References

Bloy, Marjorie. *Britain and Ireland 1789-1801*, 1994. Available from World Wide Web: http://landow.stg.brown.edu/victorian/history/ireland1.html

Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond's Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web: http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html

Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

SECTION TWO INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

EARLY ELEMENTARY

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (3) and Civics and Government (7)

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Political Systems: Students will explain that political systems emanate from the need of humans for order; leading to compromise and the establishment of authority.

- Have students explain some of the reasons why people move from one country to another. Use some historic movements of large groups of people as examples. Then discuss what the 17th century plantations meant to Ireland. What groups of people came to Ireland as a result of the plantations? How were the native Irish affected?

- Develop the concept of power and authority through discussion and description of families and the roles of each family member, and of schools and the roles of each school organization's members. Use school organization as an analogy of a government and governing body, e.g., compare Parliament to a student council. Present students with the scenario that their school and an elementary school in another district were to merge and that only the student council in the other school could vote and make school decisions. Discuss reactions and compare this to the Act of Union.

UPPER ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (3) and Civics and Government (7)

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Political Systems: Students will explain that political systems emanate from the need of humans for order; leading to compromise and the establishment of authority.

- Explain how roles and status of people have differed and changed throughout history, based on gender, age, class, racial and ethnic identity, wealth, and/or social position. Hold a discussion with students on how Catholics were viewed in Ireland during this period. How did the Penal Laws affect them?

- Describe the emergence of select governmental systems, principles and institutions. How did Ireland come to fall under British rule? What impact did the series of events of the 18th century, leading to the Act of Union, have on Ireland?

HIGH SCHOOL

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (1 and 3)

Historical Thinking: Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time; contextualizing, comprehending and analyzing historical literature; researching historical sources; understanding the concept of historical causation; understanding competing narratives and interpretation; and constructing narratives and interpretation.

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

- Describe, explain and analyze political, economic and social consequences that came about as the resolution of a conflict. Discuss with students the role Oliver Cromwell and his "scorched earth policy" had on Ireland. How did the Cromwellian Plantations affect the native Irish? What were the political, economic and social consequences?

- Have students record a poem, song or story that is particularly meaningful to them. Ask them to imagine that their community is overtaken by a foreign power, which passes laws forbidding them to speak or write their language. How would they feel if they could no longer recite the writing they have recorded? Would they want to resist the law? How would they try to hold on to their own language? Have students write a short essay on how they would attempt to remember their writing and pass it on to others.

- Ask students to locate definitions of exploitation and oppression in several dictionaries, and hold a discussion on these definitions. Then, using the experience of the native Irish, develop a list of reasons why one group will exploit and oppress another, such as economic dominance or cultural superiority. Have students debate which comes first? The desire for economic dominance or the belief in cultural superiority?

- Ask students to research other groups which have undergone exploitation and oppression so that another group could dominate a region (Native American tribes, European Jews, Korea under Japanese control, etc.). Were the motives for exploitation and suppression similar to those of the English in Ireland? Were the methods similar? Were there additional methods?

SECTION THREE
Ireland: 1800-1845

Introduction

Many early 19th century travelers to Ireland were struck by its poverty as the condition of the Irish 'peasantry' appeared uniquely primitive. Various explanations for this privation were put forth; some blamed an excessive birth rate or lack of individual enterprise. But more sympathetic observers pointed to oppressive landlords and British 'misgovernment'.

Although the Great Hunger was not inevitable, it would not have been possible without the existence of these interrelated problems: overpopulation, widespread poverty, a corrupt landlord system, government deprivation and an excessive dependence on the potato (Gray, 1995).

From Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine.*
New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995.
Used with permission.

A Troubled Economy

Although many nationalists blamed the Act of Union for Ireland's economic decline in the early 1800s, it brought free trade between England and Ireland, beginning the process of integrating the two economies. The Industrial Revolution, which had taken root in England, created an urban labor population dependent upon a trade rather than agrarian economy. Immense amounts of natural resources were now needed to fuel the engines of industry and England's hunger for these resources, and its expanding trade empire motivated them to place greater demands and tighter controls on Ireland's production and trade.

