



ATLAS OF THE **IRISH**
REVOLUTION
Resources for Schools



College of
Arts, Celtic Studies
and Social Sciences

Unit 1:

*Mapping the Great Irish
Famine*

TEACHERS HANDBOOK



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Transition Year Unit: Mapping the Great Irish Famine

OUTLINE AND PROJECT GUIDELINES

This Transition Year Unit is focused on the Great Irish Famine 1845-1851 and covers the country-wide impact of the famine and its short and long-term consequences. This offers an opportunity for students to find relevance to their own locality, and therefore encourage investment in the project. Furthermore, the centrality of the Great Famine in Modern Irish History means that there is a wealth of sources on which students may draw during the course of this project. The emphasis on remembrance and commemoration during the Decade of Centenaries also means that there is a wealth of relevant digital material available for students to access, providing opportunities for deeper student engagement with the period.

This module guides students in the revision of the history of famine, a topic they encountered briefly in Junior Cycle, but in an active learning context. They will explore the watershed moment in Irish history through an examination of maps, documents and images drawn primarily from the Atlas of the Irish Revolution. Students will be encouraged to re-examine the consequences of the Famine from new perspectives.

For those considering taking History or Geography for Leaving Cert, the unit will provide a foundation in more advanced project work, document handling, critical thinking, and writing skills. This teaching unit is also strongly placed to help students develop the 'Key Skills for Senior Cycle' identified by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment as 'Information Processing', 'Communicating', 'Being Personally Effective', 'Working with Others' and 'Critical and Creative Thinking'.

The three-week unit is divided into three parts (see below), each of which aims to increase knowledge, present historical and procedural concepts and develop particular skill sets. During the course of the unit, the students will be encouraged to participate in group research projects, which they will present at the conclusion of the module.

AREAS OF STUDY:

Top-Up and Tasters: Bridging learning gaps and stimulating interest in Leaving Certificate Courses.

DURATION OF THE UNIT:

This outline is based on a typical Transition Year module/unit drawn from the Subject Sampling Layer of the Transition Year Curriculum: three, 40 minute classes per week for seven weeks:

Parts 1-2 of the three-part teaching unit will require one or two classes for teacher presentation, source analysis and discussion, and written analysis.

One single class per week will be required for research, project preparation and, later, project presentation and personal assessment.

Access to computers, the availability of guest speakers and the feasibility of a class field trip will inform the duration of the course and the mode of delivery, teachers may adapt the content to their requirements, either expanding on or reducing the material as necessary.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- o To inspire an interest in history
- o To broaden understanding of the centrality of the Famine in Irish history
- o To create a deeper understanding of the work of the historian
- o To give students hands-on experience of working with, and thinking critically about, primary and secondary source material
- o To guide students in the analysis of maps as historical sources
- o To develop students' recording, sequencing and summarising skills
- o To develop research and digital literacy skills
- o To locate and critically evaluate digital sources for research
- o To facilitate group work and collaborative project work
- o To develop presentation and communication skills

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit students should have:

- o A greater understanding of the work of the historian
- o A broader understanding of the causes, course and consequences of the Famine
- o Put into practice historical research skills
- o Gained experience in working with primary and secondary source material
- o Learned to identify bias and to question the reliability of a source
- o Worked effectively as part of a group
- o Engaged with digital learning tools
- o Transformed data from one form to another
- o Depicted the results of their research in written and visual format
- o Confidently communicated the results of their research in a variety of media
- o Engaged in peer and self-assessment

MODULE OUTLINE

PART 1: *Introduction: (1 class period)*

Outline the content of the History Module.

Explain the expectations and learning outcomes to the class

Present the guidelines and assessment criteria for the group projects.

Nominate the members of each project group at the end of the first class. (The complexion of these groups should comprise as many different 'intelligences' as possible).

PART 2: *Revising the Famine 1845-1851: (1-2 class periods)*

Survey the class to assess prior knowledge of the Famine in Ireland

Based on the level of the class, re-introduce the social and economic circumstances in Ireland before the Famine. *Population explosion, subdivision, dependence on the potato and class structure.*

Teachers may find the Student Worksheets 1-2 in the Junior Cycle Project Pack useful for this section of the module.

The blank poster on page 2 of the Student Project Book may serve as a means of revising the most significant elements/concepts of the broad history of the famine

The list of websites provided in the external sources sheet included in this pack may also prove valuable for the introductory classes.

PART 3: *Working with the Sources (1-2 class periods)*

During this class, the teacher should reintroduce the concepts of bias, propaganda and reliability when interrogating sources. Particular attention should be paid to online sources. The strengths and weakness of particular types of sources should also be explored. Some time should also be spent on outlining best practice when working with source material.

PART 4: *Introducing the Project (2 class periods)*

Class 1: The Teacher will explain that the premise of the project is that *Cork County Council has invited applications from artists for the creation of a new Famine memorial to be located in the town of Skibbereen. A panel of judges will decide on the winning application based on quality of the following:*

1. A well-written and well-illustrated proposal submitted by the deadline
2. Evidence that each member of the team contributed equally
3. A clear understanding of the effects of the Famine in west Cork based on research into primary and secondary sources.

The teacher should allocate marks to each of these criteria depending on the priority of the lessons and complexion of the class group.

The teacher may also decide to designate groups at this point.

Each student is a member of a design team and would like to submit a proposal.

The teacher should allow time for a class discussion on the elements of a historical memorial. Any topical or controversial news item relating to a memorial may be an effective means of opening the discussion.

For homework, students should individually conduct online research into other examples of memorials in Ireland and abroad that commemorate significant historical events. They should take note of the memorials they consider particularly impressive and why. They should note also the types of materials

Class 2: Discussing Commemoration

At the beginning of the class, students form groups of four to discuss the findings of their preliminary research. The Key question should be, “What are the elements of an effective memorial?” This will culminate in a class discussion based on the findings of each group.

