

FIFTEEN YEARS ON: AN EXAMINATION OF THE IRISH  
FAMINE CURRICULA IN  
NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies  
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## ABSTRACT

Fifteen Years On: An Examination of the Irish

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D. Litt. Dissertation by

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Since the early 1980s Holocaust education and genocide studies programs at the primary, secondary and post-secondary educational levels have become commonplace and an accepted element of public school curriculum. As these programs and their curricula gained acceptance within public education, efforts to increase awareness of genocidal events outside and beyond the European Holocaust as well as increased attention paid to ethnic studies programs have also gained traction in public schooling. These efforts manifested themselves in the mid to late 1990s to include the Great Irish Famine (1845 – 1852) as a sub-study of greater Holocaust/genocide studies in both the states of New Jersey and New York. More than ten years after the formal adoption of the official state-sponsored Great Irish Famine curricula, their impact, influence and utilization remain unclear. This paper examines the history behind the creation of both New Jersey and New York Famine Curricula, compares and contrasts the two documents, examines their use in both states' public schools, and suggests potential revisions to each Famine curriculum.

## Dedication

For Dawn, John and Abby...

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Any work examining the efficacy of the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum and the New York Irish Famine Curriculum needs to acknowledge the work of James Mullin. Mullin was the driving force behind the creation of the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum. Without his efforts there would be no study of the Irish Famine within the public schools of this state or many other states.

Dr. Maureen Murphy and Dr. Alan Singer of Hofstra University also deserve praise for their work on the creation of the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum. They were both faced with a herculean task in generating a workable document for teachers in New York State.

This paper will examine and criticize both documents. However, the individuals and their respective curriculum committees should be recognized for their pioneering work in the teaching of Irish history and culture. Without their first steps, no further work in examining the Irish condition in American public schools would be possible.

This paper would not have been possible without the support and guidance of Dr. Stephanie McGowan, Dr. Christine Kinealy and Dr. William Rogers.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980s Holocaust education and genocide studies programs at the primary, secondary and post-secondary educational levels have become commonplace and an accepted element of public school curriculum.<sup>1</sup> As these programs and their curricula gained acceptance within public education, efforts to increase awareness of genocidal events outside and beyond the European Holocaust and the development of ethnic studies programs have also gained traction in public schooling.<sup>2</sup> These efforts manifested themselves in the late 1990s to include the Great Irish Famine (1845 – 1852) as a sub-study of greater Holocaust/genocide studies in both the states of New Jersey and New York. More than ten years after the formal adoption of the official state-sponsored Great Irish Famine curricula, their impact, influence and efficacy remain unclear. The New York curriculum has been charged with “gathering dust” on library bookshelves throughout the state of New York, while the New Jersey curriculum did not appear on the state’s Holocaust/Genocide Resources Web Page until 2011, sixteen years after it was

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Bromley and Susan Garnett Russell, “The Holocaust as history and human rights: A cross-national analysis of Holocaust education in social science textbooks, 1970–2008,” *Prospects* 40 (2010), and “Genocide Claiming a Larger Place in Middle and High School Lessons,” *Education Week* 27, no. 9 (October 2007). See also Samuel Totten, “A Holocaust Curriculum Evaluation Instrument: Admirable Aim, Poor Result,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 148.

<sup>2</sup> Nalea J. Ko, *Educators Want High School Studies Pilot Program to Take Flight* 19 (January 2010), accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.pacficcitizen.org>, Kathleen McGrory, *Ethnic studies thrive in South Florida schools*, May 5, 2010, accessed April 5 2011,, <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/05/22/1642453/ethnic-studies-thrive-here.html> and Karen Riley and Samuel Totten, “Understanding Matters: Holocaust Curricula and the Social Studies Classroom,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 541.

formally adopted by the New Jersey Department of Education.<sup>3</sup>

This research will examine the appropriateness of the Great Irish Famine curricula within the Holocaust/genocide educational frameworks as established through legislative action in both states, investigate the various interpretations of the Irish Famine, examine the utilization of the current curricula within public education in both states, and suggest how both curricula could be improved and implemented. In examining the nature of the Irish Famine Curricula for both the states of New Jersey and New York, several questions present themselves. Firstly, is the Great Irish Famine an appropriate field of study within the greater subject of Holocaust/genocide educational programs? While the two Curricula have been in place for more than a decade in each state, the Famine's existence as a legitimate field of study under greater Holocaust/genocide frameworks was heavily questioned at both their initial proposal and during their final ratification and adoption. Secondly, if the Famine curricula are appropriately placed, are they being effectively utilized and implemented? This paper will examine the history of how the Irish Famine Curricula came into existence, compare and contrast the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum and the New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum, and survey teachers in both New York and New Jersey as to the utilization of each document.

Politics, politicians and political maneuvering were critical in the formulation of both state curricula.<sup>4</sup> Holocaust education had informally been part of New Jersey public

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<sup>3</sup> Jacquelyn Swearingen, "An Irish History Lesson Goes Untaught," Albany Times Union (Albany, NY), March 17, 2002, sec. A, 1. New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/curriculum/>.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Hernandez, "New Curriculum from Albany: the Irish Potato Famine, or One View of It," *Times* (New York, NY), December 1, 1996, [ 52], and Thomas J.

education since the early 1970s, when the drive for a curriculum exposing students to the devastation of the European Holocaust began to gather support amongst teachers, particularly teachers of social studies. Political leaders, as well as local community and religious leaders, had an impact on this movement. In 1981 Governor Thomas Kean, through executive order, supported the first official efforts to write and coordinate Holocaust education in New Jersey. The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education was divided into several subcommittees, one of which was a commission dedicated to the creation of curriculum. Its objective was to “facilitate the development, review, dissemination and evaluation of recommended curriculum on the Holocaust and genocide, and to recommend appropriate teacher education programs to ensure effective implementation of Holocaust and genocide curricula.”<sup>5</sup>

Efforts to guarantee and solidify Holocaust and genocide education were eventually codified. In 1991, Title 18-A of the New Jersey administrative code (the law that oversees public education) was amended to include the following language:

The Legislature finds and declares that:

- During the period from 1933 to 1945, six million Jews and millions of other Europeans were murdered in Nazi concentration camps as part of a carefully orchestrated program of cultural, social and political genocide known as the Holocaust;
- All people should remember the horrible atrocities committed at that time and other times in human history as the result of bigotry and tyranny and, therefore, should continually rededicate themselves to the principles of human rights and equal protection under the laws of a democratic society;

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Archdeacon, “The Irish Famine in American School Curriculum,” in *New Directions in Irish-American History*, ed. Kevin Keeney (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 280-302, and Elizabeth Llorente, “History or Propaganda? Genocide Studies; New Courses Tell Victims’ Side of Story,” *Bergen Record*, March 10, 1996, sec. A, 1.

<sup>5</sup> New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education. The Department of Education relates the story of the Commission on Holocaust Education here as well as their purpose. See: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/>

- It is desirable to educate our citizens about the events leading up to the Holocaust and about the organizations and facilities that were created and used purposefully for the systematic destruction of human beings;
- It is the policy of the State of New Jersey that Holocaust history is the proper concern of all people, particularly students enrolled in the schools of the State of New Jersey...<sup>6</sup>

Through the above language, the state mandated that every child that attended a public school (at some point in their kindergarten through senior year in high school) would be exposed to lessons that taught about the specific events of the European Holocaust. In 1994, the Commission endorsed other curricula that could be used in the study of genocide (which was part of the original legislation), including the Great Irish Famine, the Armenian Massacres, the Cambodian and Native American Genocides, along with the Ukrainian Famines.<sup>7</sup> That an Irish Famine curriculum exists at all in New Jersey is largely a result of the political pressure brought to bear on the New Jersey State legislature by James V. Mullin. Mullin is a lawyer, librarian and a supporter of teaching the Irish Famine within the context of the public schools. He chaired the committee that generated the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> New Jersey Permanent Statutes Database, A. Res. 18-A, 1992 Leg. (N.J. ). Accessed February 11, 2011, [http://lis.njleg.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/om\\_isapi.dll?clientID=1369911&Depth=2&TD=WRAP&advquery=Genocide&deph=4&expandheadings=on&headingswithhits=on&hitsperheading=on&infobase=statutes.nfo&rank=&record={8065}&softpage=Doc\\_Frame\\_PG42&wordsaroundhits=2&x=0&y=0&zz=](http://lis.njleg.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/om_isapi.dll?clientID=1369911&Depth=2&TD=WRAP&advquery=Genocide&deph=4&expandheadings=on&headingswithhits=on&hitsperheading=on&infobase=statutes.nfo&rank=&record={8065}&softpage=Doc_Frame_PG42&wordsaroundhits=2&x=0&y=0&zz=).

<sup>7</sup> New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, last modified 2004, accessed February 27, 2012, [http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/about\\_us/holocaust\\_ed.html](http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/about_us/holocaust_ed.html).

<sup>8</sup> This is the claim made by Mullin in a telephone interview conducted in 2008. However, Dr. Maureen Murphy of Hofstra also recognized Mullin's presence as well as Thomas J. Archdeacon. See: James V. Mullin, telephone interview by the author, April 7, 2008, and Maureen Murphy, telephone interview by the author, March 30, 2008 and Thomas J. Archdeacon, "The Irish Famine in American School Curriculum," in *New Directions in Irish-American History*, ed. Kevin Keeney (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 284.

The effort to make the Great Irish Famine an official element of state Holocaust/genocide frameworks came to fruition with the adoption of an official New Jersey curriculum in 1996. The committee charged with creating a Great Irish Famine Curriculum presented a 117-page document detailing the impact of the Famine, with particular attention paid to the role the British played in both their administration of Ireland and their lack of attention in effectively remedying the devastation of the Famine.<sup>9</sup> The dedication of the original document notes, “This curriculum is dedicated to the millions of Irish who suffered and perished in the Great Starvation. It is also dedicated to those who escaped by emigration, and to the great Irish Diaspora worldwide.”<sup>10</sup> New Jersey’s curriculum is a reflection of the Traditional/Nationalistic perspective of Irish history and the Irish Famine, and presents the view that the Irish Famine was as devastating as it was because of the bigoted, even racist views of the British overseers of Ireland in the hundreds of years prior to and during the worst years of the Famine.<sup>11</sup> New Jersey’s document utilizes evidence to present to students a view and an argument that the Great Irish Famine of the mid-nineteenth century could be interpreted as a genocidal event.<sup>12</sup>

#### The legislation mandating, funding and adopting New Jersey’s curriculum

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<sup>9</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996). Three years later, Mr. Mullin and his committee assembled a revised edition containing seven major units detailing the Irish Famine.

<sup>10</sup> *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, curriculum (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1999). This dedication appears in the revised edition.

