

Irish Dimensions  
in  
National Curriculum History

*Key Stages 3*

**DOOLOUGH**  
**A Playscript in Five Acts**  
**A Cross-curricular, Multi-cultural Approach to**  
**the Great Irish Famine, 1845-52**

*by*

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*In association with*

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## **CHARACTERS**

### **Newcasters: 1 and 2**

( Mary Lloyd and  
Rachel Smile)

### **TV Journalist**

(Sally Myles)

### **TV Interviewer**

(Rachel Coulter)

### **Relief Worker**

(*Maria Lopez*)

### **P.J. Murphy**

**Cait Murphy (his wife)**

**Liam Murphy (their son)**

**Nora Murphy (their  
daughter)**

**Various members of the  
Doolough Community**

**A Priest**

**Corn Manager**

**Corn Manager's wife**

**His/herhelpers**

**Mary Flaherty**

### **Chief of the Choctaw**

**American General**

**His men**

**Member of the Choctaw  
tribe**

## **ACTS**

**Act 1**            **A TV studio of the present day**

**Act 2**            **Doolough in 1847**

**Act 3**            **America in 1849**

**Act 4**            **Doolough today**

**Act 5**            **Back to the TV studio**

**ACT 1**  
**Scene 1**

**Newscaster 1** *[News music and voice:]* The news at 6 with your newscasters: Mary Lloyd and Rebecca Smile.

Good evening. News headlines today are dominated by world leaders meeting in an emergency summit in Berlin to discuss the deepening crisis of world poverty and hunger in the third world.

**Newscaster 2** ... And tonight we are including a special feature on hunger in the past in this extended news programme. Now over to Mary for the news in detail on that Berlin summit.

**Newscaster 1** Thank you Rebecca. We'll be returning to Brian for that special feature shortly. But now the crisis of world poverty and hunger. It is reported that the Presidents of the USA, Britain and Germany have pledged 200 million pounds to help towards famine relief in Ethiopia, Somalia and Bangladesh where starvation is at its worse. Reporting live from Berlin through satellite TV is our special famine correspondent Sally Myles. Sally, can you hear me?

**Sally** Yes I can Mary. The latest information reaching world leaders at this summit from the relief organisation Oxfam is that about 27 million people in the world at the present time are facing slow death by starvation. Oxfam is calling upon governments of the 'developed' world to provide new food and aid now before it is too late.

**Newscaster 1** And how has the summit responded to this cry for help from Oxfam?

**Sally** Well as you'll have heard already earlier today the Presidents of the USA, Britain and Germany have pledged 200 million pounds and ...

**Newscaster 1** Sorry to interrupt Sally, but is it enough?

**Sally** It will never be enough but it's a step in the right direction and shows that world leaders are aware of the terrible consequences of civil wars, crop failure and transport problems for the ordinary people in these developing third world countries.

**Newscaster 1** Thank you Sally. We'll have to leave it there but will return to you in a later bulletin. Right now we can go live to Somalia where our woman Rachel Coulter is with Maria Lopez, a relief worker for Oxfam. Hello Rachel. Can you hear me?

**Rachel** Hello. I *can* hear you but very faintly.

**Newscaster 1** It's OK Rachel, we can hear you well. What are conditions *really* like over there?

**Rachel**        **There are no other words to describe it but desperate and, of course, tragic. The best thing I can do is to hand over to Maria Lopez here, who will tell you how the relief programme is going.**

**Maria**        **I've been to many places of famine in the last ten years but this is one of the worst. No words can really describe the human misery, squalor and hopelessness of the people in the country districts of Somalia. Facts are all very well but we need a response from the human heart. I know millions of people are watching who do not know what it is like to be without food and water. I'm appealing to you to give, yes, but more than that to *listen* to this with your *hearts* as well as your *minds*.**

***Poem***

**The angry sun blazes on the dry, dead, land  
A black bird wheels above watching and waiting  
I too wait and watch to know who'll win the race,  
The spirit of good? flooding  
the dry land with milk and honey?  
Or the grim reaper? who will come too soon.  
And harvest what remains of this barren land:-  
The innocent wailing children  
with faces as old as time itself  
managing on a thread.**

**Rachel**        **Thank you Maria. Now back to the studio.**

**Newscaster 1** **All the world leaders are aware of the seriousness of this problem, which has been with us throughout history. Now over to the special feature mentioned earlier: 'Famine in the Past'.**

**Scene change**

**Newscaster 2** **Thank you Mary. Tonight I want to take you back in time to 1847 to be exact and to Ireland.**

ACT 2  
Scene 1

DOOLOUGH

*[Music: the 'slow air', 'Eamonn an Chnoic' is heard fading into an American native drum beat which gives way to a bodhrain beat.*

*The Year: 1847. The place is County Mayo: the cabin of P.J. Murphy and his family: late afternoon.]*

PJ Murphy     Dia Dhuit a Cait! (Dja Ditch)

Cait             Dia is Muire Dhuit! (Dja is Morra ditch)

News caster 2 I should come in to tell you here that Mr Murphy and his family are speaking in Gaelic or Irish. He has just said 'hello' and his wife has replied to the greeting. From now on you will hear what they say in 'MBearla' or English.