The diminished Irish land base and expanding English holdings, dramatically changed agricultural customs and patterns in Ireland. Traditional Irish agricultural practices involved a diversified approach: crops were grown in the country's fertile valleys, cattle grazed the highlands and forests yielded lumber and game. English commercial agriculturists employed whatever approach would bring them the greatest and most immediate profits. Ireland's forests were soon denuded for England's ships and charcoal furnaces, and fertile valleys became lush pasturelands for cattle and cash crops.

Not only were the Irish driven from their lands, as tenant farmers they were given the poorest land to farm. Poor land, and the native Irish custom of passing on their tenancies to all their children meant that, as the population increased, the Irish farmed smaller and smaller plots of unfertile land —

unsuitable for grazing cattle or growing grain crops. This practice prevented tenants from expanding and improving their farms, leading instead to increased poverty as holdings diminished. This, in turn, engendered an overdependence on the potato, which was the only crop that would flourish in the poor soil.

Daniel O'Connell And Catholic Emancipation

Daniel O'Connell, a Catholic advocate of nonviolent and lawful political action, emerged in the early 1800s as the sole leader of the peasant and middle class Catholics, who comprised the vast majority of the Irish population. O'Connell, whose family came from the Gaelic gentry, organized Catholics into an extraordinary political machine, impacting England and Ireland for almost 100 years.

He first attracted attention as the leader of an unsuccessful 1804-1807 movement for "Catholic Emancipation." Although Catholics had been granted the right to vote in 1793, they were still prohibited from serving in Parliament. In 1823, O'Connell founded the "Catholic Association," and by 1826, the organization began to flex some muscle. The first goal was emancipation and a policy was enacted to actively oppose any political candidate who was either against emancipation, or who joined the cabinet of an anti-emancipation government.

Opportunity knocked when, prior to the next general election, Vesey Fitzgerald, who had served in Parliament for 10 years was appointed to the cabinet and then required by law to stand for reelection in 1828. Although Fitzgerald was personally pro-emancipation, and therefore no enemy of Catholics, he had joined a government that was, thereby, requiring the Catholic Association, as a matter of policy, to oppose him. However, Fitzgerald was so strong that O'Connell could find no Protestant to run against him. He, therefore, declared his own candidacy, thus exploiting a loophole in the election law. Specifically, although the law clearly prohibited Catholics from being sworn in as members of Parliament, it did not explicitly prohibit Catholics from filing as candidates and running for election.

The election results shocked the British Parliament. Because of O'Connell's highly effective political machine, he won by a two-to-one margin, but by law could not sit in Parliament. To avoid any disorders that might follow its refusal to seat O'Connell, Parliament, in 1829, passed legislation that not only granted Catholic Emancipation, but repealed virtually all of the remaining Penal Laws as well (Desmond, 1999).

From Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond's Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web: http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html
Used with permission.

O'Connell became a well-respected and successful member of Parliament in Westminster.

Population And Poverty

In 1841, the Census stated there were 8,175,124 people living in Ireland. This was an increase of 175 percent since 1780, making Ireland one of the most densely populated countries in Europe (Campbell, 1994).

The Poor Inquiry of 1832 found 3 million people at poverty level and that approximately 100,000 of these were widows, orphans and unemployed in a state of total destitution requiring welfare of some kind (Gray, 1995).

To assist the destitute and to prevent them from entering England en masse, government officials enacted the Poor Law in 1838.

Modeled on the English workhouse system and supported by the Catholic clergy, officials felt it was an effective means of accommodating and housing the poor. Under the law, Ireland was divided into 130 poor-law unions, each containing a workhouse. Guardian Boards, elected by local taxpayers and responsible to a resident commissioner in Dublin, regulated each union. The workhouses were designed to house some 100,000 destitute people, well short of the 2,400,000 the royal commission had declared in 1836 to be in a state of "poverty." The act aimed to discourage "pauperism" by enforcing a harsh regime of work, diet, and segregation by age and sex. Hated by the poor, the work houses were rarely half full before 1845 (Gray, 1995).

From Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine*. New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995.
Used with permission.

Absentee Landlords

In the wake of the Act of Union, landlords resided at their Irish country estates less and less, using the rental income to support political careers or fashionable living in England. Their estates were frequently let on long leases at low rent to wealthy farmers, known as middlemen, who made vast profits by subletting at increased rents and short or no leases to numerous under-tenants. Middlemen usually cared little for the effective overall management of the landlord's property. Leases were usually negotiated on a townland basis, with the middlemen, in turn, allocating rental responsibilities within the community. This system saved the landlord the trouble of dealing with a multiplicity of small fractious leaseholders, leaving the resident middlemen to deal with such contentious issues as the regulation of communal grazing, the fixing of rents and the allocation of strips of land (Campbell, n.d.).

However, after 1815, most landowners moved to Ireland to take personal control of their estates and, as leases expired, middlemen were removed. Landlords gave their smaller tenants yearly "tenancies-at-will," which made eviction easier. Influenced by British practices, they wanted to overhaul farming methods and introduce large farms worked by landless laborers. They felt little sympathy or moral responsibility for the large numbers of 'cottiers' (farm laborers who rented a small portion of land annually) and seasonal laborers who remained on their estates (Gray, 1995).

From Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine.*
New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995.
Used with permission.

Ireland's Food Staple

In 1845, Ireland was extraordinarily dependent on a single subsistence crop —the potato, an American vegetable. Introduced into Ireland during the colonial settlements of the late 16th and early 17th century, Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have cultivated it on his own estates in County Cork in the 1580s. The potato rapidly established itself as the principal food of the Irish poor and, by the 1840s, it was the most extensively cultivated crop in Ireland, accounting for over 2 million statute acres, or one-third of all tilled land, usually in tiny parcels. An adult rural laborer would eat up to 14 pounds of potatoes per day, with women and children over 10 years consuming about 11 pounds and younger children around five pounds per day. Generally eaten with a seasoning of salt, cabbage or fish, when available, potatoes provided a diet adequate

in proteins, fats, carbohydrates, calcium and iron. An estimated 7 million tons of potatoes were required each year for human consumption.

Difficult to store and transport, potatoes generally lasted about 10½ months, and the six weeks before the potato harvest were periods of hardship, when people relied on scanty rations of oatmeal, eggs, herring or lard. Farmers and laborers in the Northern counties relied on a year-round supplement of oatmeal, a traditional food since the 17th century. Fishing, especially on the West Coast, was a seasonal activity and during the months the seas were not navigable, fishing communities relied heavily on potatoes (Campbell, 1994).

From Campbell, Stephen J. *The Great Irish Famine: Words and Images from the Famine Museum, Strokestown Park, County Roscommon.* Minneapolis, MN: Irish Books and Media, 1994. Used with permission.

References

Campbell, Stephen J. *The Great Irish Famine: Words and Images from the Famine Museum, Strokestown Park, County Roscommon.* Minneapolis, MN: Irish Books and Media, 1994.
Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond's Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web: http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html
Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995.

SECTION THREE INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

EARLY ELEMENTARY

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (1 and 3)

Historical Thinking: Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time; contextualizing, comprehending and analyzing historical literature; researching historical sources; understanding the concept of historical causation; understanding competing narratives and interpretation; and constructing narratives and interpretation.

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

- Have students gather historical data from multiple sources on Ireland's food staple at the time — the potato. Then hold a discussion as to how the Irish became dependent on the potato. Why was it the principal food of the Irish poor? Was it a healthy food source?

- Have students describe sources of historical information. Discuss the kinds of information available in the library and on the Internet. Which did they find most helpful?

- Examine family life and cultures of different people at different times in history. Discuss the family life of the native Irish peasant. Did the Irish have large families? How did the native Irish custom of passing on their tenancies to all their children contribute to their increased poverty? How did this engender an overdependence on the potato? Identify how the Gaelic Irish ended up with the poorest lands in the West of Ireland, and what impact this had on their ability to farm.

