

An illustration depicting the Great Famine in Ireland. In the foreground, a man in a dark coat and hat sits on a wooden stool, looking down with a somber expression. To his right, a woman in a brown dress and bonnet stands, her head bowed. In the background, a man in a white shirt and dark trousers sits on a wooden stool, looking down. To his right, a woman in a brown dress and bonnet stands, her head bowed. In the background, a man in a white shirt and dark trousers sits on a wooden stool, looking down. To his right, a woman in a brown dress and bonnet stands, her head bowed. The scene is set in a room with stone walls and wooden beams. A yellow banner with the title 'The Great Famine' and 'An Gorta Mór' is overlaid on the image.

# **The Great Famine**

## **An Gorta Mór**



# The Great Irish Famine

**K**

What do you know about The Great Irish Famine already? What have you heard about it? Can you think about when it happened and why? Write down anything you know about the Famine.

**W**

What do you want to learn about The Great Irish Famine? You might know some details but are interested to know more. Write about what things you would like to learn.

**L**

What have you learnt after finishing this topic of The Great Irish Famine. Look back at what you knew before and show how much more information you now know after studying the topic.





# The Great Famine An Gorta Mór

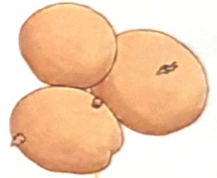
## The Potato and Ireland

The potato proved to be a popular crop as it needed little soil to grow and required very little equipment to harvest.

An average man could eat up to 70 potatoes a day.

The potato crop was first brought to Ireland by a man called Sir Walter Raleigh. He discovered that the Irish climate suited potato-growing.

Back in the mid 1800s, potatoes were often eaten up to three times a day.



Potatoes are nutritious, cheap and yielded a high crop.

More than 3 million people would have lived on a diet of only potatoes, meaning it was a vital crop for Ireland.

## Life in Ireland

In 1845, over eight million people lived in Ireland. More than half the population lived on small land in mud cabins. Society relied on agriculture to survive and people were most dependent on potatoes.



Landlords owned the land and many lived in Britain. These were known as **absentee landlords**. Ireland was governed by Britain and ruled from London.

## The Blight Strikes

'The blight' was a disease which affected the potato crop in 1845. It was a fungus which spread by wind. It turned potatoes soft and black. Potatoes hit by 'the blight' were rotten and smelled very bad.



With their main source of food destroyed, over 1 million people in Ireland died. The British government tried to ignore the problem in Ireland for many months before finally realising that help was needed.



# 1846

In 1846, the crop failed again. Starving people ate whatever food they could find, some even eating grass to survive.

The British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, organised help for Ireland.

He arranged for Indian corn to be brought from America to feed the poor.

However, this was not without cost and many of the starving were too poor to even buy the corn.



Some workers died before ever receiving their wages.

Schemes were organised to provide people with jobs, such as canal and road building in return for money.

## Workhouses

Workhouses were built around Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s.

They were set up to help people who could not help themselves.

People hated going to the workhouses but during The Great Famine many people were left with no other option.

As a result, workhouses became overcrowded and many had queues outside of people waiting to come in.

Conditions were extremely poor and families were separated on arrival.

Once you entered you could not leave.

Men spent up to ten hours a day breaking stones while women would knit.

Such strict rules were kept, such as no bad language and no speaking during meal times.

Families would only see each other on Sunday mass.

## Black '47

1847 was the worst year of the famine.

Diseases spread amongst the population of Ireland.

These diseases included typhus, cholera and scurvy.

Many people died from these diseases rather than starvation.

Widespread evictions took place of families who couldn't pay their rent.



## Soup Kitchens

Soup kitchens were established to help feed the poor.

The Quakers (The Society of Friends) set up the first soup kitchen in Dublin.

A litre of soup would cost one penny but if you could not afford to pay you were provided with soup for free.

By 1847, the government had set up many more soup kitchens around the country.

In August 1847 more than 3 million people were living on this soup.





## Emigration

For many people, the only way to escape from the famine was emigration.

Huge numbers of people fled to Britain but were encouraged to return by British government in May 1847

America and Canada became the focus for many Irish.

Many people chose to emigrate to America on dangerous ships



## The Effects of the Famine

Disease and hunger continued in Ireland until 1851

The population of Ireland was greatly reduced as a result of the famine

More than one million people died and  
more than one and a half million  
people emigrated.

Thousands died on 'coffin ships' used to bring people away from Ireland

The west of Ireland was worst affected.

The number of Irish speakers decreased from four million to under two million by 1851

Families were torn apart as younger members were encouraged by parents to emigrate to a better life

## Coffin Ships

The ships used to bring the Irish who wanted to emigrate were known as 'coffin ships'.

The conditions onboard were horrendous.

The term 'coffin ships' came from the amount of people who died aboard.

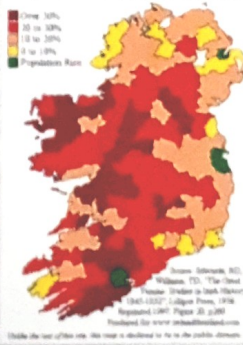
In 1847, it was estimated that 1 in every 6 passengers died before reaching their destination.