Cait             Well, dear, was the crop harvested today?

PJ                Indeed it was.

Cait             And?

PJ                And the news is bad I fear: all the crop!

Cait             *All* the crop?

PJ                It's ruined. The whole of the crop is cursed. We harvested the crop and everything looked promising: the potato was healthy and looking firm. The next day we looked into the pits and saw a rotting, stinking mass of slime.

Liam            *[Enters]* Father! Father!

PJ                What is it?

Liam            Reports are coming from all over the land. No potatoes have survived. The land is ruined. People are going to starve again.

Cait             But what could it be? It's been poor before and many have died but this is different.

PJ                I have a bad feeling. It *is* different. God protect us. Something evil has entered the whole crop and is gnawing away at it inwards.

Norah           *[Enters]* Yes! May the Virgin Mary shield us now. Nothing remains: we're in God's hands now. Nothing remains. Everywhere we look all over our land the potato is rotting away. Our only food! Without it we die.

***[Wind noises off stage]* - 15 months later, March 1849**

**Recorded message: or Narrator**

**The potato blight devastated Ireland. Well meaning organisations had sent aid to Ireland during the mid 1849s, like the Quakers. The British Government grappled with the problem by opening corn depots. Trevelyan worked as hard as he could to stem the tide, but the terrible blight gripped Ireland like a great dog would shake a helpless kitten by the scruff of the neck. Thousands and thousands faced starvation.**

**The square at Doolough. Various starving people standing around including the Murphys. Enter the Choctaw who silently watches the proceedings. Voices: 'We'll all die if we don't do something'. But what?**

- Priest**            **There is *no* food in Doolough.**
- Voice**            **Then where is it Father?**
- Voices**           **Yes! Yes! Tell us where is it!**
- Priest**            **I don't know my people! I don't know.**
- PJ**                **My children have scoured the countryside looking for anything they can lay their hands on to eat! The land gives nothing. Why! Why! Who or what have we offended?**
- Priest**            **God would not see his people starve. We must do something for ourselves. I've heard there *is* corn.**
- Voices**           **Where? Where? Tell us Father, we'll go.**
- Priest**            **There is corn in Louisburgh.**
- Voices**           **Then let's go! Let's march there!**
- Priest**            **We must go to Louisburgh. March with dignity and love.**
- Voices**           **To Louisburgh.**
- PJ**                **Louisburgh.**
- Cait**             **Food**
- Liam**            **Help! Father, I'm afraid that our people are going to be disappointed even after the long trek to Louisburgh.**
- Nora**            **Let's hope for Life! God help us!**

**ACT 2**

**Scene 2**

**Louisburgh**

*[Groups of starving people, pleading 'Food, Food. Please. We're starving. Our children, at least feed them!']*

**Corn Mgr** I'm sorry, silence please: please listen! I have no food to give you. It ran out months ago: my heart goes out to all your starving children but I have no corn.

**People** No food - but we were told! We've trekked miles - our feet are bleeding!

**Corn Mgr** Yes, I know. I'm sorry but you'll have to go to Delphi Lodge.

**People** Delphi Lodge! Where? I don't know it! Delphi were? Is there food?

**Corn Mgr** I think there is. I'm sorry I can't help you! I'm without the means to do so. Please believe me.

**PJ** We do. Calm down everybody. The man is telling the truth. Father, lead the way.

**Priest** Delphi Lodge is ten miles away. We'll set out tomorrow. God be with you!

**Corn Mgr's  
Wife**

Shut up husband, or I'll brain you, you big bag of wind! 'Your heart goes out to *them* and *their* starving children'. What about your wife and your starving children? We're going to be joining them in the workhouse the way we are going! There's no food here! He's already told you now please believe us.

*[She beats him off the stage]. [Jig music.]*

**Mary  
Flaherty**

Well, all the people have gone from the town. I'm the only one left I think. Aye, things are so quiet you can hear the little linnets twittering in the leaves of the Ash tree at the Crossroads. Crossroads! That's where I'm at. I couldn't go on the march on account of me bad leg, but I'll soon be a skeleton if this famine goes on much longer. I blame the government, not God. After all, they're responsible for us, aren't they? A pack of idle workers coming onto the land and then flitting back to their estates in England as soon as the going gets tough! Crossroads, aye, should I marry that 55 year old so called farmer Liam McCreesh? The tight fisted old son of a swine!

Well, I suppose a bit of land and enough food to keep body and soul together counts for something in these hard times. Marry Liam McCreesh! He's got a face like a bag of old rotting carrots all pimply and horrible. Well, I suppose if our families agree we'll have to make a 'match' of it! One thing he's never out of the pub, slurping Poteen. Perhaps he'll die early. There won't be any kids, so I'll inherit his half acre. I could be queen of McCreesh's Potato Patch. Here's a Crown. How do I look?