<sup>11</sup> Specific interpretations of the Irish Famine and Irish History will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, curriculum (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1999). Little room exists within the document for a differing interpretation. This will be explored later in this paper.

received some negative attention, largely due to its placement within greater Holocaust/genocide studies education frameworks.<sup>13</sup> There was also negative reaction to the creation of a specific curriculum dedicated to a definite ethnic group: in this case, the Irish.<sup>14</sup> Critics suggested that the Irish and the study of the Irish Famine were given “special attention” over other cultures’ and sub-cultures’ experiences because of political reasons—specifically, to shore up Irish-American political support.<sup>15</sup> The nature of classifying the Irish Famine as a genocidal event, on par with the Holocaust of the 1930s and 1940s or the Armenian Massacres during World War I, drew additional criticism.<sup>16</sup> A 1996 article in the *Bergen Record* reported that several Jewish leaders and Holocaust educators were concerned that the presence of the Irish Famine document would cheapen the study of the Holocaust:

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<sup>13</sup> New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, last modified 2004, accessed February 27, 2012, [http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/about\\_us/holocaust\\_ed.html](http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/about_us/holocaust_ed.html). Reactions to the presence of the Famine Curricula are detailed in Thomas J. Archdeacon, “The Irish Famine in American School Curriculum,” in *New Directions in Irish-Amer History*, 280-302 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), and Elizabeth Llorente, “History or Propaganda? Genocide Studies; New Courses Tell Victims’ Side of Story,” *Bergen Record*, March 10, 1996, sec. A, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Among those critics was former United States Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch. Woody West, “You say potato, and they say Holocaust,” *Insight on the News*, March 10, 1997: 48.

<sup>15</sup> William B. Rogers, “The Great Hunger: Act of God or Acts of Man,” in *Ireland's Great Hunger*, ed. David A. Valone and Christine Kinealy (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 2002), 235.

<sup>16</sup> Historians and political figures questioned the nature of the Irish Famine inclusion under the respective states’ Holocaust Frameworks. Raymond Hernandez, “New Curriculum from Albany: the Irish Potato Famine, or One View of It,” *Times* (New York, NY), December 1, 1996, 52. See also Vincent Comerford, *Grievance, Scourge or Shame? The complexity of attitudes to Ireland's Great Famine to Holodomor and Gorta Mor: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, ed. Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen, and Vincent Comerford (New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2012), 68-69.

“[t]he biggest misgivings were over the inclusion of the Irish Famine in the genocide curriculum. Many Jewish community leaders – while backing the teaching of the Armenian genocide – argued that the Irish Famine was largely a natural disaster that the British exploited. They said they feared that including it would dilute the concept of genocide and, by extension, the horror of the Holocaust.”<sup>17</sup>

Yale economics professor Timothy Guinnane commented on the emergence in the 1990s of the Famine Curricula under Holocaust/genocide studies:

Students returning to high schools this fall will encounter another example of a recent and unwelcome development in public education. Several states have mandated that the Great Irish Famine of 1845-1850 be taught in their high schools as an example of genocide, sometimes in courses originally intended for the study of the Holocaust.

More states are considering enacting similar measures. These mandates reflect the efforts of a small number of Irish-American leaders who have pushed this line for ideological reasons. The reinterpretation of the famine as genocide has not been well-received by scholars who study the Irish famine. The mandates force schools to waste precious class time pushing an argument rejected by most historians.<sup>18</sup>

Luna Kaufman, survivor of the Krakow Ghetto and a founding member of the Commission on Holocaust Education, noted that the presence of an escape route from Ireland to other nations allowed the Irish a degree of hope that the Jews trapped in Hitler’s Europe did not possess.<sup>19</sup> In her mind (and perhaps others’ minds, as well), this element of the Irish Famine’s nature prevented the Famine from being accurately classified as genocide. The New Jersey Commission defended the curriculum.

“In some things, there isn’t a balance,” said Paul Winkler, executive director of the Holocaust Education Commission. “There aren’t two sides.”...The commission and the guides’ authors maintain the accounts accurate, the facts and figures checked, rechecked and documented. Although activists and special-

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<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Llorente, “History or Propaganda? Genocide Studies; New Courses Tell Victims’ Side of Story,” *Bergen Record*, March 10, 1996, sec. A, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Guinnane, “Ireland’s Famine Wasn’t Genocide,” *Tulsa World* (Tulsa, OK), September 19, 1997, Final edition, sec. A, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Archdeacon, “The Irish Famine in American” in *New Directions in Irish-American*, 280 – 302.

interest groups were involved in writing some curricula—and lobbied hard to get their stories approved for classroom instruction—the groups and the commission say scholars and other experts confirmed their accuracy.<sup>20</sup>

Mullin noted at the time of the adoption, “No one will try to argue that [the Irish curriculum] is impartial. When you have a group of people with a tragic history, like the Irish and the Famine, a history they haven’t been able to properly share with others, you’re going to have emotion.”<sup>21</sup> Despite the criticisms associated with the curriculum, it was accepted by the New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission and approved by the State Department of Education. It was printed and distributed to the public schools by the autumn of 1997, with a revision written in 1999 that added some elements of Irish poetry.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time that the New Jersey State Department of Education was approving and distributing its Irish Famine Curriculum to its public schools, the New York State Assembly approved funding and the creation of its own state curriculum examining the Great Irish Famine. The new Famine curriculum was to be created under the 1994 state law that dictated that students be exposed to “human rights violations with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery and the Holocaust.”<sup>23</sup> Article 17, Section 801 New York State’s Education code specifically deals with the instruction of human rights education as part of the goal of patriotic instruction.

In order to promote a spirit of patriotic and civic service and obligation and to foster in the children of the state moral and intellectual qualities which are

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<sup>20</sup> Llorente, “History or Propaganda? Genocide,” sec. A, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Llorente, “History or Propaganda? Genocide,” sec. A, 1.

<sup>22</sup> That revision is not available on the New Jersey Holocaust Commission web page. For that reason, the original document will be referenced in this work.

<sup>23</sup> Hernandez, “New Curriculum from Albany,” 52.

essential in preparing to meet the obligations of citizenship in peace or in war, the regents of The University of the State of New York shall prescribe courses of instruction in patriotism, citizenship, and human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery (including the freedom trail and underground railroad), the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850, to be maintained and followed in all the schools of the state. The boards of education and trustees of the several cities and school districts of the state shall require instruction to be given in such courses, by the teachers employed in the schools therein. All pupils attending such schools, over the age of eight years, shall attend upon such instruction.<sup>24</sup>

New York State Assemblyman Joseph Crowley, a Democrat from Queens, originally proposed the New York Irish Famine Curriculum.<sup>25</sup> The debate surrounding the inclusion of the Irish Famine as part of greater Holocaust/genocide Education was contentious. The *New York Times* noted that the debate that this curriculum sparked was “one of the most heated debates in the New York State Legislature” during the 1996 session.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the criticisms were made on philosophical grounds; many in New York were upset that “big government” was intruding into the local school boards, noting that this was only the sixth time in the twentieth century that the New York Assembly mandated instruction in public schools.<sup>27</sup> Other criticisms came from political opposition of Crowley. Republican politician John J. Faso felt that Crowley (who represented a

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<sup>24</sup> Laws of New York, last modified 2013, accessed January 2, 2014, <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menugtf.cgi?COMMONQUERY=LAWS>.

<sup>25</sup> Congressman Joseph Crowley, last modified September 2012, accessed September 18, 2012, <http://crowley.house.gov/about-me> (accessed September 18, 2012). Crowley is now a member of the United States House of Representatives.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond Hernandez, “New Curriculum from Albany: the Irish Potato Famine, or One View of It,” *Times* (New York, NY), December 1, 1996, 52.

<sup>27</sup> While there were certainly critics of the existence of a New York State Famine Curriculum due to its very association with genocide, James Mullin was open in his criticism of the New York Famine Curriculum for letting the British “off easy” in regards to the charges of genocide. Tom Deignan, “SIDEwalks: Famine Curriculum Under Fire Again,” *Irish Voice*, April 16, 2002, 8, and Hernandez, “New Curriculum from Albany,” 52.

largely Irish-American district in Queens) was pandering to his ethnic supporters.<sup>28</sup> Faso commented, “I suppose if we had a large Cambodian population, we could expect a law mandating lessons about the horrors of Pol Pot.”<sup>29</sup> Nationally syndicated conservative columnist George Will opined that the creation of the Famine Curriculum was an effort to establish “self-esteem” for Irish-Americans.<sup>30</sup>

Eventually the bill providing for creation of the curriculum (and the important funding that it would need) passed the New York State Assembly. A committee of more than fifty individuals, led by Dr. Maureen Murphy of Hofstra University, spent the next five years and eventually \$300,000 to generate and field test a curriculum of over one thousand pages that would be utilized in a public school setting.<sup>31</sup> The objective of the committee was to generate a document that would examine the Famine beyond the Irish and Irish-American experience. Murphy was quoted in a New York *Times* story: “[t]his is not a self-serving ethnic kind of thing,” she said. “We’re trying to do much broader things.”<sup>32</sup> The framers believed that the greater purpose behind the curriculum could be to teach important lessons about fighting hunger and poverty in the twenty-first century.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> National Journal notes that 4.5% of the district is of Irish ancestry – although the same source notes that 9.5% of the same district is of Italian background. See: “National Journal Almanac - NY 7th Congressional District,” *National Journal*, 2011, , accessed September 18, 2012, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/almanac/2010/area/ny/07>. Faso later ran for Governor in 2006, losing to Eliot Spitzer.

<sup>29</sup> Hernandez, “New Curriculum from Albany,” 52.

<sup>30</sup> George Will, “Teaching Potato Famine May be Just an Exercise in Therapeutic History,” *Times-Union* (Albany, NY), November 1996, sec. E, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Hernandez, “New Curriculum from Albany,” 52.

<sup>32</sup> Kate Zernike, “Using the Irish Famine to Explore Current Events,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), March 21, 2001, sec. B, 7. Both Murphy and Alan Singer (also of Hofstra) advocated this view in a September, 2001 article for *Social Education*. Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer, “Asking the BIG Questions: Teaching about the Great Irish Famine and World History,” *Social Education* 65, no. 5 (September 2001): 286-287.

<sup>33</sup> Archdeacon, “The Irish Famine in American,” in *New Directions in Irish-*

There was opposition to the initial legislation in 1996, as there was intense reaction to the publication of the finished curriculum in 2001. The London *Times* noted in a headline that “Irish famine compared to the Holocaust; New York schools to study ‘evil of Britain.’”<sup>34</sup> Then-ambassador to the United States from the United Kingdom, Sir John Kerr, noted his objections to the curriculum through formal protests in both the print media and through the United States Department of State.<sup>35</sup> Five years after the publication of the New York Famine Curriculum the London *Times* maintained that the teaching of the Famine as genocide in the United States was the equivalent of Islamist terrorist cells existing within Britain.<sup>36</sup>

The New York Famine Curriculum weighs in at over one thousand pages in length. As Dr. Murphy noted, this curriculum examines the Famine in the context of poverty hunger, homelessness, economic deprivation and how those forces shape a people’s existence.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the New Jersey curriculum (which maintains British responsibility for the devastation of the Famine), New York’s Irish Famine Curriculum does not directly hold the British responsible for the devastation wrought upon Ireland by the British; it allows for students to draw their own conclusions about the British role in

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*American*, 280-302, & Murphy and Singer, “Asking the BIG Questions,” 286-291.