*Voyages took many months at a time*

## How Did the Population Change?

### Population Fall in Ireland 1841-1851





# Famine

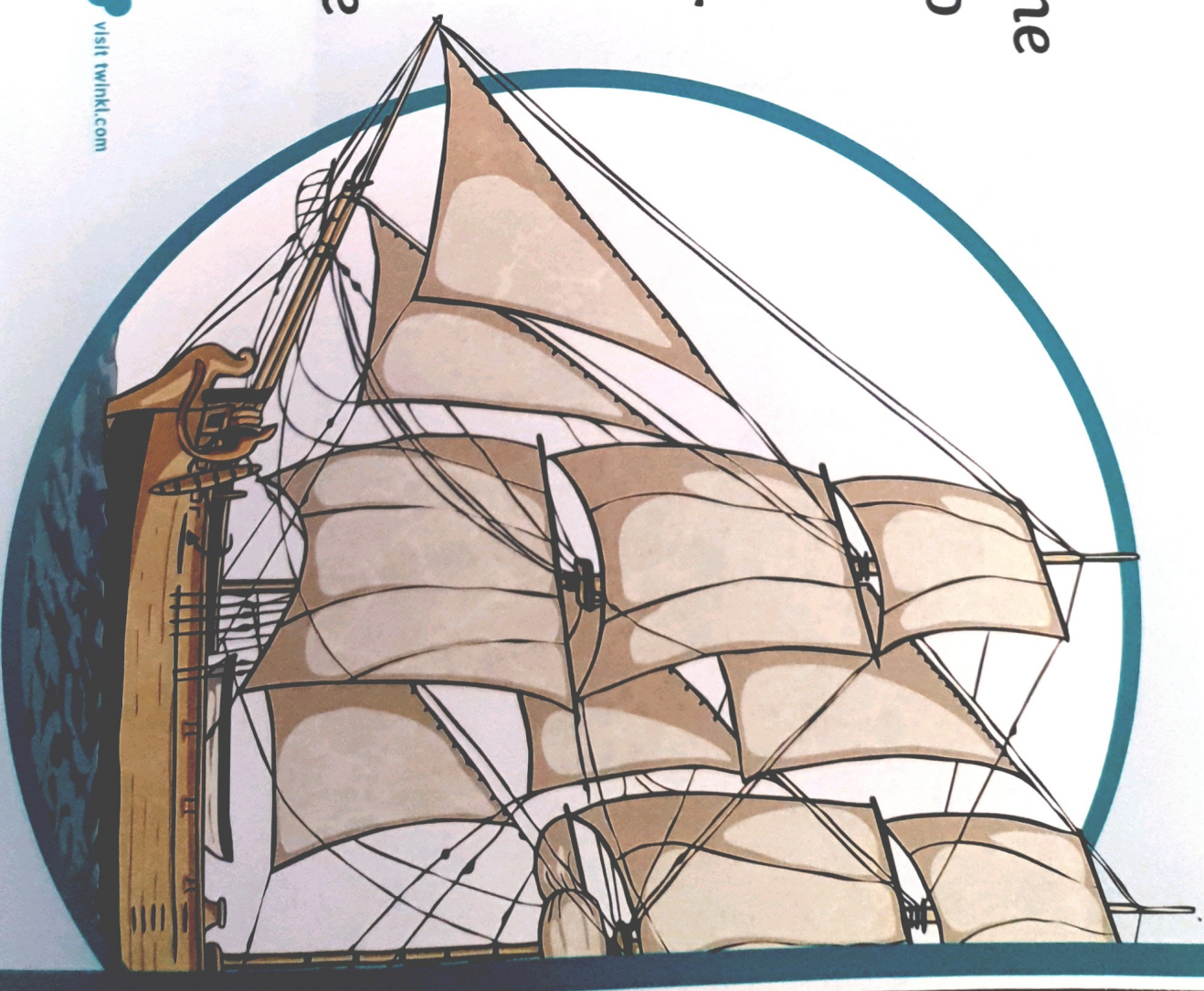
A famine is when there is a widespread scarcity of food due to crop failure, population imbalances or the government. The Great Irish Famine of 1845-1850 was a time of suffering, misery, disease, starvation, poverty, eviction, emigration and death. Over one million Irish people died and two million emigrated.





# Emigration

Emigration is when someone leaves their own country to seek settlement elsewhere. The Great Irish Famine of 1845-1850 resulted in over two million Irish people leaving Ireland to settle in England or North America forever. They had no choice as conditions in Ireland were appalling.