*[Crown of Thorns?] [She skips off.] [Jig music/Drum beat.]*

**ACT 2**

**Scene 3**

**CHOCTAW RESERVATION, AMERICA, 1849**

**Dawn Flower** Do we really have to leave our beautiful lands where we were born and brought up to the sound of the wild animals? the birds; the bison; the wild free horses? I remember my mother told me that we are not additions to this country, we are *part* of it. It *is* our people. Well, my name may be soft and sweet but my nature is like the sharp branches of the trees. It claws at the heart of injustice. We should *fight* these people who seek to take our lands.

**Night Bird** Patience, we *must* have patience. It's written that our people must suffer before we can come into our just inheritance. One day we'll return to this land. It belongs to us, not the intruders from over the seas.

**Dawn Flower** We should kill them and send them to their God in the sky.

**Night Bird** They will eventually kill themselves with greed. Be calm. Here comes the 'American General'.

**Dawn Flower** They look like 'people' but they are so pale. Is everyone pale cruel?

**Night Bird** No, we are all people, some are good, some bad, that's all.

**ACT 3            AMERICA IN 1849**

**Chief**            *[An old man of 80 years. He has been watching quietly the previous act with some of his men.]*

The year was 1831. That year is fixed in the hearts of all Choctaws from the oldest to the youngest in our tribe. It was a time of great upheaval and distress. A painful chapter in our history. I waited whilst the great 'Yankee' general marched into our camp.

**General**        Well Chief, greetings from our great Chief.

**Chief**            Greetings soldier.

**General**        Have you thought of what we said a month ago.

**Chief**            We have.

**General**        And?

**Chief**            And our elders have decided it is useless to resist the power of your army.

**General**        Progress, Chief, progress.

**Chief**            These lands were ours before the coming of the white man and one day we will return to them.

**General**        Another land awaits you in Oklahoma.

**Chief**            We are ready to make the long journey into our own future.

**General**        It's 500 miles Chief: That way. *[Exit.]*

**Chief**            We settled into the march: Many died: Many starved: Children were born: Children died. Old men and women, young men and women died far from their own lands.

*[Irish slow air fades in to drum beat lessening]*

And another people from far across the sea left their lands also to march to foreign lands to start a new life over land and across the sea.

**Men**            They are now our blood brothers.

**Chief**            Brothers in suffering. They marched barefoot, bareheaded to Delphi Lodge to beg for food.

*[Silent enactment of the Doolough marchers being turned away from Delphi.]*  
No food was available: The depots were closed: Death through starvation stared them in the face.

We entered a cabin. Stretched in one corner, scarcely visible from the smoke and rags that covered them, were three children huddled together, eyes sunk, voice gone and evidently in the last stages of starvation.

**Choctaw 1**     **They are white.**

**Chief**           **They are our brothers.**

**Choctaw 2**     **They took our land.**

**Chief**           **Brothers in pain.**

**Choctaw 1**     **They made us starve!**

**Chief**           **Brothers in suffering.**

**Choctaw 2**     **They will come to our land.**

**Chief**           **They will come as brothers.**

**Choctaw 1**     **Let us stretch our hands across the great ocean.**

**Chief**           **Brothers who now turn to us.**

**Choctaw 2**     **Let us give our new found wealth.**

**Choctaw 3**     **To help ... our brothers.**

**Chief and**  
**Men**           **Brothers of Doolough accept our small gift.**

**[Voice from**  
**off stage ]**     **'We do: we do: with thanks!'**

***[Slow air fades out.]***

**ACT 4        IRELAND 1990**

*[All previous characters from Ireland and America are now in 'modern dress'.]*

**PJ Murphy**        Today, as chairperson of the Doolough Council, I would like to welcome our 'brothers' from the USA. The Choctaws. *[Applause.]*

We call them brothers because well over a hundred years ago our families' ancestors were helped in their darkest hours of death and starvation by the fathers of this very tribe or clan. Over 700 dollars were collected then to help our town see the famine through. Today that amount would be worth 1 million dollars so Failte Cead Mile a thousand welcomes. *[Applause.]*

**Chief**                We have crossed the Atlantic Ocean to reach the arm of friendship to our friends and brothers in Ireland. Common suffering brought us together and our shared humanity keeps this band of friendship between our two different 'clans'. This band is not just for today but for all time. So let us begin the march from Doolough to Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge to Doolough.

**Cait**                 The ghosts of all our ancestors will accompany us on the march. Remember, also the longer march in America when death and starvation gripped our people.

**People of  
Doolough**            But the hand of friendship and love restored life and peace and the wanderer settled once again in his own lands.

*[Irish music fades into the drum beat. Gifts are exchanged between the two nations.]*

*[The march commences with PJ Murphy and the chief joint head of it.]*

**ACT 5**      **TV STUDIO TODAY**  
**Scene 1**

**Newscaster 1** Well, that concludes our special feature on ‘Famine’ in the past. We hope it has made you aware of the connections between the past and the present. We can put somebody on the moon but we still seem incapable of stopping millions of people from starving. The reasons are often complex and puzzling. One thing, however, does give the world cause for hope. That is *the will to help*. Think of the Choctaws and think of the help you may have given to help the starving. Back over to the main studio.