Class 3: Mapping the Consequences of the Great Irish Famine

The next task is more specific to the final project and guides students in extracting evidence from Maps.

Document A in the student worksheets depicts:

1. Percentage reduction in number of holdings over 1 acre, 1847-53.
2. Percentage of Evictions, 1846-1852
3. Percentage of Deaths as a proportion of total deaths 1846–51
4. Percentage of Townlands auctioned, 1849-55

The teacher will first project Map 3 in Document A in isolation. This depicts the percentage of deaths as a proportion of total deaths during the famine. The teacher will then ask students to write three words that express their first impressions of what they see. The teacher will survey the class for answers which should lead into a discussion of how the enormous death rates were not the only consequences of the watershed event in Irish history.

Projecting the other three maps in Document A, the teacher will use the maps to explain four of the most devastating effects of the Famine.

For Homework, students should complete comprehension questions 1-8 paying particular attention to the final question which draws attention to the focus of their final project on Skibbereen.

Class 4: Analysing Sources

Students should now begin focused research into the effects of the Famine in west Cork. The teacher explains that Cork County Council has helpfully provided some additional primary and secondary sources to aid their research. Individually, students should examine the 9 sources on in their Project Book and fill in the Source Analysis Worksheet that follows. Students may complete this task individually or in pairs.

Depending on time and the ability levels of the class, the teacher may decide to add one or two digital sources from the List of External Sources to the students' cache.

The Source Analysis Worksheet asks students to rate the reliability of each source. They are also asked to list the most interesting or surprising words, numbers and facts in each of the sources. This will help with their design decisions later on.

To avoid heavy photocopying, consider making the individual group documents available digitally. Storing them in a class Google Drive folder and providing the students access would be an effective alternative. Another option would be to set up a class email address and send individual emails to each group in advance

Class 5 The Design Brief

At this point students should consider the design brief more closely.

1. The commission is to create a memorial to commemorate the effects of the Famine on the people of west Cork.
2. The memorial may take the form of either a sculpture (with one or more pieces), or a stained glass window for the local church.
3. If it is a sculpture, it may be bronze, marble or stone.
4. The artwork may be realistic or abstract but it must clearly represent the effects of the Famine on the local area.
5. The total budget available for the artwork is up to €120,000
6. Artists may be invited to attend an interview before final selection is made.

The proposal must be completed using the template provided. It must include:

- The title of your artwork
- The names of each member of the design team and their individual specialities, i.e. artist, historical advisor, artistic consultant, local expert
- A detailed description of the proposed artwork/memorial, and how it represents the effects of the Famine in west Cork.
- A clear explanation of how your research into the primary and secondary sources influenced the design of your memorial
- A visual representation of the proposed work as it will look when finished (using drawings or computer generated images). It should be labelled where necessary.

PART 5: *In Class Project Work: (2 class periods)*

All materials collected to be brought to class
Teacher facilitation of group preparation for presentation

PART 6: *Project Presentation: (1-2 class periods)*

Guidelines for project presentation listed in the student project pack should be outlined for the class in advance.

PART 7: *Review: (1 class period)*

Peer assessment and self-assessment

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

This unit offers the opportunity to put into practice a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies.

Atlas of the Irish Revolution Maps: The interrogation and analysis of the cartographic representation of the consequences of the Famine will form the backbone of the unit.

Primary Source Material: materials from the Irish Examiner, Atlas of the Great Irish Famine, The Illustration London News and documents from the National Library of Ireland provide a deep well of sources from which to glean an insight into the period.

Group Work: The students will participate in group-work during almost every class period. In groups they will examine source material in the Student Document Packs and engage in debate and discussion and plan and execute their research project.

Negotiated Learning: The students will submit for approval a proposal for their own design project. They will take responsibility for their own research and project work.

ICT: Much of the project work may be conducted using ICT.

Field Trips: If possible it would be ideal for the students to take a trip to a local famine site or museum to ground their research in reality.

Visiting Speakers: To have a historian visit the class would offer a further insight into the work of the historian and the processes of locating source material.

ASSESSMENT:

Teachers will engage in both summative and formative assessment.

Throughout the module there will be ongoing assessment through oral questioning and discussion. Students are assessed on their participation and engagement in class. This is worth a percentage of their overall grade.

The main form of assessment is the project based on the Famine and the student presentation of that project. The projects will be completed in groups of four. Together students compile and submit a proposal for the project within the deadline set by the teacher. The students will also engage in peer assessment using the 'Interviewing the Artists' worksheets included in the project pack. The teacher will decide on the weighing of marks for each of the peer assessment criteria

At the conclusion of the module students should also complete the student self-assessment sheet on the final page of the project pack. This is also worth a percentage of the final grade.

LINKS TO OTHER SUBJECTS:

There are numerous possibilities for linking to other subjects in the Transition Year programme.

1. **Communications** would build up expertise in the presentation of an oral project and the construction of a presentation
2. **Geography** Curriculum could also look at the concept of historical geography and biographical mapping
3. **Art** would build on the importance of conservation.
4. **English:** The writing assignments in English would benefit in that the students could draw from the real life stories that they encounter in history. Obviously literacy skills are necessary for the writing up of the project in a logical and well-structured manner.

EVALUATION:

Students' responses during class time will give immediate feedback to the teacher about their levels of enthusiasm and engagement. This should be a key factor in determining the success or otherwise of a section of the module. One of the central aims of the module is to enthuse the students about history generally and the history of the Famine in particular, and if they are not enjoying the class then it is not fulfilling the objective.