UPPER ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (3 and 4)

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Applying History: Students will recognize the continuing importance of historical thinking and historical knowledge in their own lives and in the world in which they live.

- Discuss the concept of empathy for others and, in particular, people who have lived in the past. What was it like being an Irish Catholic during this period? How were they treated?

- Describe and analyze, using historical data and understandings, the widespread poverty found in Ireland during the early 1800s. What factors contributed to the country's excessive dependence on the potato?

HIGH SCHOOL

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (3 and 4)

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Applying History: Students will recognize the continuing importance of historical thinking and historical knowledge in their own lives and in the world in which they live.

- Describe the basic tenets of the world religions that have acted as major forces throughout history, including, but not limited to, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, and indigenous popular religions. How did Christianity — particularly Catholicism — affect the lives of the Irish Catholics? How were Protestants treated during this same period?

- Initiate questions and hypotheses about the underlying causes leading up to the Great Hunger. Discuss with students how overpopulation, poverty and government deprivation contributed to a country's over-dependence on the potato. Could the Great Hunger have been avoided?

SECTION FOUR
The Great Hunger: 1845-1850

Introduction

Before the famine, Ireland's population was just over 8 million — by its end, it was reduced by half. It is estimated that one in four people died. By 1900, the population was further reduced — to less than 2 million, a decrease of over 75 percent in a country that was part of the United Kingdom and under British control.

The Hunger not only devastated the Irish people, it had profound long-term effects on Ireland — many of which remain to this day: the transfer of bankrupt estates caused the rise of the Irish middle class farmer and his dominance in rural society, family and social life are more anglicized, English is the dominant language, and people are marrying later and having fewer children (Campbell, 1994).

The Blight

In the summer of 1843, *Phytophtora infestans*, a fungus that invades potato plants and causes rapid decay, struck for the first time in the Eastern United States. The invisible fungus spores were then transported to Belgium in a cargo of apparently healthy potatoes, and in the summer of 1845, devastated the potato crop in Flanders, Normandy, Holland and Southern England. Aware of the impending disaster should the blight spread to Ireland, British Prime Minister Robert Peel ordered the Irish Constabulary to investigate. By August 20, blight was recorded at the Dublin Botanical Gardens and a week later, a total crop failure was reported from County Fermanagh. By October, there was a panic in Western Ireland, as the blight destroyed healthy potatoes harvested in August (Campbell, 1994).

From Campbell, Stephen J. *The Great Irish Famine: Words and Images from the Famine Museum, Strokestown Park, County Roscommon.* Minneapolis, MN: Irish Books and Media, 1994. Used with permission.

In October 1845 the Irish newspaper, *The Spectator* reported: "Ireland is threatened with a thing that is read of in history and in distant countries, but

scarcely in own land and time — a famine. Whole fields of the root have rotted in the ground, and many a family sees its sole provision for the year destroyed."

To the people and scientific experts who urgently sought a remedy, the blight was an inexplicable horror. Many saw the blight as the work of a supernatural influence, or evil spirits, or God's curse on Ireland following the Catholic Emancipation Act. Others blamed it on the use of *guano* fertilizer, or regarded the blight as a lesson to the Irish poor against overbreeding or reliance on the 'lazy man's' crop, the potato. Misdiagnosed, the official government inquiry decided the disease was a result of wet weather, which had rotted the plants. The small number of botanists who attributed the blight to fungus, were ignored and an antidote was not discovered for over 30 years (Campbell, 1994).

From Campbell, Stephen J. *The Great Irish Famine: Words and Images from the Famine Museum, Strokestown Park, County Roscommon.* Minneapolis, MN: Irish Books and Media, 1994.
Used with permission.