**Newscaster 2** Well that ends our special news bulletin on this day. This was a day when the world’s leaders’ meeting in Berlin voted extra famine aid to the so called third world countries. We asked the question is it enough? And we leave you with the answer given by Maria, relief worker for Oxfam.

**Voice** It will *never* be enough but please, please keep caring and keep listening with your hearts as well as your heads.  
*[News music fades.]*  
*[Exit of presenter and newscaster.]*

*[Enter*      *The Doolough and Choctaw marchers. Silent, they face the audience.]*  
  
*[Irish/Choctaw drum music fades. The lights dim.]*

**ACT 5        TV STUDIO TODAY**  
**Scene 2**

***['From a Distance' is played. To the song all the cast assemble: Irish on one side, the native American on the other.]***

- (1) Both groups move to the centre - arms reaching out.**
- (2) March down the aisle and back round, leaving Corn Manager who hungrily eats bread on stage.**
- (3) They line up and beg for food. He ignores them and walks through their appealing arms.**
- (4) They march again helping each other along. They offer gifts to each other.**
- (5) Corn Manager returns: They retreat.**
- (6) He appeals for food. They ignore him.**
- (7) One breaks rans and offers him food.**
- (8) He joins the group.**
- (9) They put the gifts down.**
- (10) They offer signs of friendship.**
- (11) The group see the Star. [Spotlight.]**

# **Notes for Teachers**

## **Suggestions for Preparatory Work**

### **Stimulus**

- 1. Read the story of the 'Doolough March' to the class.**
- 2. Show the class the print(s) of the Van Gogh the 'Potato Eaters'.**
- 3. Play the taped 'slow air' 'Eamonn an Chnoic' for the class to listen to.**
- 4. Play the taped drum music for the class to listen to.**
- 5. Discuss then write down thoughts, moods, feelings.**

### **Improvisation**

- 1. Work in groups on the following theme:-**  
  
**'I have no food to give you.'**  
**(A group of starving people marching from place to place being refused food.)**
- 2. The potato crop has completely failed. (The news is given to a group of starving land dwellers).**
- 3. A Parliamentary debate: on one side MPs in favour of aid to Ireland against those who think it would not be necessary and/or too difficult to carry out in 1847.**

### **Preparation work**

- 1. Find out the distance of the Doolough March.**
- 2. Find out the distance of the Choctaw March.**
- 3. Find out the distance from Ireland to America.**
- 4. What forms of transport were available in 1847?**
- 5. What were roads like in Ireland in 1847?**
- 6. What sort of countryside did the Choctaws face on their march?**
- 7. Why do you think the Choctaws collected so much money to help people they did not know?**

- 8. Find out the differences between famine aid today and famine aid in 1847.**
- 9. Why did people starve in Ireland when the potato crop failed?**
- 10. What caused the potato blight?**
- 11. Find out a 'typical' day for an Irish labouring family in 1847.**
- 12. Compare this with a 'typical' day for a Choctaw.**

### **Creative Work**

- 1. Work on a script linking the Doolough March with the Choctaw March and famine in the world today.**
- 2. Design and make the Choctaw costumes.**
- 3. Design and make the Irish costumes.**
- 4. Organise the different 'music' tapes for the Choctaw and Irish elements of the script.**
- 5. Design and make all props for the presentation.**
- 6. Organise the scenery necessary for the Drama.**
- 7. Design and organise any special verbal effects.**
- 8. Allocate parts.**
- 9. Draw up a rehearsal schedule.**
- 10. Video the final presentation.**

# **Notes for Teachers**

## **The Doolough March**

### **Famine in Doolough**

**County Mayo was one of the worst areas affected by famine. Conditions were particularly bad in Doolough, a tiny community of farming people living in a remote part of County Mayo. Very few of the people who lived there survived the famine.**

**In desperation hundreds of people decided in March 1849 to walk from Doolough to the town of Louisburgh to try to obtain food. They walked many miles across rough and mountainous countryside. When they arrived at Louisburgh they were told that they would have to walk to Delphi Lodge which was some ten miles away, the next day. There they would meet people who could provide them with food.**

**That night they slept in the open fields. The weather was so cold and wet that many of them died from exposure and hunger. But, the next morning four hundred of them set out from Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge. Some were so weak from hunger, cold and dampness that they died by the roadside.**

**When they arrived at Delphi Lodge, they were told that there was no food for them. They had to begin the long march back to their own homes. During this return journey more than two hundred people died.**

### **The impact of the Doolough march**

**The experience of the people of Doolough Lake is just one example of what happened to many thousands of Irish people during the Great Famine. The Doolough march is, however, unique because some time later the story was heard by a tribe of American natives - the Choctaws.**

**They sympathised with the people of Doolough because in the year 1831 the Choctaws had been forced out of their own territory in southern Mississippi. They were forced to march five hundred miles to a new settlement in a remote part of Oklahoma.**

**When, in 1849, the Chief of the Choctaws heard about the march from Doolough to Louisburgh, the Choctaws still remembered their own long forced march from Mississippi to Oklahoma. They wanted to help the Irish people. So they collected 710 dollars from their members and sent the money to Ireland to help the victims of the famine. In today's money that would come to one million dollars.**

