

Learn about the Great Famine
and try some fun activities

QUIZZES!
PUZZLES!
GAMES!

AND
MORE



THE GREAT FAMINE

History-at-Home Pack



Discover why 1 million Irish people
had to leave Ireland between 1845–1852



A HISTORY OF... The Great Famine

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum explores the stories of Irish emigrants, and why they left Ireland at different points in history. One very important factor that caused a lot of people to leave Ireland was the Great Famine of AD 1845 – 1852, also known as the Potato Famine, the Great Hunger or in Irish, An Gorta Mór. During this time, due to the failure of the potato crop, a million Irish people died and another million or more left Ireland.



COLONIAL RULE

During the 16th and 17th centuries, England began to exert greater control over Ireland. Seizing the property and land from the Irish locals to give to loyal settlers, known as colonists, they left the original residents with one choice: death or relocation, mostly to the rocky and desolate areas in the west of the country.



Battered by the Atlantic Ocean, the land was extremely poor, wet and hard to farm. Therefore, these poor Irish tenants became reliant on a crop that grew well in damp and poor soil, and provided good sustenance: the potato.

THE BLIGHT

Phytophthora infestans – or the potato blight fungus – struck for the first time in America in the summer of AD 1843. It wasn't long before the invisible fungus spores accidentally loaded on board a ship in a cargo of seemingly healthy potatoes, and in August 1845, the blight arrived on Irish shores at the Dublin Botanical Gardens. When the blight hit the first year, it was a disaster for those who depended on the potato for food and for paying rent, but most Irish people had some form of reserves. However, when the blight returned in the following years, it meant poverty, disease, starvation, and death or emigration for many.



AID

Aid was slow to be organised – although up to 75 percent of Irish land was sown with other crops such as wheat, oats and barley, they continued to be exported. The British government assigned an MP, Charles Trevelyan to distribute aid, and established 'The Poor Law', setting up workhouses and soup kitchens around the country. However, the soup kitchens closed during the worst year, known as Black '47, and facing eviction and starvation, many Irish people ended up in the workhouses, where they worked long hours and lived in terrible, overcrowded, disease-ridden conditions.



Wheat, oats and barley were exported during the famine.

A HISTORY OF... The Great Famine

EMIGRATION

There were many different schemes offered to those seeking to leave Ireland during these times, for example, an emigration committee was set up by the British government offering incentives to landlords to send their tenants abroad, while the Earl Grey Scheme transported orphaned girls from the workhouses to male-dominated Australia. Other schemes invited applications from individuals and promised everything from first class travel to land, gold and husbands to those who availed. Of those who left, approximately 70% went to America and 25% to Canada, while most of the rest went to Australia and Britain.

25% to Canada
70% to America

COFFIN SHIPS

Those who emigrated risked death at every turn. Most Irish people lived in rural areas, far from the major ports, meaning that they had to walk miles to reach ships while weakened and malnourished. Once aboard, their situation did not improve. Many of the ships were known as 'coffin ships', because so many passengers passed away during the voyage. If they managed to withstand the damp, dark, overcrowding, suffocation, disease and months of starvation, the Irish emigrants eventually reached their new homelands, where they often faced prejudice and hard labour.

NEW LIFE

These homelands were not all unsympathetic to the Irish plight. The Great Famine was one of the first national disasters to elicit an international aid response, with everywhere from Calcutta in India and Boston in the United States, to groups such as the Quakers, the British Relief Association and The Choctaw tribe contributing to famine relief. While the Great Famine was a devastating event in Irish history that cost many lives, the mass emigration it led to has helped promote the acceptance and celebration of Irish people and culture around the world, with over 70 million people globally claiming Irish heritage today.

70 million people around the world
claim to be Irish

FAMINE TRIVIA... wordsearch quiz

Now that you've learnt all about the history of the Great Famine, answer the questions below, and then find the answers in the word search.