Government Relief

After the first signs of crop failure appeared, Britain's Tory government, under Prime Minister Robert Peel, took modest initiatives to alleviate the problem. It paid half the cost of jobs for about 140,000 family heads on public works, which were required by law to be nonproductive, and it matched local voluntary contributions to hunger relief. It also imported large quantities of Indian corn and meal from the United States; however, the government refused to distribute the food free, selling it instead at low prices to prevent artificial increases in food prices.

Peel firmly opposed more radical measures. The starvation could have been averted had legislation been passed prohibiting the export of food from Ireland and any hardship on growers could have been avoided by legislation authorizing purchase of their grain using borrowed money, with repayment to be made over a period of years from increased agricultural taxes. But Peel's government never seriously considered feeding the population by interfering with exports, in part because the expense might fall on the English growers and/or the public treasury. Instead, he chose to repeal the "Corn Laws," which imposed stiff tariffs on grain brought in from outside the United Kingdom. This reduced food prices (as Peel intended), but did nothing to alleviate the hunger, since the poor could not afford food at whatever the price.

The controversial repeal of the "Corn Laws" toppled Peel's Tory government in June 1846. Replaced by an even less compassionate Whig government under Lord John Russell, the blight problem was delegated to Charles Trevelyan, Head of Treasury. The Whigs and Trevelyan were committed to a laissez-faire approach, which held that it was not a government's job to provide aid for its citizens, or to interfere with the free market of goods or trade. Laissez-faire was the dominant economic theory in mid-19th century Britain (Desmond, 1999).

From Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond's Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web:
http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html
Used with permission.

However, despite criticism of the relief measures and the shortfall in food supply, mass starvation was avoided during 1845.

The Blight Returns

The potato failure in the summer of 1846 exceeded the fears of even the most pessimistic in Ireland. Three to 4 million people were threatened with starvation by crop failure unprecedented in the history of modern Europe. Only the British could command resources sufficient to alleviate such a catastrophe, but employing these effectively required the exercise of administrative wisdom and political will.

By early August virtually the entire surface of Ireland had been ravaged. Eyewitnesses described fields of 'luxuriant growth' being reduced overnight to a 'wide waste of putrefying vegetation'. No human action seemed capable of halting the advance of the blight, and everywhere the general response was one of despair and fear (Gray, 1995).

The winter of 1846-47 was the harshest in living memory — it was when the real dying began — the suffering reaching its peak in February 1847, when hundreds of thousands of homeless, freezing and starving peasants left farms for the towns, hoping for employment in public works, which had already hired 500,000 family heads. Cholera and typhus broke out and people died from sickness, starvation and exposure — by the famine's end, the death toll would be in the millions (Desmond, 1999).

From Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond's Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web:
http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html. Used with permission.

The worst year of the Great Hunger was 1847, when between 500,000 and 1 million people are estimated to have lost their lives. It is still called "Black 47" by the Irish.

Relief Efforts

Donations for the Irish Famine came from distant and unexpected sources: India, Italy, France, Jamaica and Barbados. Many major cities in America set up Relief Committees for Ireland, and Jewish synagogues in America and Britain contributed generously (Campbell, 1994).

The Irish newspaper *The Cork Examiner* reported in July 1947 that: "The United States frigate Macedonian, laden with benevolent contributions for the poor of Ireland, sailed from New York for Cork on the 15th instant. Her cargo consists of 30 packages of clothing, 210 tierces of rice, 6 tierces of peas, 1,132 bags of oats, 1,115 bags of corn, 2,103 bags of beans, 1,047 bags meal, 122 barrels of beans, 8 barrels of rye, 7 barrels of potatoes, 84 barrels of corn, 4 barrels of beef, 6 barrels of pork, 13 barrels of flour, 5,178 barrels of meal and 10 chests of tea. This is quite a large cargo and will be received with much joy by the people for whom it is intended."

In November 1846, the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends — Quakers — was set up in Dublin and London. Commanding a vast network of fellow Quakers throughout Britain, Ireland and the United States, the organization raised over 200,000 pounds for famine relief. Not only did they distribute food, clothing and crop seeds, they also sought to encourage industry and improve agriculture. However, they closed operations in 1849.