**Since then, there has been a close friendship between the people of Doolough and the Choctaws. In 1990 the present Chief of the Choctaws took part in the march from Doolough to Louisburgh to commemorate the victims of the famine.**

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### **Relief Worker**

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**Liam Murphy (their son)**

**Nora Murphy (their  
daughter)**

**Various members of the  
Doolough Community**

**A Priest**

**Corn Manager**

**Corn Manager's wife**

**His/herhelpers**

**Mary Flaherty**

### **Chief of the Choctaw**

**American General**

**His men**

**Member of the Choctaw  
tribe**

## **ACTS**

**Act 1**            **A TV studio of the present day**

**Act 2**            **Doolough in 1847**

**Act 3**            **America in 1849**

**Act 4**            **Doolough today**

**Act 5**            **Back to the TV studio**

**ACT 1**  
**Scene 1**

**Newscaster 1** *[News music and voice:]* The news at 6 with your newscasters: Mary Lloyd and Rebecca Smile.

Good evening. News headlines today are dominated by world leaders meeting in an emergency summit in Berlin to discuss the deepening crisis of world poverty and hunger in the third world.

**Newscaster 2** ... And tonight we are including a special feature on hunger in the past in this extended news programme. Now over to Mary for the news in detail on that Berlin summit.

**Newscaster 1** Thank you Rebecca. We'll be returning to Brian for that special feature shortly. But now the crisis of world poverty and hunger. It is reported that the Presidents of the USA, Britain and Germany have pledged 200 million pounds to help towards famine relief in Ethiopia, Somalia and Bangladesh where starvation is at its worse. Reporting live from Berlin through satellite TV is our special famine correspondent Sally Myles. Sally, can you hear me?

**Sally** Yes I can Mary. The latest information reaching world leaders at this summit from the relief organisation Oxfam is that about 27 million people in the world at the present time are facing slow death by starvation. Oxfam is calling upon governments of the 'developed' world to provide new food and aid now before it is too late.

**Newscaster 1** And how has the summit responded to this cry for help from Oxfam?

**Sally** Well as you'll have heard already earlier today the Presidents of the USA, Britain and Germany have pledged 200 million pounds and ...

**Newscaster 1** Sorry to interrupt Sally, but is it enough?

**Sally** It will never be enough but it's a step in the right direction and shows that world leaders are aware of the terrible consequences of civil wars, crop failure and transport problems for the ordinary people in these developing third world countries.

**Newscaster 1** Thank you Sally. We'll have to leave it there but will return to you in a later bulletin. Right now we can go live to Somalia where our woman Rachel Coulter is with Maria Lopez, a relief worker for Oxfam. Hello Rachel. Can you hear me?

**Rachel** Hello. I *can* hear you but very faintly.

**Newscaster 1** It's OK Rachel, we can hear you well. What are conditions *really* like over there?

**Rachel**        **There are no other words to describe it but desperate and, of course, tragic. The best thing I can do is to hand over to Maria Lopez here, who will tell you how the relief programme is going.**

**Maria**        **I've been to many places of famine in the last ten years but this is one of the worst. No words can really describe the human misery, squalor and hopelessness of the people in the country districts of Somalia. Facts are all very well but we need a response from the human heart. I know millions of people are watching who do not know what it is like to be without food and water. I'm appealing to you to give, yes, but more than that to *listen* to this with your *hearts* as well as your *minds*.**

***Poem***

**The angry sun blazes on the dry, dead, land  
A black bird wheels above watching and waiting  
I too wait and watch to know who'll win the race,  
The spirit of good? flooding  
the dry land with milk and honey?  
Or the grim reaper? who will come too soon.  
And harvest what remains of this barren land:-  
The innocent wailing children  
with faces as old as time itself  
managing on a thread.**

**Rachel**        **Thank you Maria. Now back to the studio.**

**Newscaster 1** **All the world leaders are aware of the seriousness of this problem, which has been with us throughout history. Now over to the special feature mentioned earlier: 'Famine in the Past'.**

**Scene change**

**Newscaster 2** **Thank you Mary. Tonight I want to take you back in time to 1847 to be exact and to Ireland.**

ACT 2  
Scene 1

DOOLOUGH

*[Music: the 'slow air', 'Eamonn an Chnoic' is heard fading into an American native drum beat which gives way to a bodhrain beat.*

*The Year: 1847. The place is County Mayo: the cabin of P.J. Murphy and his family: late afternoon.]*

PJ Murphy     Dia Dhuit a Cait! (Dja Ditch)

Cait             Dia is Muire Dhuit! (Dja is Morra ditch)

News caster 2 I should come in to tell you here that Mr Murphy and his family are speaking in Gaelic or Irish. He has just said 'hello' and his wife has replied to the greeting. From now on you will hear what they say in 'MBearla' or English.

Cait             Well, dear, was the crop harvested today?

PJ                Indeed it was.

Cait             And?

PJ                And the news is bad I fear: all the crop!

Cait             *All* the crop?

