

Curated Resources: The Irish Potato Famine

1. ***Learn About the Great Hunger***
www.ighm.org/learn.html | Ireland's Great Hunger Museum

This resource includes images of paintings along with the text that chronicles some of the basic facts of the Irish famine. Beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries, it briefly explains the invasion by England and the settlement of land by Protestants from Scotland and England along with laws denying rights to Irish-Catholics. It then provides an overview of the blight, the response of both the British and private relief efforts, the exportation of food, and the emigration of the Irish. This resource is an easier read and good introduction to many of the facets of the famine.

2. ***The Irish Famine***
www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/famine_01.shtml | BBC

This resource focuses most heavily on the various ideologies in play surrounding the Irish Potato Famine. It highlights, in particular, the economic policies of laissez-faire, the commonly held belief that the famine was an act of Providence, and the widespread prejudice, both ethnic and religious, that dominated social policies in Ireland at the time.

3. ***Irish Famine Memorials***
irishfaminememorials.com/ | Dr. Emily Mark-FitzGerald

This resource is a website of photographs of over 140 memorials related to the Irish famine. The memorials are found in Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, and the United States. Although there is minimal text, many of the images convey the despair and desolation of the poor Irish.

4. ***The Great Irish Potato Famine (1845-52): An Historical Introduction***
www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/gifcbackact.pdf (pg. 36-42)
The Great Irish Potato Famine Curriculum, New York State Education Department;
Maureen Murphy, Maureen McCann Miletta, Alan Singer

With a heavy focus on politics and particular policies enacted throughout the time of the famine, this resource provides a significant amount of information about the famine. This resource is written for teachers and has a higher reading level than the other resources. Take note that this is a long resource but of particular interest are pages 36-42 which give a detailed historical introduction to the famine.

5. *Irish Potato Famine*

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYy6-QUJ2ZyjWXpOdgxvIY_K5fSLkyX8C
Extra History - YouTube

This resource has a series of five videos that detail various aspects of the Irish Potato Famine. It is wellresearched, witty, and engaging. Each video is roughly eleven minutes. See below for details on each video.introduction to many of the facets of the famine.

#1 - Isle of Bright

This video discusses the social and economic factors leading up to the Irish Famine. It details the discrimination against Catholics in Ireland and the associated English laws, the land system of tenant farming and absentee landlords, the centrality of the potato in the Irish diet, and the previous year of blight across Europe and Russia.

#2 - The Corn Laws

This video focuses on Robert Peel's role in the Irish Potato Famine. It brings to light Peel's attempts to keep both the Whigs and Tories happy, and why his solution of purchasing maize from the United States to feed the Irish failed. It also explains that Parliament saw famine relief as a partisan issue and the reports about the devastating conditions as alarmist rather than accurate.

#3 - Black '47

This video recounts the horrors of the Irish Potato Famine including the government relief houses also known as the prison for the poor, the failed public work projects, disease, rampant death, eviction rates, violence, etc. In addition, the video gives an account of Charles Trevelyan and his desire to remake Irish communal society into a capitalist economy. It tells of Trevelyan's relationship to Thomas Malthus and his belief that starvation and death were a natural means to correct overpopulation.

#4 - The American Wake

This video includes discussion of the hardships in gaining passage on ships to Canada and the United States, the squalid conditions aboard the cargo ships also known as coffin ships, and the intense conflict between the old Irish immigrants, mainly wealthy Protestants and the new Irish immigrants, mainly poor Catholics.

#5 - The Young and the Old

This video includes information about the poor laws and their link to increased tenant evictions, Daniel O'Connell and his failed political strategy, the shift in British aid due to an economic burst in railroad construction, and factions between the old and young Irish political party over the use of violence. It ends with a turn to the present and how Ireland is acting now to help the poor around the world.