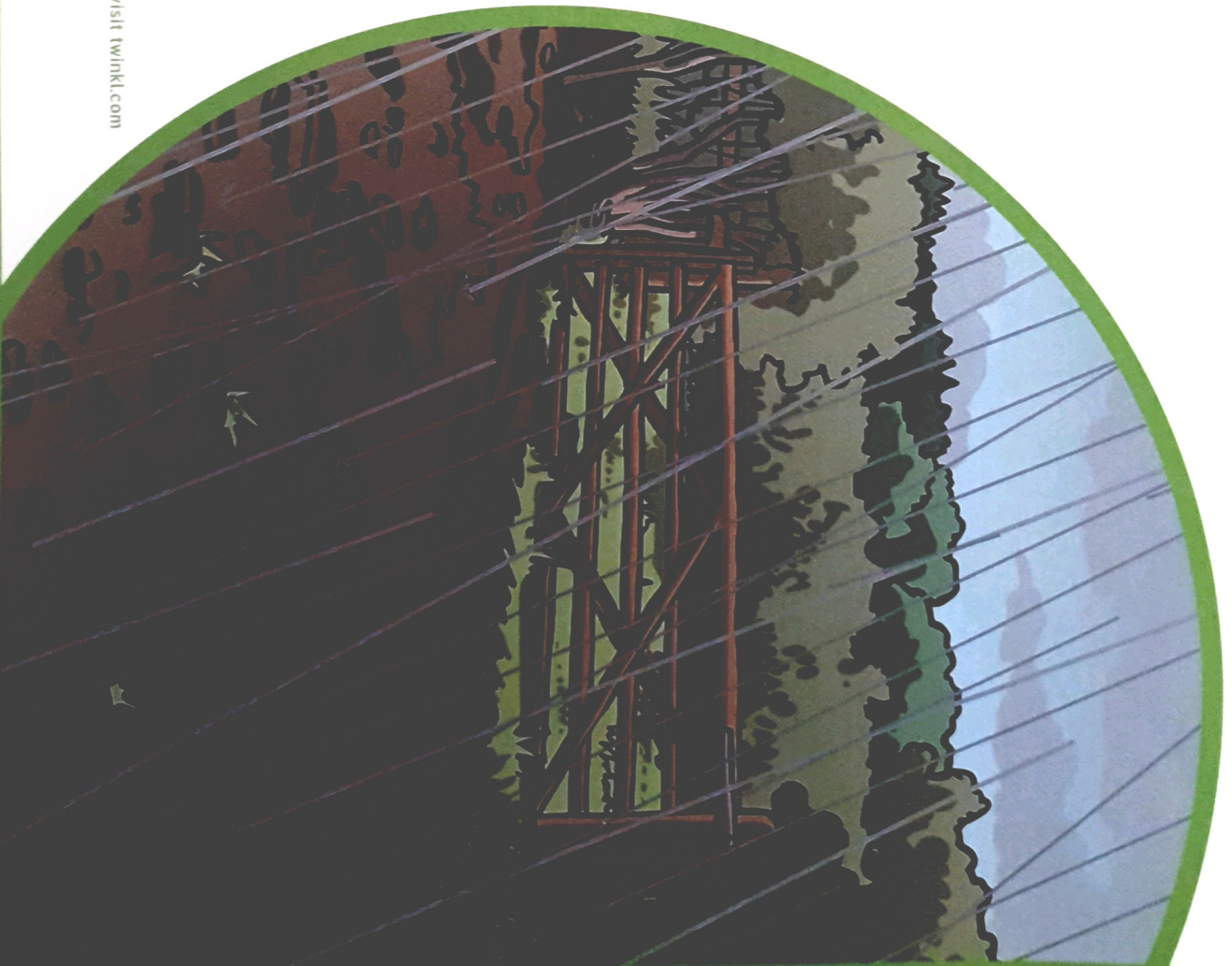


# Labourers

Labourers are unskilled workers. Before the Great Irish Famine, many Irish people worked on the land, growing and living off mainly potatoes. However, many people did not have huge amounts of land to grow crops and thousands of labourers had no land at all.