PJ                It's ruined. The whole of the crop is cursed. We harvested the crop and everything looked promising: the potato was healthy and looking firm. The next day we looked into the pits and saw a rotting, stinking mass of slime.

Liam            *[Enters]* Father! Father!

PJ                What is it?

Liam            Reports are coming from all over the land. No potatoes have survived. The land is ruined. People are going to starve again.

Cait             But what could it be? It's been poor before and many have died but this is different.

PJ                I have a bad feeling. It *is* different. God protect us. Something evil has entered the whole crop and is gnawing away at it inwards.

Norah           *[Enters]* Yes! May the Virgin Mary shield us now. Nothing remains: we're in God's hands now. Nothing remains. Everywhere we look all over our land the potato is rotting away. Our only food! Without it we die.

***[Wind noises off stage]* - 15 months later, March 1849**

**Recorded message: or Narrator**

**The potato blight devastated Ireland. Well meaning organisations had sent aid to Ireland during the mid 1849s, like the Quakers. The British Government grappled with the problem by opening corn depots. Trevelyan worked as hard as he could to stem the tide, but the terrible blight gripped Ireland like a great dog would shake a helpless kitten by the scruff of the neck. Thousands and thousands faced starvation.**

**The square at Doolough. Various starving people standing around including the Murphys. Enter the Choctaw who silently watches the proceedings. Voices: 'We'll all die if we don't do something'. But what?**

- Priest**            **There is *no* food in Doolough.**
- Voice**            **Then where is it Father?**
- Voices**           **Yes! Yes! Tell us where is it!**
- Priest**            **I don't know my people! I don't know.**
- PJ**                **My children have scoured the countryside looking for anything they can lay their hands on to eat! The land gives nothing. Why! Why! Who or what have we offended?**
- Priest**            **God would not see his people starve. We must do something for ourselves. I've heard there *is* corn.**
- Voices**           **Where? Where? Tell us Father, we'll go.**
- Priest**            **There is corn in Louisburgh.**
- Voices**           **Then let's go! Let's march there!**
- Priest**            **We must go to Louisburgh. March with dignity and love.**
- Voices**           **To Louisburgh.**
- PJ**                **Louisburgh.**
- Cait**             **Food**
- Liam**            **Help! Father, I'm afraid that our people are going to be disappointed even after the long trek to Louisburgh.**
- Nora**            **Let's hope for Life! God help us!**

**ACT 2**

**Scene 2**

**Louisburgh**

*[Groups of starving people, pleading 'Food, Food. Please. We're starving. Our children, at least feed them!']*

**Corn Mgr** I'm sorry, silence please: please listen! I have no food to give you. It ran out months ago: my heart goes out to all your starving children but I have no corn.

**People** No food - but we were told! We've trekked miles - our feet are bleeding!

**Corn Mgr** Yes, I know. I'm sorry but you'll have to go to Delphi Lodge.

**People** Delphi Lodge! Where? I don't know it! Delphi were? Is there food?

**Corn Mgr** I think there is. I'm sorry I can't help you! I'm without the means to do so. Please believe me.

**PJ** We do. Calm down everybody. The man is telling the truth. Father, lead the way.

**Priest** Delphi Lodge is ten miles away. We'll set out tomorrow. God be with you!

**Corn Mgr's  
Wife**

Shut up husband, or I'll brain you, you big bag of wind! 'Your heart goes out to *them* and *their* starving children'. What about your wife and your starving children? We're going to be joining them in the workhouse the way we are going! There's no food here! He's already told you now please believe us.

*[She beats him off the stage]. [Jig music.]*

**Mary  
Flaherty**

Well, all the people have gone from the town. I'm the only one left I think. Aye, things are so quiet you can hear the little linnets twittering in the leaves of the Ash tree at the Crossroads. Crossroads! That's where I'm at. I couldn't go on the march on account of me bad leg, but I'll soon be a skeleton if this famine goes on much longer. I blame the government, not God. After all, they're responsible for us, aren't they? A pack of idle workers coming onto the land and then flitting back to their estates in England as soon as the going gets tough! Crossroads, aye, should I marry that 55 year old so called farmer Liam McCreesh? The tight fisted old son of a swine!

Well, I suppose a bit of land and enough food to keep body and soul together counts for something in these hard times. Marry Liam McCreesh! He's got a face like a bag of old rotting carrots all pimply and horrible. Well, I suppose if our families agree we'll have to make a 'match' of it! One thing he's never out of the pub, slurping Poteen. Perhaps he'll die early. There won't be any kids, so I'll inherit his half acre. I could be queen of McCreesh's Potato Patch. Here's a Crown. How do I look?

*[Crown of Thorns?] [She skips off.] [Jig music/Drum beat.]*

**ACT 2**

**Scene 3**

**CHOCTAW RESERVATION, AMERICA, 1849**

**Dawn Flower** Do we really have to leave our beautiful lands where we were born and brought up to the sound of the wild animals? the birds; the bison; the wild free horses? I remember my mother told me that we are not additions to this country, we are *part* of it. It *is* our people. Well, my name may be soft and sweet but my nature is like the sharp branches of the trees. It claws at the heart of injustice. We should *fight* these people who seek to take our lands.