During the bitter winter of 1846-47, members of the Society made their way into Ireland's remoter districts and were often overwhelmed by what they saw, unable to convey the experience (Campbell, 1994).

From Campbell, Stephen J. *The Great Irish Famine: Words and Images from the Famine Museum, Strokestown Park, County Roscommon*. Minneapolis, MN: Irish Books and Media, 1994. Used with permission.

Two alarming accounts from *The Cork Examiner* follow:

Disease and death in every quarter — the once-hardy population worn away to emaciated skeletons — fever, dropsy, diarrhea and famine rioting in every filthy hovel, and sweeping away whole families — the population perceptively lessened — death diminishing the destitution — hundreds frantically rushing from their

home and country, not with the idea of making fortunes in other lands, but to fly from a scene of suffering and death.

- December 1846

How can the labourer work? He has a wife, perhaps an old father or bed-ridden mother, and three or four children in his cabin; he strains and toils for them — for the sickly wife, and the youngest darling, whose once round cheeks are now pale and shriveled, resting on the mother's fleshless breast; he thinks of them, and toils on — but every blow he gives is at his heart-strings — he is sounding his funeral knell — every effort of that starving man, who hides the hunger that is gnawing at his entrails, that he might spare a morsel for those he loves, is hurrying him to the coffinless grave and the shroud of rags. And this a Christian country! This under the proud banner of British sway! This in a land united to England by a union, considered as sacred as a holy covenant, so much so that the thought of severing it is regarded as a profanation, a sacrilege!

Will no sound of woe penetrate the Cabinet, or reach the heart of the Minister! Is he determined to look on until Presentments are not for coffins — but *churchyards*? Or until the Rev. Mr. Fitzpatrick's calculation be realized — when *one-third* of the population shall be swept away?"

- January 1847

British relief finally came when the Whig government decided to extend aid through the Soup Kitchen Act, providing free soup to the starving. The British Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, was now convinced that 'the pressing matter at present is to keep the people alive' and soup kitchens provide the most immediate relief.

A new relief commission was formed under Sir John Burgoyne, but the new act was not quickly implemented. Russell was now aware of the dangers of shutting down the public works before the soup kitchens were ready, but with the numbers employed still rising (up to 714,000 in early March), there was intense pressure to cut back on spending and to release laborers for planting.

On March 20 the public works closings began with the dismissal of one-fifth of the workforce. Although the public works had been a lifeline for the poor, the government, unable to fund both the soup kitchens and public works, choose to close the public works by May 1. However, this proved impossible, because of the resistance of many workers and the absence of any alternative relief in areas (Gray, 1995).

By the end of June, all but 28,000 had been discharged. Some workers rioted against the soup kitchens and the demeaning regime this system entailed.

In a further assault on the Catholic religion, some evangelical Protestant relief efforts required the hungary to renounce Catholicism in return for food; hence the name *souper* for those who sought such relief.

In some of the hardest hit areas, like Skibbereen, soup kitchens came into operation only in mid-June. Once they were established, further problems arose. The number of rations issued never matched the full extent of destitution. The poor quality and small quantity of the food distributed by many committees added to popular anger.

By the first week of July, more than 3 million rations were being distributed daily at a cost of some two pence per head. This extraordinary administrative achievement, despite its flaws, proved to be the most effective means of containing the ravages of famine. Yet the government and British opinion regarded the soup kitchens as a strictly temporary measure. In mid-August the soup kitchens began to be phased out, and by the end of September were all but closed (Gray, 1995).

From Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine.* New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995. Used with permission.

Blight returned in October 1848, destroying virtually the entire potato crop. Government assistance was largely denied and 1848-49 proved to be as bad, if not worst, than 1846-47. Hundreds of thousands more perished, routinely falling dead on the streets; eyewitnesses reported corpses lying unburied in the streets for days, sometimes gnawed by dogs and rats. One road inspector reported burying 140 corpses scattered along his route. The magnitude of the fatalities was so overwhelming that authorities were unable to record the precise number of deaths (Desmond, 1999).