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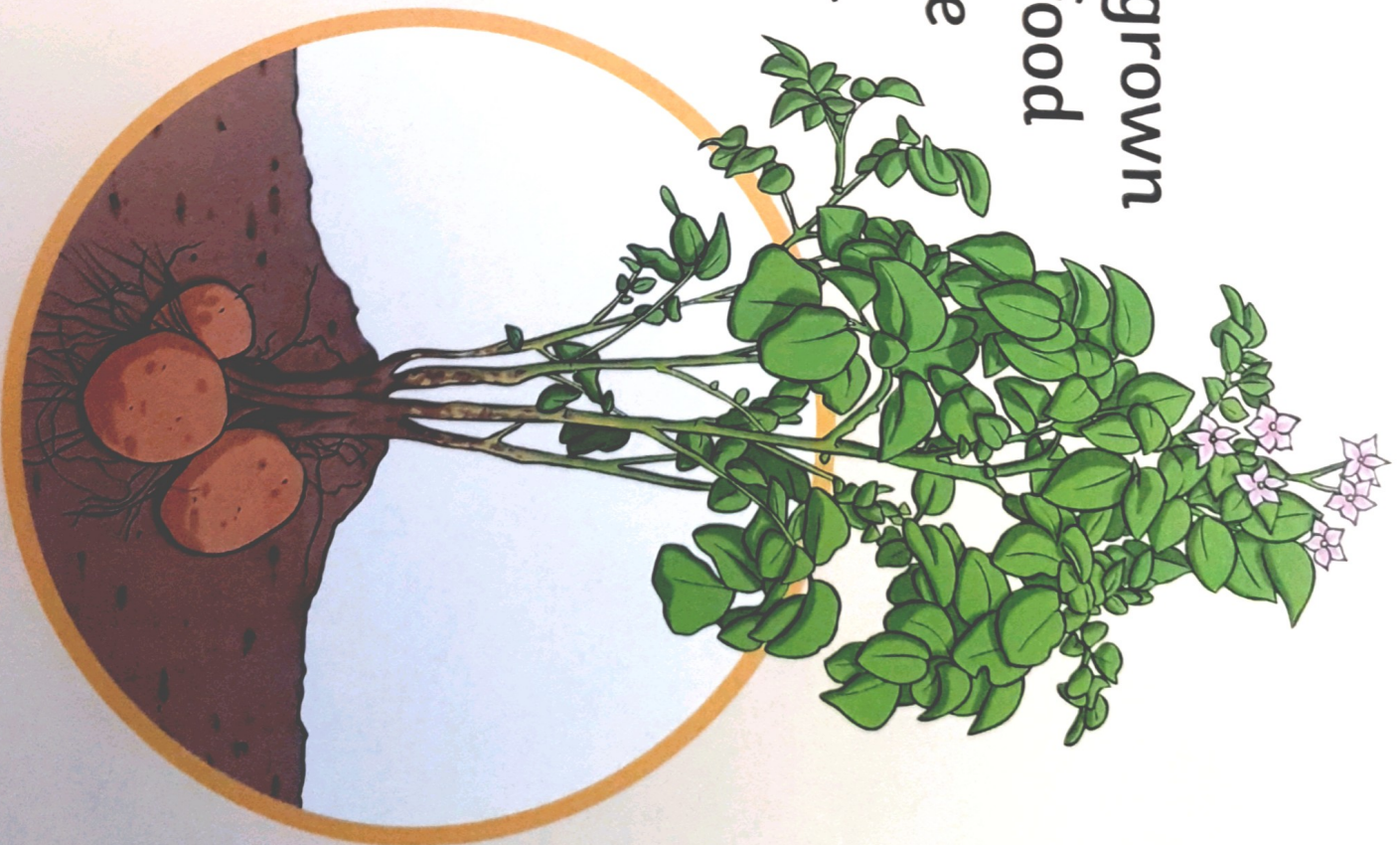
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# Potatoes

Potatoes are a starchy crop grown underground and were a staple food source to Irish people before The Great Irish Famine. Men used to eat at least 60 potatoes a day; women ate about 45 and children ate about 25 a day. Families, in particular poorer families, depended on potatoes in order to live.

