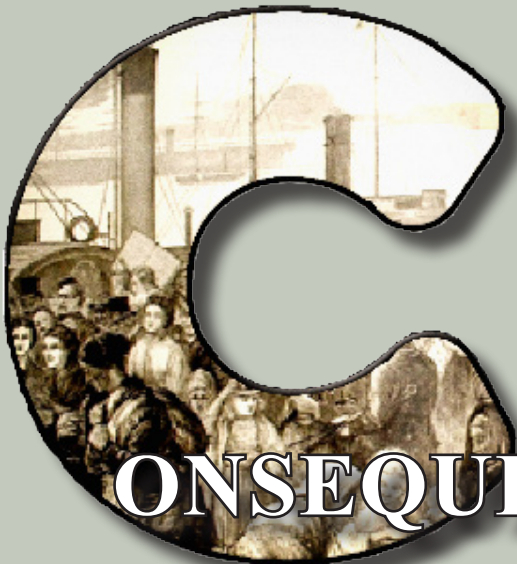
# THE GREAT FAMINE



AUSES



OURSE



ONSEQUENCES