<sup>34</sup> Quentin Letts, “Irish famine compared to the Holocaust; New York schools to study ‘evil of Britain’,” *The Times of London*, October 10, 1996: 16.

<sup>35</sup> See: Henderson, Michael. “My mother apologized to an Irish senator.” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 3, 1996, 19-19.

<sup>36</sup> Dean Godson, “The feeble helping the unspeakable; Comment,” *The Times, London*, April 5, 2006: 19.

<sup>37</sup> Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer, “Asking the BIG Questions: Teaching about the Great Irish Famine and World History,” *Social Education* 65, no. 5 (September 2001): 286-291.

perpetuating the Famine or creating conditions that enabled it to happen.<sup>38</sup> The curriculum examines the influence of the Famine by comparing Ireland before, during and after the Famine years. The two curricula present a stark contrast in size, scope, presentation, and, most significantly, interpretation as to the nature of the Irish Famine as a genocidal event.

New York became the second state to generate a specific curriculum dedicated to the experiences of the Irish Famine. Connecticut would follow later—although it created a much more concise “Teacher Resource Guide” rather than a full curriculum.<sup>39</sup> Given the high number of Irish Americans who reside in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, the fact that those states have Irish Famine curricula is rather unsurprising.<sup>40</sup> The presence of rival Famine curricula in two neighboring states might have been the impetus for other states to develop their own models. It appeared in the late 1990s and early 2000s that there was a groundswell of support for Irish Famine curriculum in the nation’s public education systems. New Jersey may have led the movement and New York soon followed, but Illinois, California, Maryland and Massachusetts also saw efforts to

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<sup>38</sup> New York State Department of Education, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, Curriculum (Albany, NY: State Education of New York, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Kathleen Hunter and Michael Yanson, eds., *The Irish: The Great Hunger and Irish Immigration to America* (Hartford, CT: Connecticut State Department of Education, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> The US government estimates that New Jersey’s Irish-American population in 2010 was approximately 1.3 million people, while New York’s Irish-American population was approximately 2.5 million. Connecticut’s Irish-American population was a little under 600,000 people. This would indicate that the Tri-State area has a total Irish-American population of 4.4 million out of a nation-wide Irish-American population of about 35 million people. See: American Fact Finder, last modified 2012, accessed January 2012, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>. In addition, Irish Central.com noted in an article that Spring Lake, NJ was fighting to be recognized as the most Irish city in the United States, see: Patrick Roberts, “New battle over most Irish town in America - SEE POLL,” Irish Central, last modified January 12, 2012, accessed January 19, 2012, <http://www.irishcentral.com/news/>.

increase awareness about the Irish Famine and to increase attention to Irish culture and history in their public schools.<sup>41</sup> Those efforts did not yield major curricular innovations in the study of the Irish Famine.

The reasoning behind this increase in attention paid to the Famine is unclear. The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Famine likely generated a good deal of interest in the Famine's legacy and generated interest in studying the Famine.<sup>42</sup> Historians noted that the anniversary "has classified the rapid spread of the recovered (famine) memory as hysterical disturbance, suggesting that recovered memories of abuse provide an external source, comparable to alien abduction or chemical warfare, to which hysterical patients can transfer responsibility for their psychic problems."<sup>43</sup> In 1994 the Irish Famine Memorial Museum opened in Strokestown, County Roscommon, also likely spurring interest in the Famine.<sup>44</sup> Once that anniversary passed, the motivation behind the creation of Famine curriculum outside New Jersey and New York might have dissipated, providing an explanation as to why the support for Irish Famine curricula faded.

While the Famine's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the 1990s was a strong motivating factor for the creation of Famine curricula, one should not ignore the American popular culture

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<sup>41</sup> Kevin Cullen, *Irish famine returns to table talk Blight: 'Black '47' refers to the worst year of the potato blight. 1847. Many Irish tried to survive by emigrating to America, particularly Boston, where a raised consciousness of Black '47 has taken hold.* - *Baltimore Sun*, August 30, 1998, [http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1997-08-30/news/1997242008\\_1\\_irish-famine-famine-refugees-metropolitan-boston](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1997-08-30/news/1997242008_1_irish-famine-famine-refugees-metropolitan-boston) (accessed February 22, 2012) and Ed Forry, "Massachusetts House Bill Presses for Famine, Genocide Curriculum," *Boston Irish Reporter*, April 1, 1997, 12.

<sup>42</sup> Scott Brewster and Virginia Crossman, "Re-writing the Famine: Witnessing the Crisis," in *Ireland in Proximity: History, Gender and Space*, 42-52 (New York, New York: Routledge, 1999), and Mary E. Daly, "Historians and the Famine: A Beleaguered Species?," *Irish Historical Studies* 30, no. 120 (November 1997): 591.

<sup>43</sup> Brewster and Crossman, *Ireland in Proximity: History*, 42-52.

<sup>44</sup> Strokestown Park: The Irish National Famine Museum, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://www.strokestownpark.ie>

landscape of the 1990s as an equally important factor. One can trace a definite increase in Irish presence in American popular culture between 1992 and 2002. In that time period, several films with Irish and Irish-American themes were released. These include, but are not limited to: *Far and Away* and *Patriot Games* (1992), *In the Name of the Father* (1993), *Blown Away* (1994), *Circle of Friends* (1995), *Michael Collins* (1996), *The Devil's Own* and *The Boxer* (1997), *Waking Ned Devine* (1998), and *Gangs of New York* (2002). To add to this cinematic exploration of Irish and Irish-America one could add the films *Rudy* (1993) and *The Brothers McMullen* (1995).

Movies were not the only cultural phenomena that sought to examine Irish identity (and perhaps capitalize on Irish-American identity) between 1992 and 2002. Thomas Cahill's best-selling book *How the Irish Saved Civilization* was published in 1996.<sup>45</sup> Frank McCourt's memoir of his hardscrabble Irish life, *Angela's Ashes*, also was published in 1996, with a film adaptation released in 1999.<sup>46</sup> In 1998, the Irish Tenors were formed, glomming some measure of success from the "Three Tenors" that performed at the World Cup Finals in 1998.<sup>47</sup> Member Ronan Tynan still occasionally sings "God Bless America" at New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox games, and has been contracted by the National Hockey League's Buffalo Sabres to continue this practice.<sup>48</sup> WNBC-TV began a regular broadcast of the New York St. Patrick's Day

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1996).

<sup>46</sup> Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), and *Angela's Ashes*, produced by David Brown, Paramount, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Biography of the Irish Tenors, last modified 2012, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.theirishtenorsmusic.com/biography.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Ronan Tynan Associations, last modified 2014, accessed February 19, 2014, <http://ronantynan.net/associations/>.

Parade, which previously had been relegated to un-affiliated New York television station WPIX for nearly half a century.<sup>49</sup> Celtic musicians *The Chieftains* released thirteen albums between 1992 and 2002.<sup>50</sup> The Public Broadcasting Service aired the Walt Disney-produced documentary *The Irish in America: Long Journey Home* in 1998.<sup>51</sup> Even *Busch Gardens* in Williamsburg, Virginia changed its United Kingdom-themed area into an Irish-themed area in 2001.<sup>52</sup> And one cannot underestimate the global impact of the theatre production *Riverdance*, which began touring in 1994.<sup>53</sup>

That this was a popular cultural movement affecting and elevating a whole ethnicity is a plausible interpretation. Irish historian Roy Foster derisively noted in an interview with the *Boston Globe*, “Irish nostalgia sells, all right. The green brings in the green.”<sup>54</sup> One could interpret the above events and phenomena as a desire amongst a group of people to connect to a past they did not fully know or understand. Against that backdrop, one could see why political leaders wanted to incorporate into public education a lasting element of the history and culture of Irish Americans. Or one could interpret the

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<sup>49</sup> John J. O’Connor, “TV: 35th St. Patrick’s Day for Jack McCarthy,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), March 16, 1983, sec. C, 27 and “The St. Patrick’s Parade Marches from Ch. 11 to Ch. 4,” *New York Daily News* (New York, NY), December 9, 1997, 80.

<sup>50</sup> The Chieftains Discography, last modified 2014, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.thechieftains.com/main/>.

<sup>51</sup> *The Irish in America: Long Journey Home*, 1998, produced by The Walt Disney Company.

<sup>52</sup> “Ireland,” *The Unofficial Guide to Busch Gardens Williamsburg* (blog), entry posted 2013, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://unofficialbgw.blogspot.com/2013/11/ireland.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Anna Kisselgoff, “DANCE REVIEW; Irish Steps and Their Kin,” *New York Times Arts*, last modified March 15, 1995, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/15/arts/dance-review-irish-steps-and-their-kin.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Shea, “Tisn’t. An Irish Historian Exposes His Country’s mythmaking from the Great Potato Famine to *Angela’s Ashes* Dublin is Distressed,” *Globe* (Boston, MA), September 15, 2002, sec. E, 1, accessed July 9, 2013.

popular cultural developments of the late 1990s as a fad that worked their way into American public education; once the fad ended, the desire to produce educational materials ended.

Another reason could be political pushback against ethnic-centered studies programs and curriculum that was viewed as “multicultural.” Evidence of this pushback could be seen in the actions of Arizona governor Jan Brewer in 2011, when she signed into law a bill that would outlaw the teaching of ethnic studies or the teaching of subject material dedicated to exploring only one particular ethnic group within the Arizona public schools.<sup>55</sup> The Arizona legislation was passed in part to eliminate what a few educators saw as a divisive and angry manner present in the students (particularly Latino-American students) who took that particular course of study. One teacher who taught students in the ethnic studies programs in Tucson’s Unified School District before they were defunded indicated that he witnessed that angry tone on the part of his students: “[That class] taught them not to trust their teachers, not to trust the system. They taught them the system wasn’t worth trusting.”<sup>56</sup> There were also criticisms over the nature of the materials used within the teaching of the ethnic studies program; in particular, textbooks were used that maintained that the United States was an imperial power and had been guilty of racist behavior in regard to its Latino citizens.<sup>57</sup> Arizona has been the

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<sup>55</sup> Nicole Santa Cruz, *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/may/12/nation/la-na-ethnic-studies-20100512> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Doug MacEahern, *Ethnic Studies program at Tucson High School, Part II*, February 3, 2008, accessed April 6, 2011, <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/opinions/articles/0202vip-maceachern0203.html>.