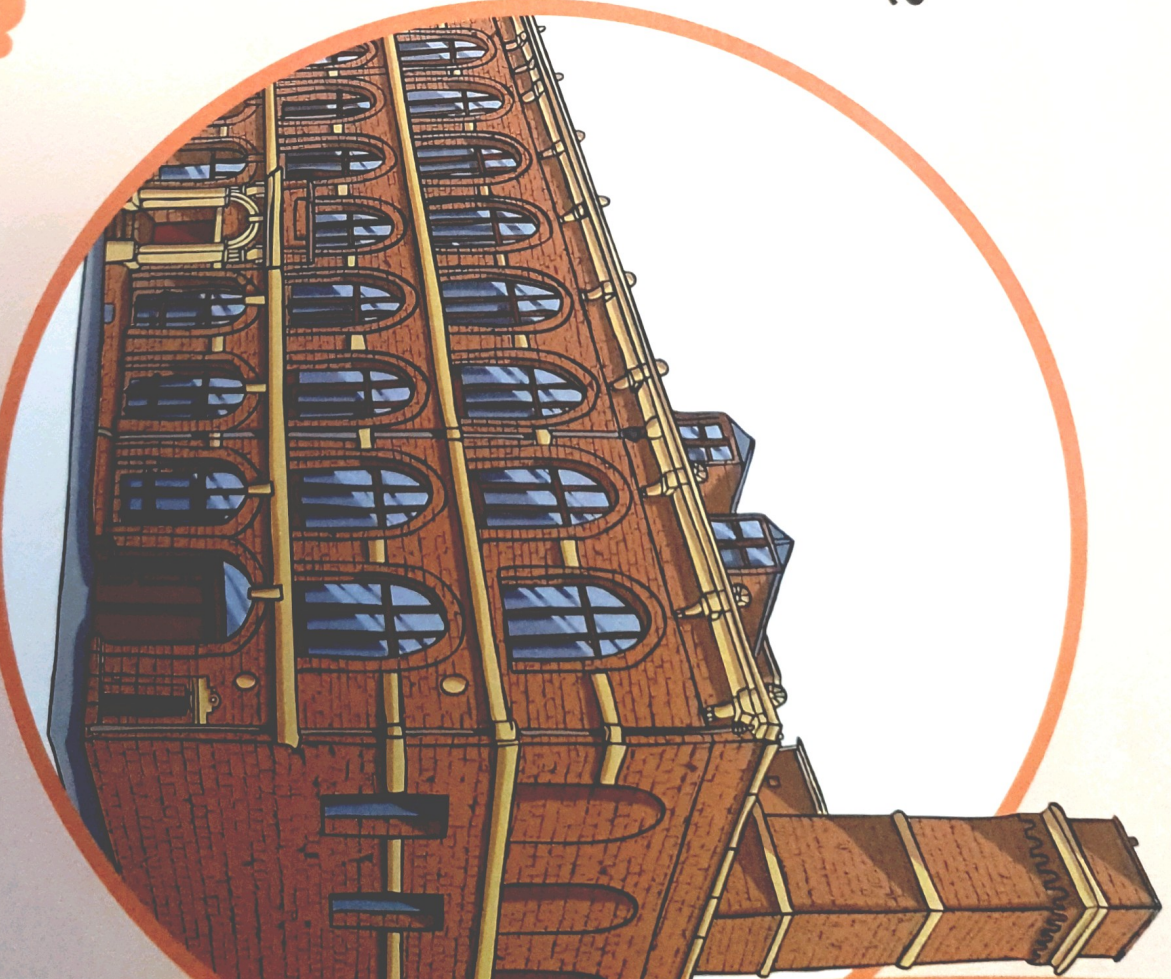




# Workhouses

Workhouses were built just before the Great Irish Famine and were used to house and feed the poor. In exchange for this, the people would have to work very hard.

Some jobs included making sacks for grain and breaking stones to fix and make roads. Approximately 130 workhouses were built between 1841 and 1845.



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# Blight

Blight is a disease that affects plants. Discoloration, wilting and the death of plants and crops occurs from this disease. In September 1845, this disease attacked the potato crop in Ireland.



# Indian Corn

After the blight had affected the potato crops and many people were dying, the British government imported Indian corn from North America to help the starving Irish people.