**Night Bird** Patience, we *must* have patience. It's written that our people must suffer before we can come into our just inheritance. One day we'll return to this land. It belongs to us, not the intruders from over the seas.

**Dawn Flower** We should kill them and send them to their God in the sky.

**Night Bird** They will eventually kill themselves with greed. Be calm. Here comes the 'American General'.

**Dawn Flower** They look like 'people' but they are so pale. Is everyone pale cruel?

**Night Bird** No, we are all people, some are good, some bad, that's all.

**ACT 3            AMERICA IN 1849**

**Chief**            *[An old man of 80 years. He has been watching quietly the previous act with some of his men.]*

The year was 1831. That year is fixed in the hearts of all Choctaws from the oldest to the youngest in our tribe. It was a time of great upheaval and distress. A painful chapter in our history. I waited whilst the great 'Yankee' general marched into our camp.

**General**        Well Chief, greetings from our great Chief.

**Chief**            Greetings soldier.

**General**        Have you thought of what we said a month ago.

**Chief**            We have.

**General**        And?

**Chief**            And our elders have decided it is useless to resist the power of your army.

**General**        Progress, Chief, progress.

**Chief**            These lands were ours before the coming of the white man and one day we will return to them.

**General**        Another land awaits you in Oklahoma.

**Chief**            We are ready to make the long journey into our own future.

**General**        It's 500 miles Chief: That way. *[Exit.]*

**Chief**            We settled into the march: Many died: Many starved: Children were born: Children died. Old men and women, young men and women died far from their own lands.

*[Irish slow air fades in to drum beat lessening]*

And another people from far across the sea left their lands also to march to foreign lands to start a new life over land and across the sea.

**Men**            They are now our blood brothers.

**Chief**            Brothers in suffering. They marched barefoot, bareheaded to Delphi Lodge to beg for food.

*[Silent enactment of the Doolough marchers being turned away from Delphi.]*  
No food was available: The depots were closed: Death through starvation stared them in the face.

We entered a cabin. Stretched in one corner, scarcely visible from the smoke and rags that covered them, were three children huddled together, eyes sunk, voice gone and evidently in the last stages of starvation.

**Choctaw 1**     **They are white.**

**Chief**           **They are our brothers.**

**Choctaw 2**     **They took our land.**

**Chief**           **Brothers in pain.**

**Choctaw 1**     **They made us starve!**

**Chief**           **Brothers in suffering.**

**Choctaw 2**     **They will come to our land.**

**Chief**           **They will come as brothers.**

**Choctaw 1**     **Let us stretch our hands across the great ocean.**

**Chief**           **Brothers who now turn to us.**

**Choctaw 2**     **Let us give our new found wealth.**

**Choctaw 3**     **To help ... our brothers.**

**Chief and**  
**Men**           **Brothers of Doolough accept our small gift.**

**[Voice from**  
**off stage ]**     **'We do: we do: with thanks!'**

***[Slow air fades out.]***

**ACT 4            IRELAND 1990**

*[All previous characters from Ireland and America are now in 'modern dress'.]*

**PJ Murphy**      Today, as chairperson of the Doolough Council, I would like to welcome our 'brothers' from the USA. The Choctaws. *[Applause.]*

We call them brothers because well over a hundred years ago our families' ancestors were helped in their darkest hours of death and starvation by the fathers of this very tribe or clan. Over 700 dollars were collected then to help our town see the famine through. Today that amount would be worth 1 million dollars so Failte Cead Mile a thousand welcomes. *[Applause.]*

**Chief**            We have crossed the Atlantic Ocean to reach the arm of friendship to our friends and brothers in Ireland. Common suffering brought us together and our shared humanity keeps this band of friendship between our two different 'clans'. This band is not just for today but for all time. So let us begin the march from Doolough to Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge to Doolough.

**Cait**             The ghosts of all our ancestors will accompany us on the march. Remember, also the longer march in America when death and starvation gripped our people.

**People of  
Doolough**        But the hand of friendship and love restored life and peace and the wanderer settled once again in his own lands.

*[Irish music fades into the drum beat. Gifts are exchanged between the two nations.]*

*[The march commences with PJ Murphy and the chief joint head of it.]*

**ACT 5**      **TV STUDIO TODAY**  
**Scene 1**

**Newscaster 1** Well, that concludes our special feature on ‘Famine’ in the past. We hope it has made you aware of the connections between the past and the present. We can put somebody on the moon but we still seem incapable of stopping millions of people from starving. The reasons are often complex and puzzling. One thing, however, does give the world cause for hope. That is *the will to help*. Think of the Choctaws and think of the help you may have given to help the starving. Back over to the main studio.

**Newscaster 2** Well that ends our special news bulletin on this day. This was a day when the world’s leaders’ meeting in Berlin voted extra famine aid to the so called third world countries. We asked the question is it enough? And we leave you with the answer given by Maria, relief worker for Oxfam.

