

Year 8, Terms 2 & 3  
**Britain 1750-1900**

**FOCUS QUESTION:** Does economic development lead to social and political change?

Organising question	Teaching & learning	Key elements	Resources	Approx. weeks
What was life like in Ireland during the nineteenth century?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Recap - what was happening in England at this time?</li> <li>ii. Why was there a famine in Ireland?</li> <li>iii. What happened during the Irish Famine?</li> <li>iv. What were the results of the Famine?</li> <li>v. Assessment based on the organising question.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2a.</li> <li>2c, 3a, 4a.</li> <li>2a.</li> <li>2a, 2e, 4a.</li> <li>5a, 5c.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Source sheet. OHT pictures.</li> <li>Doolough playscript ('Ireland in Schools'). Poem; 'The Spectre'. Task sheet.</li> <li>Extracts from <i>The Perambulations of Barney the Irishman</i> ('Ireland in Schools').</li> </ul>	3

There is nothing worse  
**There is nothing worse than telling your children there is no food.**  
**There is nothing worse than eating rotten food.**  
**There is nothing worse than losing your home.**  
**There is nothing worse than leaving your country.**  
**There is nothing worse than not knowing anyone.**

**I can only be grateful that I am alive.**

John O'Connor, Y9, King David High School



This is what a blighted potato looks like. They turn really mushy and smell awfully.



Rotting potato plant

## Famine in Ireland - sources



Source A

Picture taken from *The Illustrated London News*, 1849.



### Source B

In the first [house], six famished and ghastly skeletons, to all appearances dead, were huddled in a corner on some filthy straw, their sole covering what seemed a ragged horsecloth .... I approached with horror, and found by a low moaning they were alive - they were in fever, four children, a woman and what had once been a man ... In a few minutes I was surrounded by at least two hundred such phantoms, such frightful spectres as no words can describe .... Their demoniac yells are still ringing in my ears and their horrible images are fixed upon my brain ....

Nicholas Cummins, a magistrate of Cork, to the Duke of Wellington. The letter was published in *The Times*, 24 December 1846.

### Source C

Dependence on charity is not to be made an agreeable mode of life.

Too much has been done for the people. Under such treatment the people have grown worse instead of better, and we must try what independent exertion will do.

Charles Trevelyan on government policy during the Famine.

### Task

Look at the sources above and answer the following questions:

1. Look at source A. Write down what you think is happening in the picture.
2. Read source B. How do you think Mr Cummins felt about what he saw. Choose some key words from his letter and include them in your answer.
3. Look at sources A and B. How can source A help to explain what is happening in source B?
4. Read source C. What seems to have been Trevelyan's attitude towards people starving in Ireland? Explain your answer.



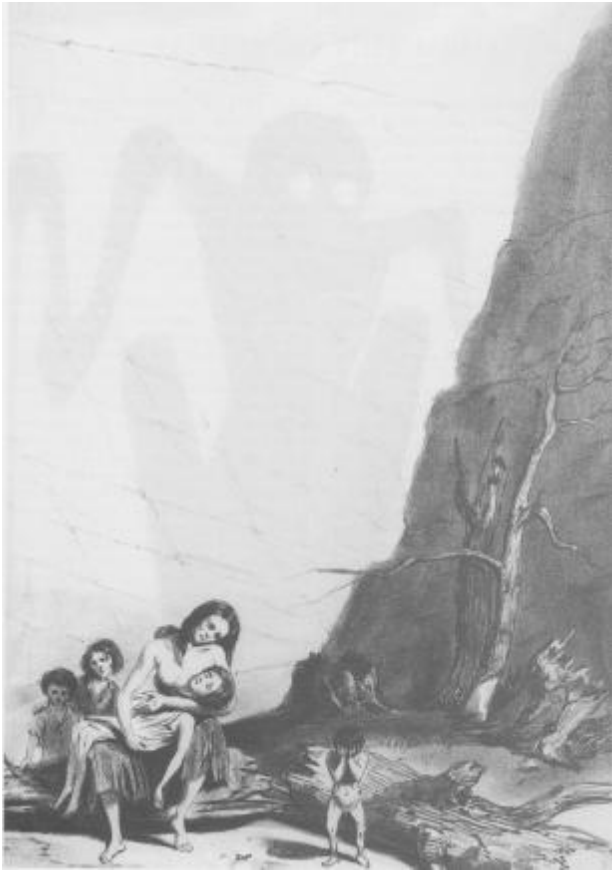
Women digging for potatoes in County Roscommon, mid-19th century.