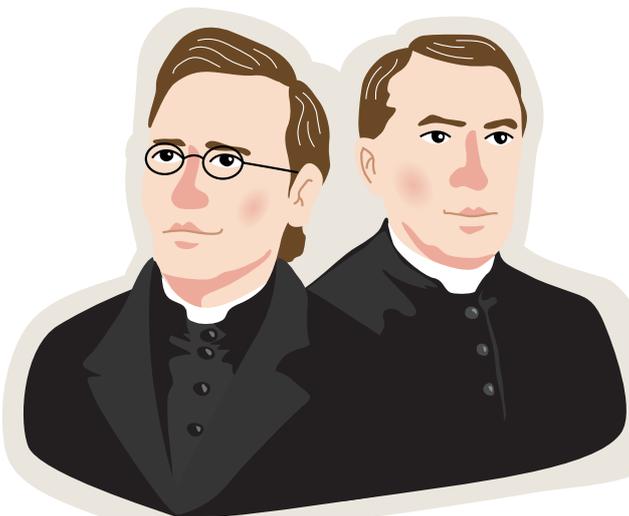
- 1 What crop was affected by a blight during the Great Famine?
- 2 The surname of the British MP in charge of famine aid in Ireland.
- 3 What was the most common profession of the Irish people during the Great Famine?
- 4 The name of the ships that ferried the Irish abroad.
- 5 A country beginning with 'C' where Irish people emigrated to during the Great Famine.
- 6 What is the word for when someone leaves their home country and moves away?
- 7 The tribe that contributed to international famine relief.
- 8 Where the potato blight first originated.
- 9 What is the Irish name for the Great Famine?
- 10 Name the law established in response to famine aid in Britain.

C	O	F	F	I	N	S	H	I	P	S	T	Q	T	J
A	T	D	R	P	I	A	O	R	D	G	H	R	R	Q
O	N	H	V	C	K	T	Z	I	D	T	E	M	M	A
C	J	G	X	F	A	R	M	E	R	V	P	F	C	C
I	D	Y	O	T	Y	N	S	N	E	N	O	G	A	E
Z	U	Z	O	R	U	U	A	L	I	I	O	Z	V	U
L	L	P	J	P	T	B	Y	D	R	Q	R	I	O	N
W	O	Q	A	I	O	A	H	B	A	G	L	Z	U	M
O	A	K	S	M	N	Q	M	I	U	V	A	V	A	E
C	P	T	V	O	F	X	C	O	N	D	W	Y	C	S
M	Y	N	C	I	C	C	J	K	R	L	R	C	I	V
K	G	J	Q	O	E	T	A	R	G	I	M	E	R	O
L	A	Z	Y	L	H	U	K	J	D	E	M	W	E	T
H	K	I	W	N	D	C	N	P	T	N	G	T	M	L
B	V	R	S	J	W	C	M	K	Y	E	E	S	A	G

Answers:
 Potato
 Trevelyan
 Farmer
 Coffin Ships
 Canada
 Emigrate
 Chocław
 America
 An Gorta Mor
 The Poor Law

A FOCUS ON

The Quinn Brothers



NAME

Thomas and Patrick Quinn

ALIAS

Father Quinn

PLACE OF BIRTH

Lissonuffly, Roscommon, Ireland

DATE OF BIRTH

c. AD 1839/41

MUSEUM LOCATION

Arriving in a New World Gallery

THE GREAT FAMINE

Thomas and Patrick Quinn were brothers born to James and Margaret Quinn in Lissonuffly, Roscommon, Ireland, just before the Great Famine. They lived the first part of their life on Strokestown Estate, owned by an Anglo-Irish landlord called Major Denis Mahon – now a museum dedicated to the Famine. Many tenants on this estate relied on the potato crop, and once the Famine hit, they could no longer pay their rent. Rather than send them to workhouses, where he would have had to continue to pay their keep, Mahon availed of the British government's incentive to send Irish tenants abroad, and in May 1847, 1,490 people left Strokestown Estate bound for Canada.



THE JOURNEY TO DUBLIN

Thomas and Patrick were just 5 and 7 years old when the family set out on the 167km walk from Strokestown to Dublin's Docklands, while a Bailiff called Robinson escorted them to ensure that they could not escape their fate. Many of the families were so poor that the children had to wear donated shoes for the journey, and they carried their only possessions in bundles in their arms. Weak and malnourished, they only paused to eat and sleep along the way. This harrowing journey is remembered today in the National Famine Way, a heritage trail that plots their exact route from Strokestown Museum, ending with the Famine sculptures in Dublin's Docklands.