<sup>57</sup> See Doug MacEahern, *Ethnic Studies program at Tucson High School, Part II*, and Nicole Santa Cruz, “Arizona Bill Targeting Ethnic Studies Signed Into Law,” *Los*

center of heated political discussion over immigration and alleged ethnic and racial profiling.<sup>58</sup> While the critics of the Latino Studies Program in Arizona were careful to avoid racial or ethnic buzzwords that could lead to charges of racism, supporters of the program maintained that the attack on the ethnic studies program was less about education and more about weakening the influence of Latino people and culture within the Arizona community: “Augustine Romero, director of student equity in the Tucson school district, said it now had become politically acceptable to attack Latinos in Arizona.”<sup>59</sup> The cancellation of the Latino Studies Program in Arizona demonstrates how politics influences and shapes public school curriculum. The cancellation may provide a rationale as to why curricula specifically dedicated to the Irish Famine failed to germinate in states outside of New Jersey and New York.

The Latino Ethnic Studies Program in Arizona and the Irish Famine Curriculum are not the only examples of politics and education coming into conflict. Nor are they the only examples of the questions of multiculturalism within a greater school curriculum. In 2004 the state of New Jersey adopted a curriculum examining the Armenian Genocides perpetuated by the Ottoman Empire during World War I.<sup>60</sup> This has provoked some strong reactions from Turkish cultural groups both inside and outside New Jersey. The state of Massachusetts saw its Armenian Genocide curriculum the subject of a protracted

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*Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), May 12, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> In April 2010 Brewer also signed into law the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act. This act quickly became identified as the “Show me your papers” law. See: Alex Seitz-Wald, “How Breitbart and Arizona seized on “critical race theory”,” Salon.com, last modified March 21, 2012, accessed July 9, 2013, [http://www.salon.com/2012/03/21/how\\_breitbart\\_and\\_arizona\\_seized\\_on\\_critical\\_race\\_theory/singleton](http://www.salon.com/2012/03/21/how_breitbart_and_arizona_seized_on_critical_race_theory/singleton).

<sup>59</sup> Santa Cruz, “Arizona Bill Targeting Ethnic,”

<sup>60</sup> *Crimes against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, 2004).

court dispute between state education officials and Turkish cultural groups.<sup>61</sup> It is possible that the political landscape of the late 1990s and early 2000s shifted with regard to support for school programs that examined the history of one particular group of people. This shift could explain why the drive for curriculum dedicated to the Irish Famine ended rather suddenly in the early to mid 2000s.

Whatever the reason behind the creation of the Irish Famine curricula, or the failure of such curricula to come into existence in other states, their use is still unclear. This paper will address their use in the public schools in both states and will examine if the placement of the Irish Famine within greater Holocaust Education mandates is appropriate. The next chapter will examine the various interpretations of the Irish Famine and how those interpretations influence teaching of the Famine.

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<sup>61</sup> Sheri Quarters, "1st Circuit: Removal of Curriculum Guide of Materials Disputing Armenian Genocide Not First Amendment Violation," Law.com, last modified June 25, 2005, <http://www.law.com/jsp?id=1202466318579>, and "State of New Jersey announces New Armenian Genocide Curriculum," Facing History and Ourselves, last modified June 25, 2005, accessed April 5, 2011, [http://www.facinghistory.org/content/state\\_new\\_jersey\\_announces\\_new\\_armenian\\_genocide\\_curriculum](http://www.facinghistory.org/content/state_new_jersey_announces_new_armenian_genocide_curriculum).

## CHAPTER 2

### INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IRISH FAMINE

Classifying the Irish Famine as genocide or a genocidal event has generated some controversy, not only among political figures (as evidenced in Chapter 1) but among historians, as well. Irish economic historian Cormac Ó Gráda noted that “no academic historian” maintains that the Famine was genocide.<sup>1</sup> Other writers, professors, journalists and historians, however, maintain that the Irish Famine can be described as genocide or at least an attempted genocide, although those experts tend to be largely sociologists, professors of genocide studies, and popular (rather than professional or academic) historians.<sup>2</sup> It is these writers who have pushed the argument forward that the Irish Famine could be considered genocidal. This disagreement over the classification of the Irish Famine has sparked a debate over the placement of Irish Famine curricula under greater Holocaust/genocide educational mandates.

The debate over the placement of the study of the Irish Famine under the field of Holocaust Education and Genocide Studies raises some questions that need to be addressed. First, what constitutes genocide? Second, does the Irish Famine meet the definitions of genocide or attempted genocide? Third, what is the purpose of Holocaust Education and Genocide Studies, and where does the Irish Famine narrative fit within that purpose? Fourth, if the Famine fails to meet the standards of genocide established by various experts, does that necessarily disqualify the Famine from a place of significance

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<sup>1</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), and Cormac Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, “Making Irish Famine History in 1995,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 42 (Autumn 1996): 87-104.

and study within the New Jersey and New York Holocaust and Genocide Studies frameworks? Finally, if the Famine meets the “lesser” standard of a massive violation of human rights, then is it a justified topic of examination under the Holocaust Education/Genocide Studies frameworks as established by each state?<sup>3</sup>

The above questions are not simply academic or philosophical, for they provide justification for the existence of a curriculum dedicated specifically to the historical experiences of one specific group of people. Additionally, one wonders how a politician or educator could argue that an attempted genocide or human rights violation would not be worthy of examination in a public education setting. If the Famine is classified as a natural disaster that struck one particular group of Europeans more virulently than other peoples, perhaps its place in a crowded field of social studies education is not warranted.<sup>4</sup> How one chooses to interpret the Famine and how those interpretations manifest themselves in school curriculum are important considerations. This chapter will examine the main interpretative perspectives of the Irish Famine.

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<sup>3</sup> What to include or exclude in regard to common curriculum has been a subject of discussion and debate. At roughly the same time the Irish Famine Curriculum became subject for debate in New Jersey and New York, Education Professor E.D. Hirsch began advocating for a common curriculum. John O’Neil, “Core Knowledge & Standards: A Conversation With E.D. Hirsch,” *Educational Leadership*, March 1999, 28 – 31. David Shiman and William Fernekes maintain that the “studies of Holocaust, genocide and human rights are inseparable.” David A. Shiman and William R. Fernekes, “The Holocaust, Human Rights, and Democratic Citizenship Education,” *The Social Studies*, March/April 1999, 53. Irish historian Mary Daly, however, cautions against the historical or literary similarities between the Irish Famine and the Bengal Famine, the Holocaust or African slavery. Mary E. Daly, “Historians and the Famine: A Beleaguered Species?,” *Irish Historical Studies* 30, no. 120 (November 1997): 600.

<sup>4</sup> “Social studies will never be lacking for content! A major challenge facing this field of study is the ever-increasing amount of information. For this reason the authors of this guide encouraged an even greater focus on the big ideas and major concepts of social studies.” Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction, Planning Curriculum in Social Studies, at 306 (Wis. 2001).

Interpreting the Famine as a historical event bears direct influence on how the Famine is to be taught to students. Amongst Irish historians (if not American historians of Irish descent) the Famine is a particularly difficult event about which to find an interpretive consensus.<sup>5</sup> Generally, there are three major interpretive perspectives of the Great Irish Famine: a Traditional/Nationalistic perspective, a Revisionist view and a Post-Revisionist interpretation.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, there are perspectives that fall in between these views, as well as views that do not neatly fit into any general perspective.

The first interpretation of the Famine originated with the Irish people and their descendants who lived through the Great Famine and remained in Ireland or emigrated to other nations. Their collective memories, traditions, and myths created the first historical interpretations of the Famine as a destructive yet transformative event of Irish culture. While not necessarily academic in nature and heavily reliant upon folklore and memory as evidence, the Traditional/Nationalist perspective has created the “common perception” among some Irish and Irish Americans that the Famine was a result of British action (or inaction), and that the British bear at least some responsibility for the Famine’s impact on Ireland.<sup>7</sup> The idea of British responsibility for the Famine’s devastation is perhaps best

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<sup>5</sup> Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine 1845-1919* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>6</sup> New KS3 History PoS: Famine & emigration, accessed December 16, 2013, [http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3\\_Famine\\_Interpretations.pdf](http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3_Famine_Interpretations.pdf), , and Lori Henderson, “The Irish Famine: A Historiographical Review,” *Historia* 14 (2005): 133-140, and Kevin Whelan, “The Revisionist Debate in Ireland,” *boundary 2* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 179-205.

<sup>7</sup> Henderson, “The Irish Famine: A Historiographical,” 134, and Niall Ó Ciosáin, “Famine Memory and the popular representation of scarcity,” in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 2001), 99. William B. Rogers, “The Great Hunger: Act of God or Acts of Man,” in *Ireland's Great Hunger*, by David A. Valone and Christine Kinealy (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002), 237.

summarized in the statement of Irish nationalist leader John Mitchel (1815 – 1875), who famously remarked in his book, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*, “the Almighty brought the (potato) blight, the British created the Famine.”<sup>8</sup>

Not everyone who subscribes to the Traditional/Nationalist viewpoint agrees that the British were guilty of committing genocide, particularly since the concept of genocide had not yet been developed when the views of this perspective were being formed. Cecil Woodham-Smith’s seminal work *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845 – 1849*, falls short of indicting the British with an effort to wipe out the Irish population.<sup>9</sup> More recently Tim Pat Coogan, in his rather emotional book, *The Famine Plot: England’s Role in Ireland’s Greatest Tragedy*, makes an impassioned (if not an entirely academic) argument for British guilt in perpetuating genocide.<sup>10</sup> Coogan’s work reflects a passionate argument that the British behavior before and during the Famine generated genocidal conditions in Ireland. While Coogan has driven the argument that the Famine can be viewed (or at least from Coogan’s perspective, should be viewed) as genocide, he is not a historian per se, but rather a history writer.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the disagreement with respect to genocide, the members of the Traditional/Nationalist perspective would agree that the Famine’s impact on the Ireland would not have been as devastating as it was if Ireland was not a colonized territory

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<sup>8</sup> New KS3 History PoS: Famine & emigration, accessed December 16, 2013, [http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3\\_Famine\\_Interpretations.pdf](http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3_Famine_Interpretations.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Cecil Woodham Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland, 1845-1849* (London: Penguin, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England’s Role in Ireland’s Greatest Tragedy* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> This is an important element to remember when considering the work of Coogan and others who may push historical arguments and perspectives forward. While politicians, reporters, writers and pundits may shape arguments that determine curricula, their historical expertise should be considered when those arguments are made.

within a British imperial system. Irish-American historian Dennis Clark notes that the Famine was “the culmination of generations of neglect, misrule, and repression. It was an epic of English colonial cruelty and inadequacy.”<sup>12</sup> For the landless cabin dwellers it meant emigration or extinction.”<sup>13</sup>

It is within this perspective that the “Famine-as-genocide” view emerges. While many of the Traditional/Nationalistic interpreters do not believe that the British were guilty of biological warfare or outright genocide, the proponents of “Famine-as-genocide” tend to fall within this perspective. Traditionalist/Nationalistic interpreters hold that the British political administration of Ireland and the imposition of socially-and religiously-based discriminatory laws weakened the political, economic and social standing of the Irish people and created a weakened population that depended upon the potato as a staple crop.<sup>14</sup> While the potato blight struck many nations in Europe and the United States, it was the Irish that suffered disproportionately when compared to those

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<sup>12</sup> This interpretation of Ireland as a colonized power does not sit well with other scholars, notably Denis Donoghue. Denis Donoghue, “Fears for Irish studies in an age of identity politics,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 41, no. 13 (November 21, 1997): B5.