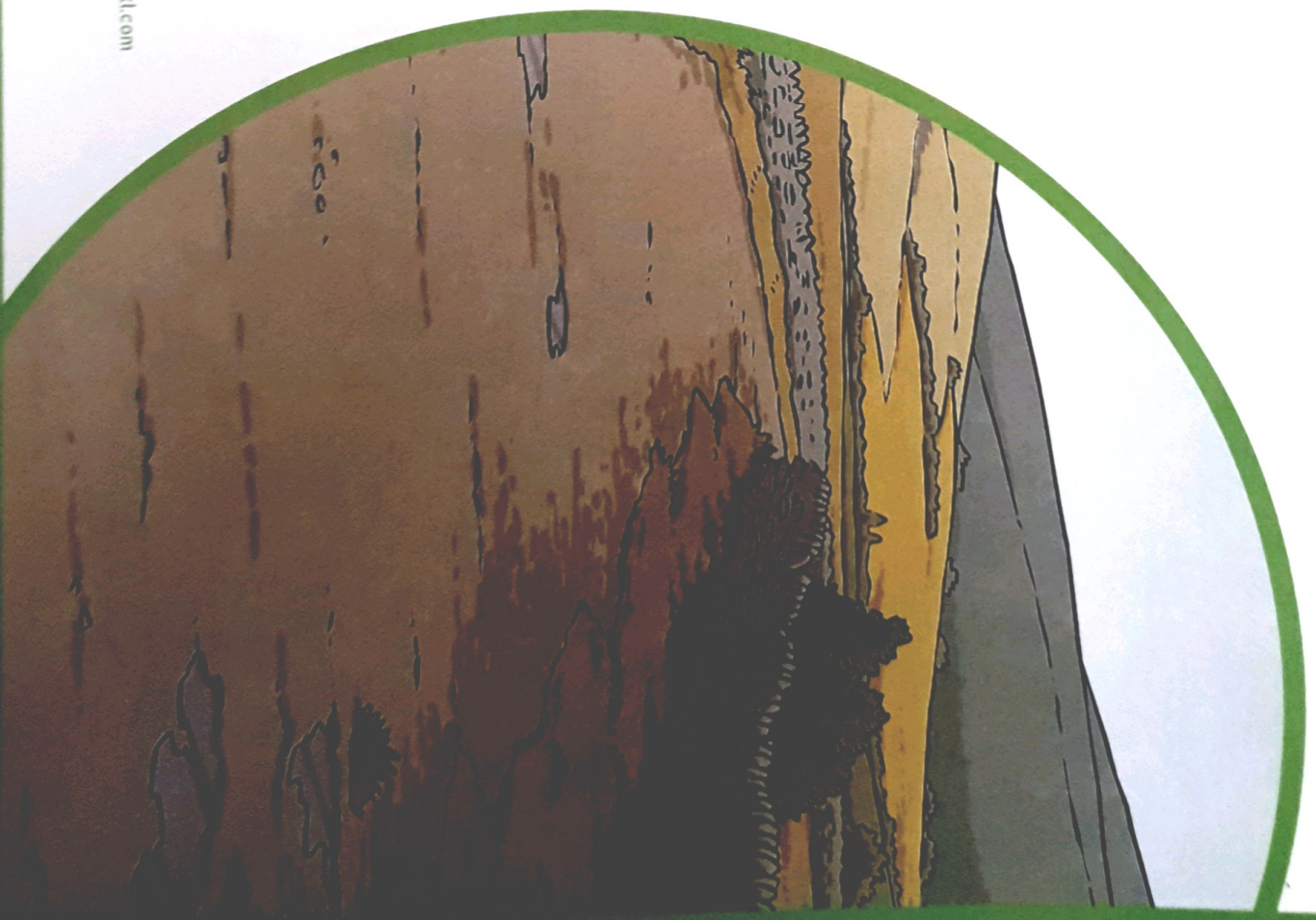


# Relief Works

The Government decided to provide work for the starving Irish, for them to earn money to buy a little bit of food.

Many of the people were too weak to work and much of the work had no real point.

Much of the work was to build unneeded roads in remote areas which became known as 'The roads to nowhere'.





# Black '47

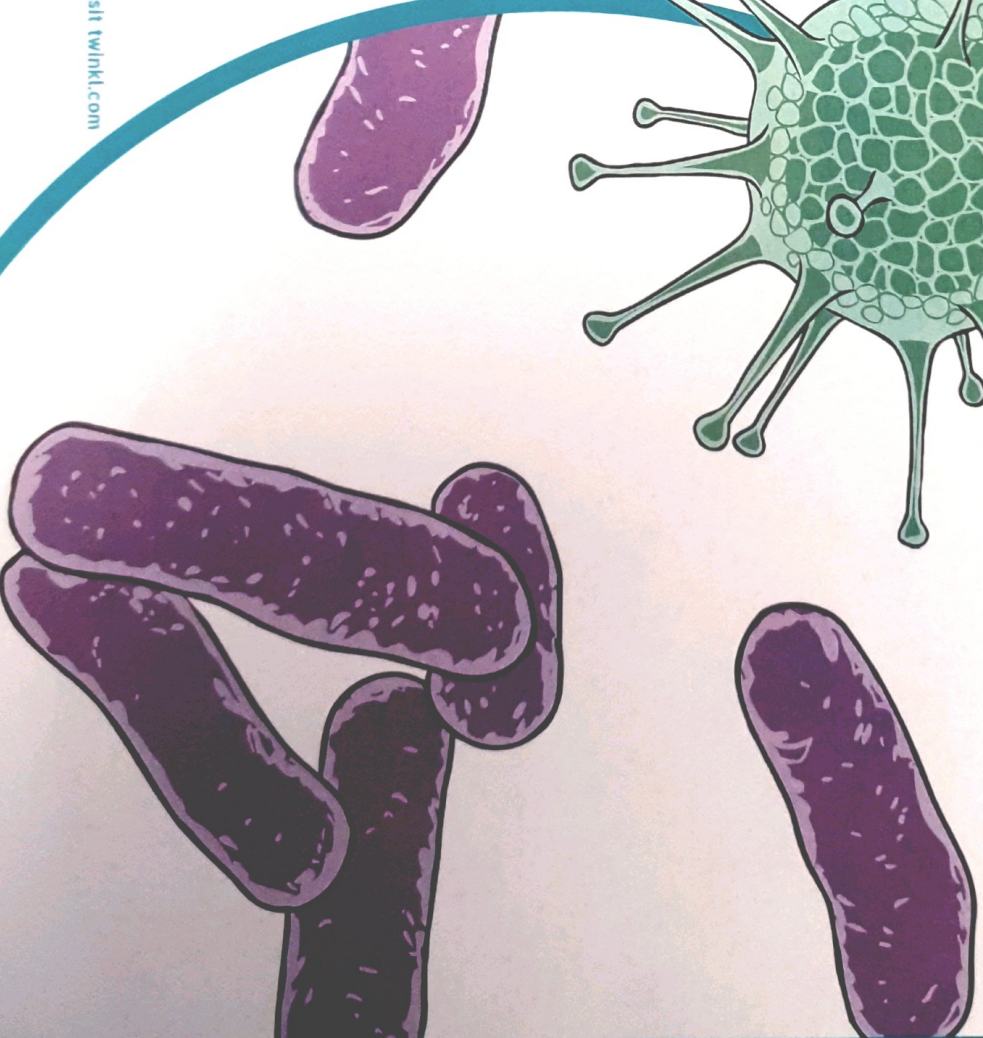
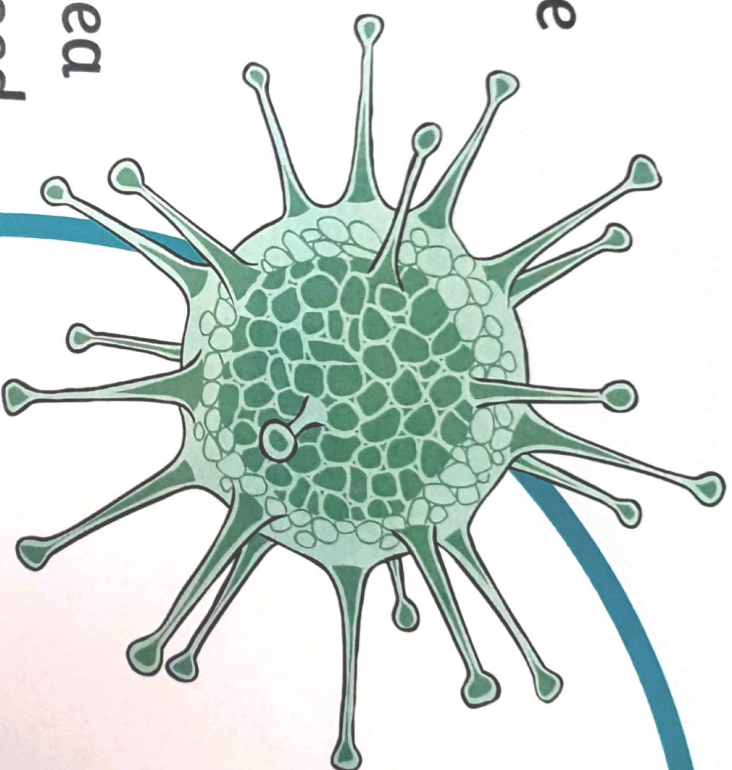
The Great Irish Famine saw its worst year in 1847 and this is known as 'Black '47'. As well as starvation, people suffered from diseases, such as cholera and famine fever. This fever was contagious and so many people were affected and died. The number of deaths was increasing and the winter of 1847 was an extremely cold one.