BRIDGET O'DONNELL AND CHILDREN.

## The Spectre

'H.D.', London 1851



Far West a grim shadow was seen, as 'tis said,  
Like a Spectre from Famine and Pestilence bred;  
His gaunt giant-form, with pale Poverty wed.

The fell Spectre advanc'd - who the horrors shall tell  
Oh his galloping stride, as he sounded the knell  
Of thousands on thousands who 'neath his eye fell?

# The Irish Famine - task sheet

## Task 1

Read the poem 'The spectre' and answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. What is the poem about?
2. Where is the 'far west'?
3. What does 'the spectre' represent?
4. What were the 'horrors' described in the poem?
5. How does the poem make you feel?

## Task 2

Make up your own short poem about the famine in Ireland. Use the word box underneath to help you. Think about how you want to make the reader of your poem feel.

### Word Box

Hunger

Fear

Disease

Potato

Poverty

Blight

Horror

Starve

Irish

British

Peasant

Famine

Parliament

Tenant

Crop

Fever

Corpse

Food



## Perambulations of Barney the Irishman

This book was written by Bernard McAiney, known in Sheffield and Derbyshire as Barney the Irishman. Bernard was born in County Monaghan in 1790, and came to England in 1810. This extract tells the story of his difficult search for work in the weeks following his arrival in England. After spending ten years working as an agricultural labourer in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, Bernard became a table knife cutter in the 1820s, but was unable to make a living; he spent another few years as a tobacco seller before moving to Sheffield, where he worked in the cutlery trade.



As my father intended me to get my living by the pen, I left my native country at the instigation of my uncle Solomon, who was a smith and farrier to the army some years before in Manchester. I was equipped with a new suit of clothes, and everything necessary for a long journey, with recommendations from the priest, squire, and magistrate; and bidding farewell to parents, relatives, and friends embarked for Liverpool, where I safely landed on 22nd July, 1810. I stopped only a short time there, as I was afraid of the press gang. I walked as far as Warrington, and succeeded in getting a good private lodging, where many respectable people stopped who came to Warrington market...

I then proceeded to Manchester, full of expectation that I could get a situation as a clerk or bookkeeper [*sic*] in some of the mercantile houses of that city, but failed in obtaining one; thus were my airy castles demolished... Being nearly twenty years of age, I thought it was time to part with my downy honours, and went to a barber's shop in Deansgate to get shaved. Having seated myself, I was surprised to see a young woman

commence lathering my chin; and whether it was the pleasure I felt in contemplating her fine features, or that my beard was soft, I know not, but certain it is I never have had so easy a shave since.

I remained with a cousin in the same street a week, during which time I applied for a situation, but in vain; for either my coarse appearance or Hibernian accent prevented my success. Chagrined, disappointed, and nearly penniless [*sic*], with my spirits depressed, I knew not what to do... In this situation I was walking disconsolately, when I met with an Irishman who was going hay-making. He told me he could get me two shillings a day and two drinkings. I gladly embraced his offer, delighted at the prospect of obtaining something to do. I worked a week at this occupation, and then made new exertions to obtain a situation; but notwithstanding all that myself and my friends could do, it was in vain. I was now resolved to take any situation, however humble, to procure a living by the most honourable of all ways - the sweat of my brow.

From: *The Perambulations of Barney the Irishman, Written by Himself* (1850), pp 3-4

## The impact of the Irish Famine

Dear cousin,

*I am writing you this letter from America. I just wanted to let you know how we are all getting on in our new home.*

*As you know we had to leave our home in Ireland at the end of last year because of the terrible famine. Life in Ireland, at the time, was truly awful. For example, ...*

[describe life in Ireland during the Famine].

*The famine was caused by...*

[explain what caused the famine].

*We lost most of our potatoes. This was a catastrophe because ...*

[explain why the loss of the potato crop was such a catastrophe].

*The English government tried to solve the problem by ...*

[explain what the English government did - was this a success?]

*As a result of the famine ...*

[explain the consequences of the Great Famine].

*My life is very different now ...*

[Be creative, describe your new life in America, how is it different from life in Ireland?]

[Is life better for you now?]

*Goodbye and take care,*

*Your cousin*

xxx