<sup>13</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996), 104. Historian Thomas J. Archdeacon notes, however, that Clark argues that the British actions do not meet the criterion of genocide, see: Thomas J. Archdeacon, “The Irish Famine in American School Curriculum,” in *New Directions in Irish-American History*, ed. Kevin Keeney (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 297.

<sup>14</sup> The Penal Laws were passed by British Parliament in the sixteenth through seventeenth centuries and prevented Irish Catholics from fully participating in political, social and economic life of Ireland as it was administered by the English and British. The Statutes of Kilkenny were passed during the fourteenth century and were designed to limit land-holding in Ireland to the English and preserve the English culture among English settlers in Ireland. See: Religion-The Penal Laws, accessed November 11, 2013, <http://www.ancestryireland.com/history-of-the-irish-parliament/background-to-the-statutes/religion/>, and, Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England's*, 45.

other nations.<sup>15</sup> The reason why the Irish suffered so disproportionately, according to the Traditionalist view, is that the Irish people were already victims of discriminatory treatment at the hands of their British overseers. The Irish, the argument unwinds, were a colonized people, similar to Indians or Africans, and the blight caused greater than “normal” damage to the Irish because of their low status within the British imperial system.<sup>16</sup> Proponents of the “Famine-as-genocide” view are a sub-group within this larger collective.

Another argument advanced by the pro-genocide camp is that the British saw the presence of the potato blight and subsequent hunger and disease as an opportunity to re-shape Irish cultural, political and economic realities. Coogan, certainly an advocate of the “Famine-as-genocide” view, quotes British administrator and Famine-relief head Charles Trevelyan in *The Famine Plot*: “The judgement (sic) of God sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson, that calamity must not be too much mitigated. . . . The real evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the

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<sup>15</sup> Eric Vanhaute, Richard Paping, and Cormac Ó Gráda, “The European subsistence crisis of 1845-1850: a comparative perspective,” in *International Economic History Congress* (Helsinki, Finland: n.p., 2006), 1-31. Ó Gráda, Vanhaute and Paping discuss the differences between the potato blight’s impact on Ireland as compared to other states in Western Europe. They note that while population growth in other European nations slowed or decreased in the Famine years for many European nation-states, it was Ireland that saw negative population growth during those years. According to their statistics, Ireland saw a population decrease of more than 17% during the Famine years.

<sup>16</sup> “By 1604 the English saw Ireland and America as similar targets of overseas expansion and in their minds linked the two lands geographically. As they looked out at the world beyond England, they saw a single arc of overseas territories suitable for colonization sweeping out from their own island...It was natural for the English to consider nearby Ireland...as the first and primary object of their colonization efforts in the early seventeenth century.” Bernard Bailyn, *The Great Republic: A History of the American People*, 4th ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1992), 1-25.

selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the people.”<sup>17</sup> Coogan ends his book with the following:

The Irish peasants, if they were considered at all, rated no higher than *Untermenschen*. Cromwell regarded the slaughter of Catholics not as a matter to trouble the conscience but as an act for the glory of God. Trevelyan was not a mere civil servant; he was the architect and executor of government policy, a policy that sheltered behind the economic dogma that the laws of business were the laws of God. . . . Certainly in the years 1846–1851 responsible Whig decision makers were complicit in genocide and did direct public incitement, as the columns of *The Times* sadly confirm only too well, toward furthering that end. Just as there are those who still attempt to deny man’s role in global warming, there are those who would still attempt to defend the Whigs’ role on the grounds that the UN Convention on Genocide stems from 1948, not 1848. To them I end by saying there is another, even older command on which the UN declaration draws, and it is not disputed: *Thou shalt not kill*.<sup>18</sup>

For “Famine-as-genocide” supporters, this view generates a connection between British action and the earliest concepts of genocide: specifically, that the British viewed an opportunity to effectively change the nature of Irish political, social and economic and religious existence—in effect ending their culture. This is the view of International Law Professor Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois Chicago Law School.<sup>19</sup> Writer and

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England’s Role in Ireland’s Greatest Tragedy* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 63 - 64.

<sup>18</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England’s Role in Ireland’s Greatest Tragedy* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Kindle Location 4055-4059 and 4045-4048. Coogan also enlists the support of noted British historian A. J. P. Taylor in his support for the “famine-as-genocide.” Coogan: “The scale of the horror of the Famine was such that the English historian A. J. P. Taylor compared the state of the country to that of the infamous German concentration camp Belsen. He declared ‘all Ireland was a Belsen.’” Coogan, Tim Pat (2012-11-27). *The Famine Plot: England’s Role in Ireland’s Greatest Tragedy* (Kindle Locations 139-141). Palgrave Macmillan. Kindle Edition.

<sup>19</sup> Francis A. Boyle, *Francis A. Boyle: The Irish Famine Was Genocide - History News Network*, March 18, 2010, accessed February 23, 2012, <http://hnn.us/node/124588>. See: CounterCurrents.org, last modified January 3, 2012, accessed January 14, 2012, <http://www.countercurrents.org/boyle030112.htm>. Boyle’s Book *United Ireland, Human Rights and International Law* was published in September 2011 by Clarity Press. Boyle has also been a rather vocal critic of American foreign policy since September 11, 2001

human rights activist Robbie McVeigh and Professor Bill Rolston of the University of Ulster maintain that the British administration of Ireland was based on sectarian (and racist) ideology, providing at least some credence for the “Famine-as-genocide” interpretation.<sup>20</sup> Hazel Waters of the Institute of Race Relations notes that the Famine helped to generate a great deal of anti-Irish racism on the part of the British, indicating if not a “Famine-as-genocide” interpretation, then perhaps a “Famine-as-cause” for further discrimination against the Irish.<sup>21</sup>

That Rolston, Boyle, Clark, Waters and other people of Irish heritage (as opposed to Irish citizenry) should have a fascination with the Irish Famine is a noted occurrence, particularly by historians in Ireland.<sup>22</sup> Mitchel’s view of the British as perpetrators of genocide (or at least genocidal actions) against the Irish people has held a good deal of influence over the view of Irish Americans, if not among Irish people themselves.<sup>23</sup> Astrid Wonneberger maintains that it was Mitchel’s assertion that gave birth and credence to the “Famine as genocide myth” that carries so much weight in the Irish-

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and has been quite vocal in his criticism of the state of Israel in terms of its relationship with Palestinians. He has also advocated for the independence of Hawaii since 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Robbie McVeigh and Bill Rolston, “Civilising the Irish,” *Race Class* (Institute of Race Relations) 51, no. 2 (June 2009): 1-28.

<sup>21</sup> Hazel Waters, “The Great Famine and the rise of anti-Irish racism,” *Race Class* (Institute of Race Relations) 37 (January 1995): 95-108.

<sup>22</sup> Harry Browne, “US using Irish past to shape its future Billed alongside slavery and the Holocaust, The Great Irish Famine Curriculum is being introduced to schools in New York State. Harry Browne went to find out what Irish history could possibly teach one of the world’s most ethnically-mixed school populations and what the Irish education system could learn from this radical initiative,” *Irish Times* (Dublin, Ireland), April 24, 2001, Education and Living, 53. See also Fegan, *Literature and the Irish*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Rogers, “The Great Hunger: Act of God or Acts,” in *Ireland’s Great Hunger*, 237.

American community.<sup>24</sup> Irish historian and writer C  lm To  b  n noted the fascination with the Famine among Irish Americans; To  b  n commented about a Famine-based lecture given by Irish-American historian (also a Famine historian) James Donnelly:

Irish historians, on the whole, do not become emotional about the Famine. Like historians elsewhere, they are happier to describe and analyse (sic) than blame or use emotional language or emotional quotations. They are not in the business of writing about forgiving or forgetting: they are aware, perhaps, that we have had to listen to this sort of language for a long time in Ireland, and none of it has done us much good. But then, as I discovered from the notes on contributors in *The Great Irish Famine*, James Donnelly is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is an American of Irish extraction.

Once I knew this, I felt I understood the tone of the paragraph. Why could an Irish historian not have written it? Equally, why had I immediately and automatically disapproved of the tone? Why should we remain cool and dispassionate and oddly distant from the events of 150 years ago?<sup>25</sup>

This desire amongst Irish-American writers to examine the Famine as the central event in the creation of Irish America might explain why it appears that people living outside of Ireland are more focused on the Famine than the Irish themselves.<sup>26</sup> Author Thomas Cahill and his 1996 book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, noted this condition in his introduction on “How real is History?” Lawrence J. McCaffrey, in *Textures of Irish America*, notes a similar connection in his chapter “From Ghetto to Suburb,” in a more

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<sup>24</sup> Astrid Wonneberger, “The invention of history in the Irish-American diaspora: Myths of the Great Famine,” in *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research* (New York: Psychology Press, 2004): 117-128.

<sup>25</sup> Colm Tobin, “Erasures Colm T  ib  n on the Great Irish Famine,” *London Review of Books*, July 1998.

<sup>26</sup> Donoghue, “Fears for Irish studies,” B5, and Harry Browne, “US using Irish past to shape its future Billed alongside slavery and the Holocaust, The Great Irish Famine Curriculum is being introduced to schools in New York State. Harry Browne went to find out what Irish history could possibly teach one of the world’s most ethnically-mixed school populations and what the Irish education system could learn from this radical initiative,” *Irish Times* (Dublin, Ireland), April 24, 2001, Education and Living, 53, and Colm Tobin, “Erasures Colm T  ib  n on the Great Irish Famine,” *London Review of Books*, July 1998, 17-23.

academic style than Cahill's work. And Tom Hayden conveys a similar sense in his essay "The Famine of Feeling" from his collected works, *Irish Hunger*.<sup>27</sup> This view, and its basis in myth and memory as much as fact, explains, in part, the second major interpretive perspective of the Famine.