# Cholera

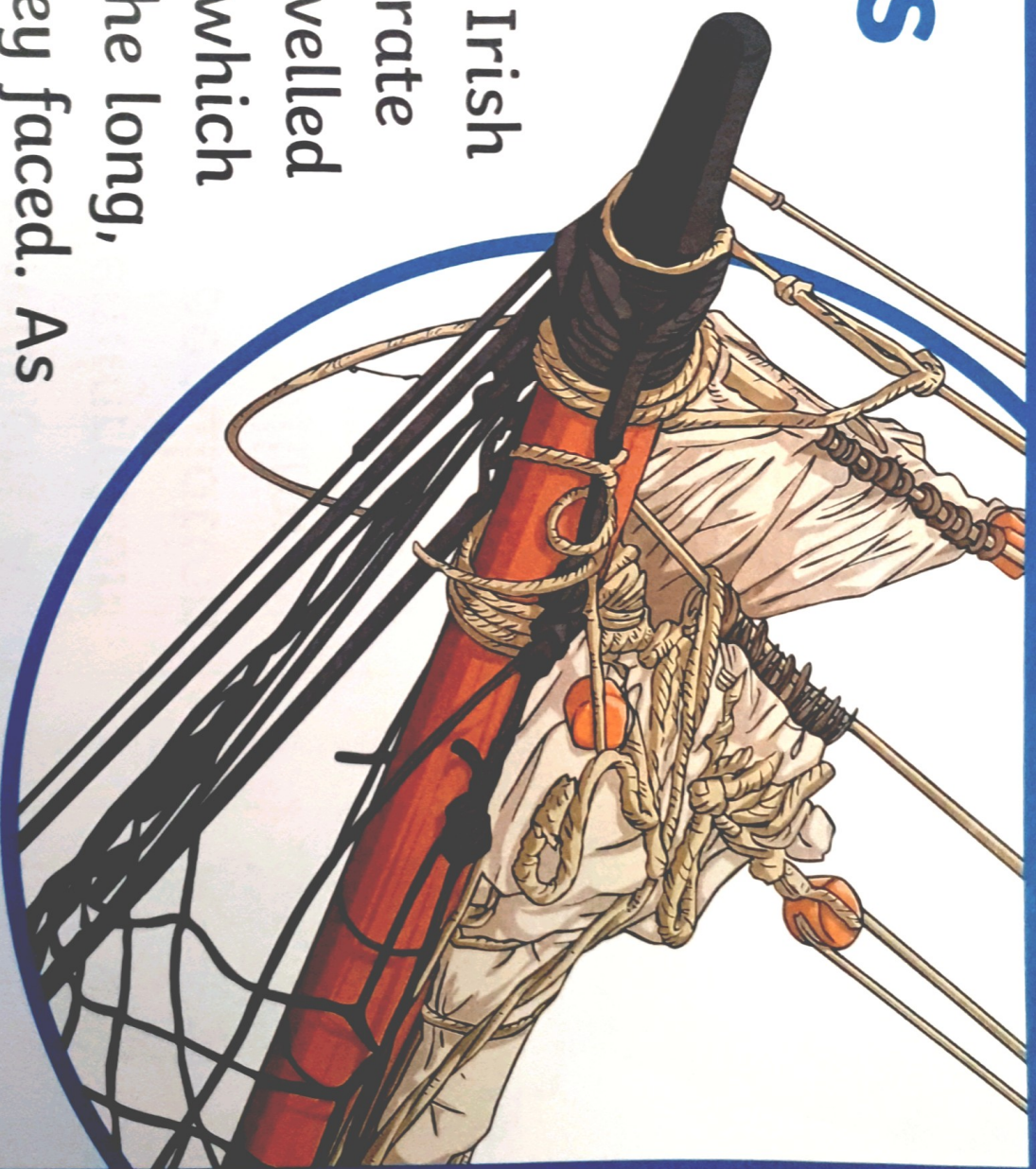
Cholera was a disease that the Irish people suffered from during 'Black '47'. This disease caused vomiting and diarrhoea and was fatal. It caused many Irish people to die during this year.