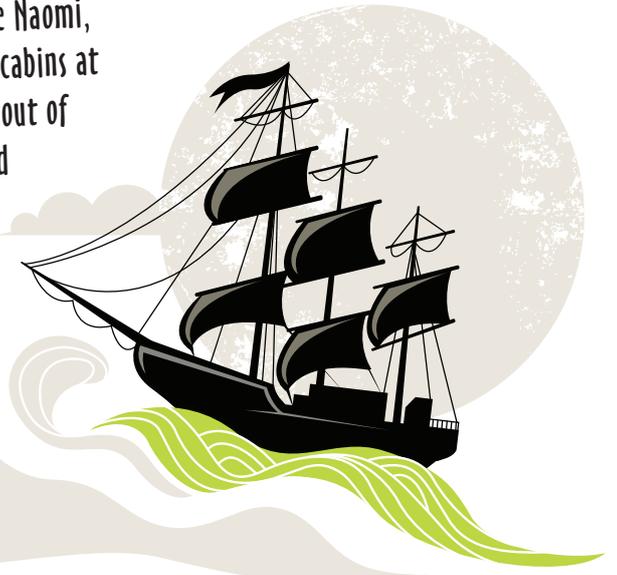
ONLY JUST BEGINNING

Their journey was only just beginning. Once the Quinn family reached Dublin, they travelled on the open deck of a ship called a packet steamer to Liverpool in England. This ship was full of grains below deck, while above, the families were starving. Upon arrival in Liverpool, they waited in the cellars of quayside buildings at the docks to board their ships to Canada.

A FOCUS ON... The Quinn Brothers

THE NAOMI

The Quinn family boarded the infamous 'coffin ship' known as the Naomi, on which they spent two months cramped in dark disease-ridden cabins at sea. When the Naomi arrived in Quebec on August 10th 1847, 196 out of its 421 passengers were dead or dying. Unfortunately, Thomas and Patrick's own parents were part of these statistics. As their father James lay on his deathbed at Gross Île immigration centre, he said to the children: 'Remember your soul and your liberty.' This was something that they would never forget.



ADOPTION

Now orphans, Thomas and Patrick were given into the care of a Catholic Orphanage run by the 'Grey Nuns'. Well-known for their work taking care of Irish immigrants, the boys were extremely lucky to be taken under the protection of Fr. Luc Trahan who ensured that they were adopted by a French-Canadian family named Bourque, in Nicolet. Here, they were well looked after, completing their education at the best schools in the area, and growing up to become priests.

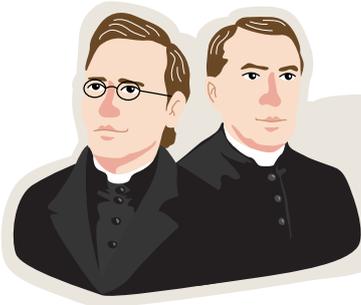


PASSION FOR FRENCH CULTURE

Due to their experiences, the brothers became huge advocates for Irish- and French- Canadian culture and their survival. Patrick founded St. Patrick's Society of Richmond, Quebec, to bring French and Irish parishioners together, while Thomas spoke passionately about the cause of keeping your culture and history alive no matter what at the First Congress of the French Language in Quebec in 1912. Around AD 1887/9, the brothers even had the opportunity to return to Ireland, where they met their surviving relatives, one of whom returned to Canada with them.



40 years after the Great Famine the Quinn brothers visited their surviving relatives in Ireland



THE QUINN BROTHERS

quiz



1 Who was the landlord of Strokestown Estate?

2 What was the name of the 'coffin ship' that Thomas and his family travelled to Quebec on?

3 What were James Quinn's parting words?

4 The Quinn family were just one family of many evicted from Strokestown Estate in May 1847. Using the National Famine Way website (<https://nationalfamineway.ie/>), find the name of one other family that would have made a similar journey, and see if you can find out what happened to them.