The reaction to the Traditional/Nationalistic perspective of the Famine emerged as early as the 1930s in Ireland. Regarded as the Revisionist view of Irish history (and the Irish Famine), it found its solidification within Irish cultural consciousness as the result of irony. In the 1940s Prime Minister of Ireland (Taoiseach) Eamon DeValera commissioned a formal study of the Famine to mark its centennial anniversary. A revolutionary who took part in the Easter Rising of 1916, De Valera could not have been pleased with the result, *The Great Irish Famine: Studies in Irish History*.<sup>28</sup> Published in 1956, and therefore much too late to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the book produced work that could be regarded as the "flagship of the revisionist school."<sup>29</sup>

Given that so much of the Traditional/Nationalist perspective is based on memory, folklore, mythology, and possibly Irish and Irish-American prejudice toward the British, the Revisionist school tends to examine generally agreed-upon collective views of the Famine with a degree of skepticism. Revisionists often try to remove the emotional elements associated with the Famine in an attempt to study the Famine from a

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<sup>27</sup>See Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1995), Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992) and Thomas Hayden, "The Famine of Feeling," in *Irish Hunger* (Niwt, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Henderson, "The Irish Famine: A Historiographical," 134–135.

<sup>29</sup> Henderson, "The Irish Famine: A Historiographical," 135.

clinical perspective.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the Revisionist school questions almost every element of the Traditional/Nationalist perspective of the Famine, including the popularly-held view that the Famine was the key moment in Irish history (certainly at least of the 19<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>31</sup> What ultimately binds the Revisionists together, and provokes a great deal of consternation on the part of Nationalists, is their absolution of the British government in regards to the devastation of the Famine.<sup>32</sup>

Revisionists stress that the proximate cause of Famine's devastation was the presence of the naturally occurring disease (the potato blight-*phytophthora infestans*), which affected a people who were overly dependent upon a single crop as their sole source of survival.<sup>33</sup> Revisionists indicate that Irish social and economic customs (in perpetuating poverty and in creating a dependency upon a single crop), Irish and English absentee landlords, as well as the Irish themselves (for not adjusting to the changing economic conditions of the nineteenth century), bear responsibility for the Famine and its damage to Ireland. Some historians indicate that the Famine was an inevitable consequence of the previously mentioned conditions. Historian K.B. Knowlton identifies

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<sup>30</sup> Kevin Whelan, writing in *boundary 2*, notes that the beginning of the revisionist school "dates back to 1938, [historians] founded Irish Historical Studies as a technical journal for historians dedicated to archivally based research and self-consciously opposed to nationalist myth in the name of scientific objectivity." Kevin Whelan, "The Revisionist Debate in Ireland," *boundary 2* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 184.

<sup>31</sup> This is Whelan describing the writings of both Roy Foster and Mary Daly. Whelan also identifies that revisionists view the Famine as an "an episode" in Irish History, rather than a watershed moment as other historians have classified the Famine. Whelan, "The Revisionist Debate in Ireland," 199 - 201. See also Kevin O'Rourke, "Did the Great Irish Famine Matter?," *The Journal of Economic History* 51, no. 1 (March 1991): 1-3.

<sup>32</sup> Henderson, "The Irish Famine: A Historiographical," 135.

<sup>33</sup> Historian Kenneth Hugh Connell cited in Whelan, "for him, a vicious circle of the potato and poverty drove a disastrous demographic system that finally careered out of control." Whelan, 199-200.

this view in his preface for *The Great Irish Famine*: “The disaster originated in that ordering of human affairs which condemned so many to a life-long dependence on a single crop. The potato economy, the primitive state of agriculture and the bad relations between landlord and tenant were but different expressions of the same evil, poverty.”<sup>34</sup> While some historians have claimed that Britain’s commitment to free-market capitalism worsened the effect of the Famine, in *The Great Irish Famine’s* forward, historians R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams note that the British cannot be blamed for these views:

If man, the prisoner of time, acts in conformity with the conventions of society into which he was born, it is difficult to judge him with an irrevocable harshness. So it is with the men of the famine era. Human limitations and timidity dominate the story of the Great Famine, but of great and deliberately imposed evil in high positions of responsibility there is little evidence. The really great evil lay in the totality of that social order which made such a famine possible and which could tolerate, to the extent it did, the sufferings and hardship caused by the failure of the potato crop.<sup>35</sup>

The Revisionist perspective maintains that the Famine was less the result of collective acts of men than it was the result of an event of nature.

The Revisionist viewpoint maintained dominance for much of the twentieth century, so much so within Ireland that graduate studies programs rarely attracted study of the Famine as a serious academic subject. More than one historian has commented that there appeared to be a global (or at least a nation-wide) conspiracy among academics to ignore the Irish Famine altogether.<sup>36</sup> It was (non-academic) historian Cecil Woodham-

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<sup>34</sup> Henderson, “The Irish Famine: A Historiographical,” 135.

<sup>35</sup> R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, quoted from New KS3 History PoS: Famine & emigration, accessed December 16, 2013, [http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3\\_Famine\\_Interpretations.pdf](http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3_Famine_Interpretations.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine*, 10, Lori Henderson, “The Irish Famine: A Historiographical Review,” *Historia* 14 (2005): 134, and Hazel Waters, “The Great

Smith and her work *The Great Hunger* (1962) that provided an important exception to the Revisionist view of the Famine. Woodham-Smith's work, while popular even today, was largely dismissed among historians of the Revisionist school.<sup>37</sup>

Revisionists consistently pointed to the fact that Woodham-Smith was not a professional historian. Her most glaring fault was to be popular, elevating her book to its position as the best-selling volume ever produced on Irish history. To be so celebrated simply smacked of populism, of a pandering to the masses that affronted the revisionists' sense of being an elite mandarin group.

While the revisionist orthodoxy reigned, the Famine was not a fashionable topic. Remarkably, after these volumes, it almost disappeared as a serious research topic. The conventional historian's response to this lacuna is to point out that there was only a handful of professional historians during this period—essentially a tiny coterie, split into two factions (the Edwards-Williams group at University College Dublin, and the Moody-Lyons group at Trinity College Dublin). As a result, there were very few graduate students, and these were expected to work on readily available sources (deemed not to exist for the Famine). Yet, even when the rank of historians and graduate students swelled appreciably from the mid-1960s onward, the Famine remained a languishing subject.<sup>38</sup>

Since Revisionism dominated so much of the study of the Famine at the academic level, the Famine's significance remained largely unexamined.

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s a new perspective regarding the Famine emerged. Known as Post-Revisionists, scholars who have adopted this perspective have sought to reject both the Traditionalist/Nationalist view that the Famine was largely England's fault and the Revisionist viewpoints that the Famine was largely

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Famine and the rise of anti-Irish racism," *Race Class* (January 1995): 95. Christine Kinealy notes, "Between 1921 and 1994 only two substantial accounts of the Famine were produced; the first reluctantly, and the second by a female non-academic, who misleadingly had a man's name." Kinealy, Christine (1994-11-01). *This Great Calamity: The Great Irish Famine: The Irish Famine 1845-52* (Kindle Locations 191-193). Gill & Macmillan. Kindle Edition.

<sup>37</sup> Both Whelan and Fagan note that *The Great Hunger* is the best-selling Irish history book of all time. Fagan, *Literature and the Irish*, 10 and Whelan, "The Revisionist Debate in Ireland," 200.

<sup>38</sup> Whelan, "The Revisionist Debate in Ireland," 200-201.

an act of nature.<sup>39</sup> Oddly enough, it was scholars outside Ireland who led this examination of the Irish Famine. Dutch-Israeli scholar Joel Moykr (based in Chicago) presented the “path breaking” study of the post-revisionist school.<sup>40</sup> Irish-American James Connelly and Belgian scholar Peter Solar added to the establishment of the Post-revisionist perspective.<sup>41</sup> Within Ireland itself Cormac Ó Gráda was the “crucial Irish exponent” of the post-revisionists.<sup>42</sup>

Rather than minimize the historical significance of the Irish Famine (as the Revisionists were wont to do), Post-revisionists maintain that the Famine was one of the most important events in Irish, if not greater world history. Ó Gráda notes that the Famine was a “catastrophe,” and that

“[t]he Irish famine killed about one million people, or one-eighth of the entire population. This made it a major famine, relatively speaking, by world historical standards. [It] was not just a watershed in Irish history, but also a major event in global history, with far-reaching and enduring economic and political consequences. In the 1840s, the Irish cataclysm dwarfed anything occurring elsewhere in Europe. Nothing like it would happen in Ireland again.”<sup>43</sup>

Post-revisionists view the Famine as the product of a number of different factors and conditions that came together to create the Famine, and accept that the Famine is a

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<sup>39</sup> Historian Mohamed Salah Harzallah argues that there are really only two views of the Irish Famine, the Nationalist and the Revisionist perspective, noting that there is no real middle ground between the two interpretations. Mohammed Salah Harzallah, “The Uses and Abuses of History in Ireland: A Manichean Famine History,” *EPONA: E Journal*, 1, accessed December 14, 2013, [https://www.academia.edu/2541718/The\\_Uses\\_and\\_Abuses\\_of\\_History\\_in\\_Ireland\\_A\\_Manichean\\_Famine\\_Historiography](https://www.academia.edu/2541718/The_Uses_and_Abuses_of_History_in_Ireland_A_Manichean_Famine_Historiography).

<sup>40</sup> Whelan, “The Revisionist Debate in Ireland,” 202.

<sup>41</sup> Whelan, “The Revisionist Debate in Ireland,” 202.

<sup>42</sup> Whelan, “The Revisionist Debate in Ireland,” 202.

<sup>43</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, “Ireland’s Great Famine: An Overview” (Working Paper., University College Dublin, 2004), 4,13,20.

complicated, multi-layered event that defies easy definition and explanation.<sup>44</sup> While they do not hold that the British government was guilty of genocide, they do not completely absolve the British of responsibility in failing to stem the impact of the Famine.<sup>45</sup> In a review of the various historical takes on the Great Irish Famine as it relates to the genocide condition, James Donnelly of the University of Wisconsin maintains that while John Mitchel's assertion that the Famine was genocide was too radical, the British policy of Famine relief leaves behind a legacy that the Irish cannot simply forgive and forget.<sup>46</sup> Historian Brendan Ó Cathaoir maintains that the damage of the Famine was caused by a combination of three factors: the blight itself, Irish social structure and British administration of Ireland.<sup>47</sup> Author Noel Kissane maintains that

[t]he charge of genocide on the part of the British government was unjustified. The government was parsimonious in providing resources, but it certainly did not want the Irish to starve. It was, however, paralyzed by doctrinaire ideology and bureaucracy, and proved incapable of formulating and implementing pragmatic policies to manage a crisis which should have been well within the capacity of the might British Empire.<sup>48</sup>

While the genocide charge might be too radical for the post-revisionists, equally incorrect is the assertion that the British government and its administration of Ireland were

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<sup>44</sup> David A. Cowell, "Teaching Ireland in the Curriculum: Demythologizing Subject Matter," *Social Studies Docket* 2, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2002): 13.