# Coffin Ships

During the Great Irish Famine of 1845-1850 and for a few years after, over two million Irish people decided to emigrate from Ireland. They travelled on small sailing ships which were not suitable for the long, dangerous journeys they faced. As a result, many passengers died and so they became known as 'coffin ships'.

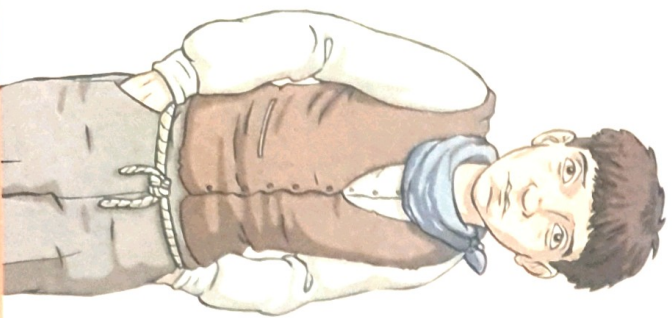




# Population

The population of Ireland grew rapidly before the famine, to approximately 8.5 million. As a result of the devastation and emigration of the Great Irish Famine, the population was affected hugely. About one million

people died and two million emigrated. Approximately 1.5 million Irish people emigrated to America, a quarter of a million went to Britain and most of the remainder went to Canada.





# The Great Famine Question Sheet

Use your knowledge of The Great Famine to answer the following questions:

1. When did The Great Famine take place?

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2. What is meant by the term 'absentee landlord'?

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3. Why were potatoes so popular in Ireland at the time?

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4. What disease affected the growth of potatoes?

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5. Which year is considered the worst year of The Great Famine?

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6. What was a 'soup kitchen'?

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7. What was a 'coffin ship'? Why do you think they were called this?

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8. Why do you think some parents encouraged their children to emigrate?

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9. What diseases caused death as a result of The Great Famine?

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10. How did the population change after The Great Famine? Why was this?

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# The Great Famine

Word Bank					
speakers	million	west	crop	emigrate	fungus
disease	population		relied	coffin ships	

The Great Famine took place in Ireland in the mid-1800s. A \_\_\_\_\_ that presented in the form of a \_\_\_\_\_ called blight caused it. This fungus caused the potato \_\_\_\_\_ in Ireland to fail, leaving the majority of people starving. This was because most people \_\_\_\_\_ on potatoes to live as this was their only source of food. Disease and hunger continued in Ireland until 1851. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Ireland was greatly reduced as a result of famine. More than one million people died and more than one and a half \_\_\_\_\_ people emigrated. Thousands died on \_\_\_\_\_ used to bring people away from Ireland. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Ireland was worst affected. The number of Irish \_\_\_\_\_ deceased from four million to under two million by 1851. Families were torn apart as younger members were encouraged by parents to \_\_\_\_\_ to a better life.



# The Great Famine - Cause and Effect

Read the following statements and decide whether it is a cause of The Famine or an effect of The Famine. Write cause or effect beside each one.

1. The Irish Famine led to the death of more than 1 million people \_\_\_\_\_
2. More than 1.5 million people were forced to emigrate. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Landlords became bankrupt. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Small farms were merged to form larger ones. \_\_\_\_\_
5. More than half a million tenants were evicted. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The number of Irish speakers decreased. \_\_\_\_\_
7. A fungus, commonly known as 'blight', spread through Ireland. \_\_\_\_\_
8. In 1845, the majority of people lived solely on potatoes. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Workhouses were opened to help people earn money. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Coffin ships brought people to places like America and Canada. \_\_\_\_\_



# Ireland in 1845

Pretend you are a reporter for the 'News in Ireland' newspaper in 1845. The blight has just affected the potato crop and this means that many people will have no food source. Report the news so the people of Ireland know what is happening and discuss what you think may happen because of this blight.

[illegible]



# The Great Famine

f u n g u s h y k p k l  
p c i w e m i g r a t e  
y h f o a r n f q s r i  
k o f r h p x a r u a e  
t l o k w o l m n h i e  
h e c h d t o i t p m e  
g r c o b a p n y y a t  
i a k u h t r e e t u n  
l t u s n o i t c i v e  
b q m e p e t y m a o s  
a r e n w s x t b u c b  
c f d r o l d n a l m a

potatoes

fungus

blight

famine

absentee

landlord

eviction

cholera

typhus

workhouse

emigrate

coffin