Finally, with the 1849 harvest, the potato blight and the famine were over. But Irish culture would never be the same, the animosity toward England now a genuine hatred. "British policy toward Ireland during the years of the Great Hunger was, at best, indifferent, and at worst, cruel beyond any standard of morality" (Desmond, 1999). "Charles Trevelyan, the British minister responsible for Irish relief measures, refused to help with Irish resettlement and emigration, blaming the 'moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the Irish people' for their circumstances, and complaining that it was "too bad only one million died" (Campbell, 1994).

Exports

Throughout the entire four-year period of the famine, Ireland was exporting enormous quantities of food to England. In *Ireland Before and After the Famine* (1989), Cormac O Grada points out, "Although the potato crop failed, the country was still producing and exporting more than enough grain crops to feed the population. But that was a 'money crop' and not a 'food crop' and could not be interfered with." Up to 75 percent of Irish soil was devoted to wheat, oats, barley and other crops which were grown for export, and which were exported while the people starved.

In the spring issue of *History of Ireland*, author and University of Liverpool fellow Christine Kinnealy related her findings:

> Almost 4,000 vessels carried food from Ireland to the ports of Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool and London during 1847, when 400,000 Irish men, women and children died of starvation and related diseases. The food was shipped under military guard from the most famine-stricken parts of Ireland: Ballina, Ballyshannon, Bantry, Dingle, Killala, Kilrush, Limerick, Sligo, Tralee and Wesport.

> During the first nine months of "Black '47" the export of grain-derived alcohol from Ireland to England included the following: 874,170 gallons of porter, 278,658 gallons of Guinness and 183,392 gallons of whisky. The total amount of grain-derived alcohol exported from Ireland in just nine months was 1,336,220 gallons!

> A wide variety of commodities left Ireland during 1847, including peas, beans, onions, rabbits, salmon, oysters, herring, lard, honey, tongues, animal skins, rags, shoes, soap, glue and seed.

> The most shocking export figures concern butter. Butter was shipped in firkins, each one holding nine gallons. In the first nine months of 1847, 56,557 firkins were exported from Ireland to Bristol, and 34,852 firkins were shipped to Liverpool. That works out to be 822,681 gallons of butter exported to England from Ireland during nine months of the worst year of famine.

> Following the second failure of the potato crop in 1846, 4,000 horses and ponies were exported from Ireland. The export of livestock to Britain (with the exception of pigs) increased during the famine. The export of bacon and ham increased. In total, over 3

From Kinnealy, Christine. *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine, 1845-52*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1995. Used with permission.

million live animals were exported from Ireland between 1846-50, more than the number of people who emigrated during the famine years (Kinnealy, 1995).

Evictions

James S. Donnelly wrote in *Mass Eviction and the Irish Famine: The Clearances Revisited*: (Dufour Editions, 1995): "Under a law imposed in 1847, called the 'Gregory Clause,' no tenant holding more than a quarter-acre of land was eligible for public assistance. To become eligible, the tenant had to surrender his holding to his landlord. Some tenants sent their children to the workhouse as orphans so they could keep their land and still have their children fed."

Desperate to feed themselves, many Irish peasants resorted to eating foods intended for sale, causing evictions by landlords. Up to 500,000 peasants fell behind in their rents during the winter of 1846-47 and were evicted from their homes or surrendered their homes peacefully. Mass evictions or "clearances" will forever be associated with the Irish famine.

When a tenant was evicted the landlords would have the dwellings burned or leveled and physical force often was used to ensure the eviction. The burning and destruction of homes of the evicted was commonplace. Helen Litton, in *The Irish Famine: An Illustrated History* (Wolfhound Press Ltd., 1994), described the plight of the evicted:

> These helpless creatures are not only unhoused, but often driven off the land, no one remaining on the lands being allowed to lodge or harbour them. Or they, perhaps, linger about the spot, and frame some temporary shelter out of materials of their old homes against a broken wall, or behind a ditch or fence, or in a bog-hole, places unfit for human habitations.