<sup>45</sup> Ó Gráda writes: "Food availability was a problem; nobody wanted the extirpation of the Irish as a race." Ó Gráda quoted in New KS3 History PoS: Famine & emigration, accessed December 16, 2013, [http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3\\_Famine\\_Interpretations.pdf](http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3_Famine_Interpretations.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> James S. Donnelly, Jr., "The Great Famine: Its Interpreters, Old and New," *History Ireland* 1, no. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 27-33, and Peter Stevens, "Seeking Answers to the Great Famine: BIR Q&A with Professor James Donnelly, Author of The Great Irish Potato Famine," *Boston Irish Reporter*, July 31, 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Brendan O Cathaoir, "Mitchel politicized the famine," *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* (Cumann Seanchais Ard Mhacha/Armagh Diocesan Historical Society) 20, no. 2 (October 2005): 155-162.

<sup>48</sup> Kissane is quoted in Astrid Wonneberger, "The invention of history," in *Diaspora, Identity and Religion*, 117-128.

blameless. As Ó Gráda notes,

[T]he current orthodoxy (revisionism) tends to view the Great Famine as both unavoidable and inevitable. I see it instead as the tragic outcome of three factors: an ecological accident that could not have been predicted, and ideology ill geared to saving lives and, of course, mass poverty. The role of sheer bad luck is important: Ireland's ability to cope with a potato failure would have been far greater a few decades later, and the political will-and the political pressure-to spend more money to save lives greater too. If this post-revisionist interpretation of events of the 1840s comes closer to the traditional story, it also keeps its distance from the wilder populist interpretations mentioned earlier. Food availability was a problem; nobody wanted the extirpation of the Irish as a race.<sup>49</sup>

Ó Gráda's statement reflects the Post-Revisionist interpretation that the Famine defies simple classification.

Post-Revisionist historical interpretations of the Famine have also enjoyed some recent attention over the renewed debate over free-market capitalism present in recent years in the United States and Europe. British (and Marxist) historian John Newsinger argues the Famine was a failure of free-market economics, and strikes a tone that could be classified as Traditional/Nationalist. However, Newsinger fails to indict the British for committing the crime of genocide. Rather, he places the Famine in the larger context of overall European imperialism of the nineteenth century:

The failure of the British government to feed the starving Irish and its involvement in mass evictions in the 1840s is without doubt the most terrible indictment that can be laid against British Imperialism in the nineteenth century. The Opium Wars, the incredibly brutal suppression of the great Indian Revolt of 1857, the conquest of Egypt and the Sudan, the invasion of Tibet—all of these crimes are eclipsed by the horrors of the Famine. Here we see hundreds of thousands of people dying or forced to flee for their lives so that Political Economy could prevail. It was a crime that should never be forgotten.<sup>50</sup>

Popular historian John Kelly echoes these ideas in his 2012 book, *The Graves Are*

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<sup>49</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, quoted in New KS3 History PoS: Famine & emigration, accessed December 16, 2013,

[http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3\\_Famine\\_Interpretations.pdf](http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/KS3_Famine_Interpretations.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> John Newsinger, "The Great Irish Famine: A crime of free market economics," *Monthly Review* 47, no. 11 (April 1996): 18-19.

*Walking*, while at the same time refusing to recognize the validity of the genocide charge:

The old Irish nationalist charge that London pursued a policy of genocide in Ireland has been discredited; modern research has also tempered another old charge. With the exception of one critical period in late 1846 and early 1847, famine Ireland imported more food than she exported. What turned a natural disaster into a human disaster was the determination of senior British officials to use relief as a policy of nation building in one of the most impoverished and turbulent parts of the Empire. In particular, Whitehall and Westminster were eager to modernize the Irish agricultural economy, which was widely viewed as the principal source of Ireland's poverty and chronic violence and to improve the Irish character which was...utterly lacking in the virtues of the new industrial age, such as self-discipline and initiative.<sup>51</sup>

Writing in a blog post for *The Daily Beast.com* (and likely in an effort to promote his book), Kelly equates the actions of the British with the American Republican Party's commitment to "fiscal responsibility":

Whether 165 years ago across the ocean or now, in America, there's a danger in the inflexible ideas of staunch ideologues, whether of the right or the left. The British government assembled some of the most able bureaucrats in Whitehall to oversee famine relief. But men like Trevelyan and Routh were free market ideologues, and ideology creates a form of tunnel vision that blinds the ideologue to context.

Yes, the free market is a very efficient instrument, but it runs on the profit motive, and in a period of crisis—whether 1845's catastrophic crop failure or our current economic near-collapse—measures need to be taken—feeding the hungry, employing the unemployed—that, in the short run at least, won't make anyone money.<sup>52</sup>

Conversely, free-market and libertarian acolytes from the Ludwig von Mises Institute and other like-minded organizations argue that the damage done by the Famine was a failure of the British government to allow the market to run freely.

Ultimately, the question of blame is not as important as the question of cause.

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<sup>51</sup> John Kelly, *The Graves are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People* (New York, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> John Kelly, "Paul Ryan's Irish Problem," *The Daily Beast: Campaign 2012* (blog), entry posted August 18, 2012, accessed August 19, 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/08/18/paul-ryan-s-irish-problem.html>.

Even more importantly, the Famine is a source of great economic errors, such as: Famines are the fault of the market and free trade, and starvation results from laissez-faire policy. Even Karl Marx was heavily influenced by events happening in Ireland as he wrote in London.

Ireland was swept away by the economic forces that emanated from the most powerful and aggressive state the world had ever known. It suffered not from a fungus (which English scientists insisted was just excessive dampness) but from conquest, theft, bondage, protectionism, government welfare, public works, and inflation.<sup>53</sup>

It appears that there may be an entirely new group of historians and academics classifying the Famine as largely the result of economic malpractice. However these recent interpretations could find homes in the Post-Revisionist interpretive perspectives.

The political history of Ireland bears a strong influence over the interpretations of the Famine.<sup>54</sup> The Traditionalist/Nationalist perspective was founded when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom and gained traction largely, as its name implies, as an effort to gain support for an independent Ireland. The Revisionist view emerged when Ireland gained independence an independent nation and as the Nationalist viewpoint of the Famine began to lose influence over the Irish cultural consciousness.<sup>55</sup> Historian

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<sup>53</sup> Mark Thornton, The Free Market: What Caused the Famine, April 1998, accessed July 31, 2012, [http://mises.org/freemarket\\_detail.aspx?control=88](http://mises.org/freemarket_detail.aspx?control=88).

<sup>54</sup> “The Famine, as a subject of academic research, has consistently exposed the polemics of Irish history-writing, from John Mitchel’s overtly nationalist verdict...to more recent ‘revisionist’ accounts which have tended to sanitise (sic) the event and argue that given the scale of the disaster, there was little the government could have done...” Ciara Boylan, “Architect or Pawn?,” review of Charles Trevelyan and the Great Irish Famine, *The Oxonian Review* 4, no. 3 (June 15, 2004): accessed February 17, 2014, <http://www.oxonianreview.org/wp/architect-or-pawn-charles-trevelyan-and-the-irish-famine/>.

<sup>55</sup> Kinealy notes, “The justification of revisionist writing had been to counter the crude nationalist interpretations of Irish history written in the early decades of the twentieth century, which was given legitimacy in the school curriculum of the newly established Free State.” Kinealy, Christine (1994-11-01). *This Great Calamity: The Great Irish Famine: The Irish Famine 1845-52* (Kindle Locations 167-169). Gill & Macmillan. Kindle Edition.

Christine Kinealy maintains that Irish historians were reluctant to tackle the Famine so as to avoid providing ideological support the Irish Republican Army and its attempt to remove British presence from Northern Ireland.<sup>56</sup> The Post-Revisionist view of the Irish Famine emerged at about the same time the Good Friday Accords sought to establish a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.<sup>57</sup>

Examination of the Famine historiography reveals a clear disconnect and disagreement among the various perspectives. The majority of historians examined indicate that the Famine was not an attempted genocide on the scale of the Holocaust, which would lead to the conclusion that the Irish Famine curricula are misplaced under the Holocaust/genocide frameworks. Adding to this concern is the fact that the classification of the “Famine-as-genocide” is only one potential interpretation under one perspective of Irish historiography. However, the definition of genocide itself is still a nebulous concept, and one that has undergone a great deal of change since the term was defined in the 1930s. The next chapter of this work will examine the varying definitions of genocide and explain how the presence of the Irish Famine under those larger frameworks could be considered appropriate.

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<sup>56</sup> Christine Kinealy, *A Death-dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland* (Chicago, Ill.: Pluto Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>57</sup> Whelan, “The Revisionist Debate in Ireland,” 203. Whelan also identifies Kinealy as a member of the Post-Revisionist school.

## CHAPTER 3

### A QUESTION OF GENOCIDE

The last chapter examined the three main interpretative perspectives of the Irish Famine: Traditional/Nationalist, Revisionist, and Post-Revisionist, as well as other perspectives surrounding the place of governments in regulating economies.<sup>1</sup> As noted earlier, the interpretation of the Great Irish Famine as genocide or an attempted genocide largely falls within the Traditional/Nationalistic perspective, and does not enjoy a great deal of support among academic historians. Professor James Donnelly maintains, however, that almost all the academic histories created since the late 1980s fall within Traditionalist/Nationalist perspective.<sup>2</sup> This development indicates that while the “Famine-as-genocide” view has not held much academic support, it has been popular to hold the British at least partially responsible for the Famine’s devastation.

The classification of the Irish Famine as genocide has met strong and informed resistance. Revisionist historian R.F. Foster in his work *Modern Ireland* (1990) maintains that the Famine was not genocide due to the efforts (however ineffective) of Famine-relief organizers such as Charles Trevelyan.<sup>3</sup> Foster and other historians indicate that the British government attempted to alleviate the suffering of the Irish; this distinction prevents the Famine from being effectively labeled genocide. Foster in a 2002 interview remarked that the existence of Irish Famine curricula in both New York and New Jersey constituted “bad history,” and indicated that it was efforts on the part of Irish

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<sup>1</sup> I avoided using the term “schools” particularly in reference to the traditionalist/nationalist viewpoint, as it seems to possess a hold on Irish-American viewpoints of the Famine and Irish history in general.

<sup>2</sup> Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, “The Famine,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge University Press), 2004: 193-207.