**Voice** It will *never* be enough but please, please keep caring and keep listening with your hearts as well as your heads.  
*[News music fades.]*  
*[Exit of presenter and newscaster.]*

*[Enter*      *The Doolough and Choctaw marchers. Silent, they face the audience.]*  
  
*[Irish/Choctaw drum music fades. The lights dim.]*

**ACT 5        TV STUDIO TODAY**  
**Scene 2**

***['From a Distance' is played. To the song all the cast assemble: Irish on one side, the native American on the other.]***

- (1) Both groups move to the centre - arms reaching out.**
- (2) March down the aisle and back round, leaving Corn Manager who hungrily eats bread on stage.**
- (3) They line up and beg for food. He ignores them and walks through their appealing arms.**
- (4) They march again helping each other along. They offer gifts to each other.**
- (5) Corn Manager returns: They retreat.**
- (6) He appeals for food. They ignore him.**
- (7) One breaks rans and offers him food.**
- (8) He joins the group.**
- (9) They put the gifts down.**
- (10) They offer signs of friendship.**
- (11) The group see the Star. [Spotlight.]**

# **Notes for Teachers**

## **Suggestions for Preparatory Work**

### **Stimulus**

- 1. Read the story of the 'Doolough March' to the class.**
- 2. Show the class the print(s) of the Van Gogh the 'Potato Eaters'.**
- 3. Play the taped 'slow air' 'Eamonn an Chnoic' for the class to listen to.**
- 4. Play the taped drum music for the class to listen to.**
- 5. Discuss then write down thoughts, moods, feelings.**

### **Improvisation**

- 1. Work in groups on the following theme:-**  
**'I have no food to give you.'**  
**(A group of starving people marching from place to place being refused food.)**
- 2. The potato crop has completely failed. (The news is given to a group of starving land dwellers).**
- 3. A Parliamentary debate: on one side MPs in favour of aid to Ireland against those who think it would not be necessary and/or too difficult to carry out in 1847.**

### **Preparation work**

- 1. Find out the distance of the Doolough March.**
- 2. Find out the distance of the Choctaw March.**
- 3. Find out the distance from Ireland to America.**
- 4. What forms of transport were available in 1847?**
- 5. What were roads like in Ireland in 1847?**
- 6. What sort of countryside did the Choctaws face on their march?**
- 7. Why do you think the Choctaws collected so much money to help people they did not know?**

- 8. Find out the differences between famine aid today and famine aid in 1847.**
- 9. Why did people starve in Ireland when the potato crop failed?**
- 10. What caused the potato blight?**
- 11. Find out a 'typical' day for an Irish labouring family in 1847.**
- 12. Compare this with a 'typical' day for a Choctaw.**

### **Creative Work**

- 1. Work on a script linking the Doolough March with the Choctaw March and famine in the world today.**
- 2. Design and make the Choctaw costumes.**
- 3. Design and make the Irish costumes.**
- 4. Organise the different 'music' tapes for the Choctaw and Irish elements of the script.**
- 5. Design and make all props for the presentation.**
- 6. Organise the scenery necessary for the Drama.**
- 7. Design and organise any special verbal effects.**
- 8. Allocate parts.**
- 9. Draw up a rehearsal schedule.**
- 10. Video the final presentation.**

# **Notes for Teachers**

## **The Doolough March**

### **Famine in Doolough**

**County Mayo was one of the worst areas affected by famine. Conditions were particularly bad in Doolough, a tiny community of farming people living in a remote part of County Mayo. Very few of the people who lived there survived the famine.**

**In desperation hundreds of people decided in March 1849 to walk from Doolough to the town of Louisburgh to try to obtain food. They walked many miles across rough and mountainous countryside. When they arrived at Louisburgh they were told that they would have to walk to Delphi Lodge which was some ten miles away, the next day. There they would meet people who could provide them with food.**

**That night they slept in the open fields. The weather was so cold and wet that many of them died from exposure and hunger. But, the next morning four hundred of them set out from Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge. Some were so weak from hunger, cold and dampness that they died by the roadside.**

**When they arrived at Delphi Lodge, they were told that there was no food for them. They had to begin the long march back to their own homes. During this return journey more than two hundred people died.**

### **The impact of the Doolough march**

**The experience of the people of Doolough Lake is just one example of what happened to many thousands of Irish people during the Great Famine. The Doolough march is, however, unique because some time later the story was heard by a tribe of American natives - the Choctaws.**

**They sympathised with the people of Doolough because in the year 1831 the Choctaws had been forced out of their own territory in southern Mississippi. They were forced to march five hundred miles to a new settlement in a remote part of Oklahoma.**

**When, in 1849, the Chief of the Choctaws heard about the march from Doolough to Louisburgh, the Choctaws still remembered their own long forced march from Mississippi to Oklahoma. They wanted to help the Irish people. So they collected 710 dollars from their members and sent the money to Ireland to help the victims of the famine. In today's money that would come to one million dollars.**

**Since then, there has been a close friendship between the people of Doolough and the Choctaws. In 1990 the present Chief of the Choctaws took part in the march from Doolough to Louisburgh to commemorate the victims of the famine.**