Family: _____

What happened to them: _____

5 When they were evicted, the children of Strokestown carried their possessions with them in bundles. Draw what you would bring with you if you had to emigrate now in the bundle opposite. Remember you can only bring what you can carry!



Answers: 1) Major Denis Mahon, 2) The Naomi, 3) Remember your soul and your liberty

ACTIVITY... Bake Survival Biscuits

Ask an adult for help with this recipe to make survival biscuits, a common food source during cases of famine around the world. After you've tried the biscuits, fill out the section below considering what it would be like to only have these to eat for several days, or even weeks. What sort of effect do you think it would have on your body? How do you think you would feel?



YOU WILL NEED

- 1/3 cup of brown sugar
- 1/2 cup of milk
- 1 cup flour
- 1/4 cup margarine or butter
- 1/4 cup water
- Baking sheet
- Baking tray
- Bowl
- Wooden spoon
- Wire rack

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Prepare the baking tray for cooking by putting the baking sheet on top.
- 2 Mix all the ingredients together in a mixing bowl.
- 3 Roll out the mixture onto your prepared baking sheet.
- 4 Get an adult to put the mixture into the oven, and bake at 200 degrees Celsius for 15 minutes.
- 5 Once an adult has removed the biscuits from the oven, leave them to cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes.
- 6 Cut or break the resulting mixture into shapes, about 2 inches each.
- 7 Ta-da, your survival biscuits are ready! It's time to taste test!

Describe what it was like to eat the survival biscuits.

What did they taste like?

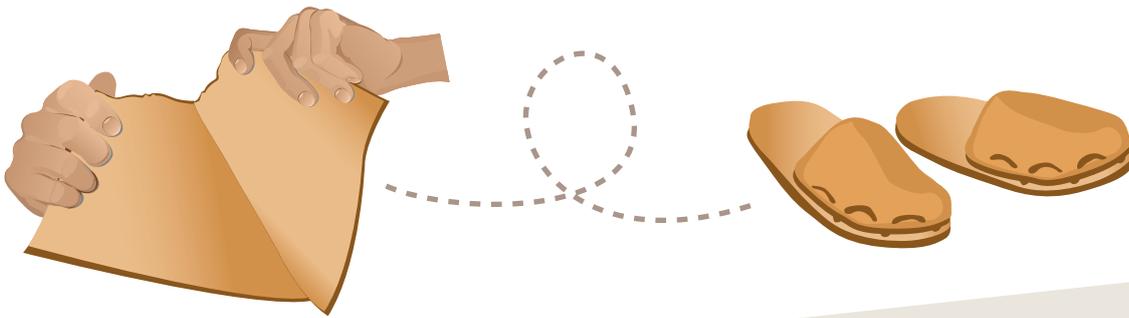
What was their texture?

Would you like to eat them regularly, for days or weeks?

Why/ why not?

ACTIVITY... Make Cardboard Shoes

A lot of the Irish people who walked from Roscommon to Dublin in 1847 didn't even have their own shoes, and had to borrow a donated pair to make the journey. These shoes were uncomfortable and difficult to walk in. To commemorate this and the difficult journey that they made, bronze statues of shoes have been placed all along the National Famine Way. Now it's your turn to add to the exhibition with your own pair of shoes, remembering an Irish emigrant. Remember to ask an adult for help!



INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Place a sheet of paper, card, or cardboard on the floor and step onto it.
- 2 Using your foot as a guideline, trace around the outline, making sure to leave some extra space (approx.. 1 – 2 inches) between your foot and the line at all times!
- 3 Repeat so that you have one outline for each foot.
- 4 Cut out along the traced lines. The two shapes you are left with will be the base of your shoes!
- 5 Now, tracing around these outlines, create two more identical shapes on paper, card, or cardboard. You should now have 2 left feet, and 2 right feet.
- 6 Cut one of the left feet and one of the right feet outlines in half. These will be the top of your shoes!
- 7 Now, it's time for the tricky part – attaching the outlines together! Using your left foot base outline and the front part of the outline that you cut, attach them by:
 - ⇒ Tape – Attach your shoes by laying the top outline on top of the bottom base outline and taping along the outer edges. Make sure that you don't seal up the middle of the shoe, and that you can still slot your foot inside.
 - ⇒ String - Attach the two parts of your shoes together by cutting small holes all around the outside edges of the top and bottom outlines, and then feeding string through one and then the other. Tie the string at both ends to make sure the shoes stay together!