In December 1848, *The Illustrated London News* protested:

> We do not say that there exists a conspiracy to uproot the 'mere Irish,' but we do aver, that the fearful system of wholesale ejectment, of which we daily hear and which we daily behold, is a mockery of the eternal laws of God — a flagrant outrage on the

mockery of the eternal laws of God — a flagrant outrage on the principles of nature. Whole districts are cleared. Not a roof-tree is to be seen where the happy cottage of the labourer or the snug homestead of the farmer at no distant day cheered the landscape. The ditch side, the dripping rain and the cold sleet are the covering of the wretched outcast the moment the cabin is tumbled over him; for who dare give him shelter or protection from the 'pelting of the pitiless storm?' Who has the temerity to afford him the ordinary rites of hospitality, when the warrant has been signed for his extinction?

However, there were examples of landlord leniency. According to a November 1846 issue of *The Cork Examiner*:

It is understood that Lady Carbery, widow of the late Lord Carbery, in consideration of the loss her tenants have sustained this year, intends to make no demand for rent on her extensive estates in this country. She has even, it appears, intimated her intention, should any sums be received, not to appropriate any portion to her personal use, but to reserve the amount in trust for purposes of benevolence.

And John Hallahan, in a letter to the editor of *The Cork Examiner*, wrote in July 1847:

Sir, you will confer a vast obligation on me by giving place in the next number of your Journal, to this brief but grateful recognition of mine of the considerable kindness of my Landlord, James Splaine, Esquire, of Gurrane, in this county, who, on his estate on the lands of Cooldrihy, has forgiven all the tenants 25 percent of last September's gale (rent payment), which he did not demand till this week. There is also a running gale which Mr. Splaine says he will not require as long as the tenantry will pursue the same industrial course they have hitherto adopted.

The Poor Law Extension Act, which made landlords responsible for the maintenance of their own poor, induced some to clear their estates by paying for the emigration of their poorer tenants. Although some landlords claimed necessity and humanitarian motives, it was beneficial to those who wanted to consolidate their land into larger holdings or to change from tillage to beef and dairy farming (Campbell, 1994).

Mortality

In her book, *The Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52* (1995), Christine Kinnealy states, "The exact number of people who died during the Famine years (1845-51) is not known. In the first year of distress, no one was believed to have died from want; however, by the end of 1846, this had changed dramatically. In April 1847, an editorial in an Irish newspaper asked: 'What has become of all the vast quantity of food which has been thrown into Ireland? Where are the effects which it might have been expected to produce? How are the millions of pounds of money voted and subscribed been used that the march of famine, instead of being saved, has apparently been quickened.'"

By this stage, it was obvious that the various relief measures employed since the appearance of the second blight had failed. The most telling manifestation was the great increase in mortality in the winter of 1846-7.

In 1851, the Census Commissioners attempted to produce a table of mortality for each year since 1841, the date of the previous census. Their calculations were based on a combination of deaths recorded in institutions and recollections of individuals (civil registration of deaths were not introduced into Ireland until 1864). The statistics provided were flawed and probably underestimated the level of mortality, particularly for the earlier years of the Famine: personal recollections are notoriously unreliable and such methods did not take into account whole families who disappeared either as a consequence of emigration or death. In the most distressed areas, therefore, the data was incomplete and the information sometimes based on indirect evidence.

The number of deaths during the Famine has variously been calculated as lying between a half-million and one-and-a-half million fatalities. The correct number probably lies in between. It is more generally accepted that in the region of 1 million people died during these years. Excess mortality as a result of the Famine, however, did not end in 1851. In addition to deaths, the Famine also contributed to a decline in the rate of marriage and in the level of fertility and fecundity. The number of deaths in Ireland in 1847 was double the number in the previous year. This increase in mortality affected all parts of Ireland. The high rates of mortality showed signs of recovery in 1848, which was maintained despite the reappearance of blight in the same year. In parts of Western