Now you have your shoes, it's time to decorate them in whatever way you like.

Take a picture of your creation and share it with us at EPIC by getting an adult to send it to groups@epicchq.com or use #EPICMuseum on social media.

THE FAMINE TODAY / RESOURCES

The Great Famine is remembered and commemorated around the world today in various different ways. Discover fascinating stories from Ireland's history with this list of resources and places to visit related to the Famine in Ireland and around the world.



And don't forget to join us at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum for one of our upcoming workshops, where you can learn more about Irish history and emigration through fun hands-on activities, and discover more about the stories of the Great Famine survivors such as Thomas Quinn and Isabella McDougall. Head to our website epicchq.com for more info.

The Famine Memorial Statues

Located by the River Liffey about 100 meters away from EPIC, this series of bronze sculptures commemorates all of those that left the country to survive The Great Famine. Simply called 'Famine 1997', these statues were designed and crafted by Dublin sculptor Rowan Gillespie and presented to the City of Dublin in 1997.

Website: <http://www.dublindocklands.ie/visiting-docklands/things-do/sightseeing/famine-memorial-and-work-poverty-stone>

The National Famine Museum, Strokestown Park

Telling the story of the Great Famine through the historic location Strokestown House, the National Famine Museum uses documents and items from the estate's past to give further insight into Denis Mahon and the plight of his tenants, while contextualising the story of the Famine in relation to contemporary global occurrences of hunger today.

Website: <https://www.strokestownpark.ie/famine/museum/>

The National Famine Way

The National Famine Way is a walking trail that begins at Strokestown Estate in Co. Roscommon, and stretches 167kms or 104 miles to the Dublin Docklands. It traces the journey that the 1490 tenants of Denis Mahon would have made when they were evicted from his estate during 1847 and links three iconic museums that cover the Great Famine, The National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park, and The Jeanie Johnston Famine Ship and EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum at the Dublin Docklands.

Website: <https://nationalfamineway.ie/>

THE FAMINE TODAY / RESOURCES

The Jeanie Johnston Famine Ship

A fully working replica of the Jeanie Johnston 'coffin ship' that transported over 2500 Irish emigrants from Ireland to Canada on board 16 transatlantic voyages during the Great Famine, climb on board to discover the story of the ship that famously never lost a life.

Website: <http://jeaniejohnston.ie>

Ireland's Great Hunger Museum

Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University investigates the Famine and its impact through art. Explore its collection through a virtual tour.

Website: <https://www.ighm.org/>

Books

How I Survived the Irish Famine: The Journal of Mary O'Flynn – by Laura Wilson

Discover the story of the Famine first-hand through the fictionalised diary of 12-year-old Mary O'Flynn, coupled with original photography of artefacts and interiors.

You Wouldn't Want to Sail on an Irish Famine Ship! A Trip Across the Atlantic You'd Rather Not Make

– by David Antram, Jim Pipe

A humorous book from the You Wouldn't Want To... series exploring the harsh realities of emigrating from Ireland to America during the Irish potato famine.

Collins Little Book of Irish History – by Neil Hegarty

For older children, those already a bit enamoured with Irish history, or those who want a little more breadth and depth to their studies, the Collins Little Book of Irish History ticks all the boxes.

Under the Hawthorn Tree – by Marita Conlon-McKenna

A well-known classic, this book is the first in a trilogy that describes life during the Great Famine through a fictional account of a family devastated by loss. Follow Eily, Michael and Peggy as they escape from their fate at the workhouse and go off in search of their long-lost relatives.



EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

Discover hi-tech history that's truly inspiring at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum. At EPIC we explore the history of Ireland at home and abroad, showcasing the incredible feats of influential Irish figures around the world, such as explorer Ernest Shackleton!

Covering a range of topics – from science and art to storytelling, music and sport – and offering workshops for explorers of all ages, visit us to experience history like you never have before.

Head to epicchq.com to discover more.