American politicians looking to secure votes that was the impetus behind the curricula.<sup>4</sup>

As evidenced from Chapter 1, Foster's view of the political element behind the creation of Irish Famine curriculum is valid. The classification of the Famine as genocide has also been problematic for many academics and historians. Historian Christine Kinealy opens her work *A Death-Dealing Famine* with an examination of the difficulties in classifying the Irish Famine as an example of a great hunger, a holocaust or genocide:

The Irish phrase “An Gorta Mor”, meaning “The Great Hunger”, is regarded as some as being an accurate description of years of hunger, which were not simply caused by food shortages. For the same reason, the use of the term “famine” is disliked by a number of nationalist commentators on the grounds that between 1845 and 1852, large volumes of food were exported from Ireland as thousands died of starvation. For others, the word “holocaust” is too emotive and ascribes too much culpability to the British government. The word is also closely associated with the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis in the twentieth century, although it was used by a number of nineteenth-century commentators when describing the famine.<sup>5</sup>

While Foster and Kinealy (who maintain very different perspectives on the Famine) eschew the connection of the “Famine-as-genocide,” the issue is still significant enough for debates over the nature of the Famine to be addressed at institutions such as Fordham Law School in 2013:

The Tribunal considered whether or not the British role during the Famine amounted to either genocide or a crime against humanity. Prosecution and defense teams, including law students from Fordham Law School and Dublin City University, presented their cases before an international panel of judges: Judge Adrian Hardiman, a justice of the Supreme Court of Ireland and regarded as one of Ireland's foremost jurists; Judge John Ingram, a renowned New York Supreme Court judge who has presided over many high profile criminal trials; and, Judge William Schabas, professor of international law at Middlesex University in London, chairman of the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the National University

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Shea, “Tisn’t. An Irish Historian Exposes His Country’s mythmaking from the Great Potato Famine to Angela’s Ashes. Dublin is Distressed.,” *Globe* (Boston, MA), September 15, 2002, sec. E.

<sup>5</sup> Christine Kinealy, *A Death-dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland* (Chicago, Ill.: Pluto Press, 1997), 1-2.

of Ireland Galway, and widely considered the world's leading authority on genocide.

Joining them were authors Tim Pat Coogan ("The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy") and John Kelly ("The Graves Are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People"), along with historian Dr. Ruan O'Donnell, Head of the Department of History at the University of Limerick.<sup>6</sup>

Given the general consensus that almost all academic or "serious" historians hold that the Famine was not tantamount to genocide, one would expect that the placement of public school curricula examining the Famine under the greater Holocaust/genocide frameworks to be a serious miscarriage of historiography and sound educational practice.<sup>7</sup> Yet, given the changing and evolving nature of genocide as an academic subject, there is an argument to be made that the Irish Famine curricula are appropriately placed. This chapter will examine the various definitions of genocide and their application to the events of the Irish Famine.

As a concept, "genocide" has been in existence since the 1930s, when the Polish legal scholar Raphael Lemkin developed the term in reference to the atrocities committed by the Ottoman Turks against Armenians living in their empire during World War I.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Irish Famine Tribunal Fordham University Law School April 20 and 21, last modified 2013, accessed July 9, 2013, <http://www.irishfaminetribunal.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda has maintained this point in several of his writings. Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Lemkin's views on the Irish Famine as genocide are ambiguous. However, according to Anton Weiss-Wendt, Lemkin used the Famine as a means to convince Ireland to ratify the United Nation's Convention on Genocide in 1948. Anton Weiss-Wendt, "Hostage of Politics: Raphael Lemkin on "Soviet Genocide"," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 4 (December 2005): 554. This is certainly a great irony, given the Turkish government's resistance to an official recognition of an Armenian genocide. See: Brian Knowlton, "A Changed U.S. House to Vote on Armenian Genocide" - *NY Times*, March 3, 2010, accessed February 22, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/04/us/04iht-genocide.html?scp=4&sq=armenian+genocide+congress&st=nyt&pagewanted=print>.

Lemkin's ideas and writings heavily influenced the codification of genocide by the United Nations in 1948, which provides one interpretation of the definition of genocide. Article Two of the Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide reads:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>9</sup>

Section c of Article Two might provide some justification for the classification of the Irish Famine as genocide. The British certainly did not deliberately inflict disease on the Irish people.<sup>10</sup> As outlined in the previous chapter, defenders of the "Famine-as-genocide" perspective hold that the presence of British imperial policy and legislation designed to minimize the political and economic power of the Irish (and Irish-Catholic) population qualifies as genocide.

The United Nations definition is only one definition of genocide. Since the end of World War II, the idea of genocide has evolved from an abstract concept to a serious academic field of study. As indicated earlier, the number of post-secondary and post-baccalaureate institutions chartering programs in genocide studies has grown

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Convention on Genocide, January 27, 1997, <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html> (accessed February 20, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Even Coogan admits that the potato blight struck Ireland without direct guidance from the administration of the United Kingdom. Tim Pat Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 20-51.

significantly since the early 1990s.<sup>11</sup> The presence of genocide studies programs in elementary, middle and high schools has also grown over the last few decades.<sup>12</sup> This growth has influenced the definition of genocide; historian Dan Stone of the University of London has asserted that genocide studies programs now define “genocide” in the broadest possible terms. The definition ratified by the United Nations based on Lemkin’s ideas is only one popular definition and the oldest definition in existence.<sup>13</sup> Some of the more recent refinements of the expression “genocide” include this one by Professors Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr:

“...genocides and politicides are the promotion and execution of policies by a state or its agents which result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a group. The difference between genocides and politicides is in the characteristics by which members of the group are identified by the state. In genocides the victimized

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<sup>11</sup> These include: Drew University; Rutgers University – Newark which maintains The Center for the Study of Genocide, Conflict Resolutions and Human Rights; John Jay Criminal College in New York, which maintains its Institute for the Study of Genocide and provides a variety of definitions; and Yale University, which maintains a Genocide Studies Program (although does not link to the experiences of the Irish Famine as a research source). Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, New Jersey also maintains a Genocide Studies Program. One of the links on the Raritan Valley Genocide Studies pages is a link to the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum. However the descriptor for the link indicates that it was posted by the Nebraska Department of Education. Regrettably the maintainers of the RVCC web page did not realize that the document was produced by and adopted by the Department of Education in their own state. See: Raritan Valley Community College, Raritan Valley Holocaust and Genocide Resources, 2012, accessed February 22, 2012, <http://www.raritanval.edu/community/holocaust/resources.html>.

<sup>12</sup> A 2010 study found that since the early 1970s more and more textbooks have increased their discussion of the Holocaust specifically and genocides in general. Patricia Bromley and Susan Garnett Russell, “The Holocaust as history and human rights: A cross-national analysis of Holocaust education in social science textbooks, 1970–2008.” *Prospects*, no. 40 (2010): 153-173. *Education Week* noted the proliferation of genocide programs in 2007, and also noted the opposition of Diane Ravitch to these programs. See: Bess Keller, Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, and Hanawar Vaishali, “Genocide Claiming a Larger Place In Middle and High School Lessons,” *Education Week* 27, no. 9 (October 2007): 2.

<sup>13</sup> Dan Stone, “The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond “Uniqueness” and Ethnic Competition,” *Rethinking History* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 134-135.

groups are defined primarily in terms of their communal characteristics, i.e., ethnicity, religion or nationality. In politicides the victim groups are defined primarily in terms of their hierarchical position or political opposition to the regime and dominant groups...”<sup>14</sup>

Research Professor Gregory Stanton of George Mason University presented his views on the eight stages of Genocide in 1996:

**The Eight Stages of Genocide:**

Genocide is a process that develops in eight stages that are predictable but not inexorable

- 1. CLASSIFICATION:** All cultures have categories to distinguish people into “us and them” by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality...
- 2. SYMBOLIZATION:** We give names or other symbols to the classifications. Classification and symbolization are universally human and do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to the next stage, dehumanization.
- 3. DEHUMANIZATION:** One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases.
- 4. ORGANIZATION:** Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, often using militias to provide deniability of state responsibility...
- 5. POLARIZATION:** Extremists drive the groups apart. Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. Laws may forbid intermarriage or social interaction. Extremist terrorism targets moderates, intimidating and silencing the center.
- 6. PREPARATION:** Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity.
- 7. EXTERMINATION** begins, and quickly becomes the mass killing legally called “genocide.” It is “extermination” to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human.
- 8. DENIAL** is the eighth stage that always follows a genocide. <sup>15</sup>

The Institute for Genocide Awareness and Applied Research provides this definition of genocide on its web page:

By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group...Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate

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<sup>14</sup> Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr, “Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases Since 1945,” *International Studies Quarterly* (Blackwell Publishing on behalf of The International Studies Association) 32, no. 3 (September 1988): 360.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory H. Stanton, *The 8 Stages of Genocide*, 1998, accessed February 22, 2012, <http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stagesofgenocide.html>. This is a web copy of part a briefing paper originally delivered at the United States Department of State in 1996.

destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Frank Chalk of the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies with colleague Kurt Jonassohn defined genocide as a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.<sup>17</sup> Professor Chalk has also indicated that genocide includes the attempt to acquire wealth.<sup>18</sup> Bradley Campbell (the founder of IGAAR) of UCLA defines genocide as “organized and unilateral mass killing on the basis of ethnicity.”<sup>19</sup>

The definition of genocide is malleable and is dependent upon the organization or the individual that references the term “genocide.” Different experts in the field of genocide studies and historians possess distinct views on what constitutes genocide. Likewise scholars of Holocaust/genocide Studies may have different interpretations of genocide than academic or popular historians. In addition (and in contrast) to the definitions explored, Dr. Linda Woolf of Webster University has crafted a genocide

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<sup>16</sup> Institute for Genocide Awareness and Applied Research, IGAAR - Institute for Genocide Awareness and Applied Research, 2012, accessed February 22, 2012, <http://igaar.org/>. Raphael Lemkin’s quote appears on the homepage for the IGAAR. The IGAAR is associated with Nova Southeastern University in Florida.

<sup>17</sup> Social Scientists Definitions of Genocide, last modified 2005, accessed January 14, 2012, [http://www.instituteforthestudyofgenocide.org/references/def\\_genocide.html](http://www.instituteforthestudyofgenocide.org/references/def_genocide.html).

<sup>18</sup> Helen Fein, “Complexities of Genocide,” *Contexts* (Summer 2003): 4 - 5. This might have some application to the Irish Famine, as Irish and British landlords were forced to evict Famine victims who fell behind on rents. It also might coordinate with the charge made by John Kelly and John Newsinger that free-market economics was a primary cause of the destruction of the Irish Famine. Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking* and John Newsinger, “The Great Irish Famine: A crime of free market economics,” *Monthly Review* 47, no. 11 (April 1996): 11-19.

<sup>19</sup> Bradley Campbell, “Genocide as Social Control,” *Sociological Theory* (American Sociological Association) 27 (June 2009): 150-171.

studies program that holds that famines are genocides.<sup>20</sup> David Nally of the University of Cambridge maintains that most famines do not fit the genocidal narrative and that to classify famines as genocides is “radical.”<sup>21</sup> Yet Nally also notes that the Great Famine was “shaped by a regulatory order willing to exploit catastrophe to further the aims of population reform.”<sup>22</sup> Amartya Sen has written extensively about the nature of famines indicating that food availability decline (FAD) can occur in otherwise strong economic conditions. As a result, famines can affect specific elements of given populations, while ignoring other elements of the same population.<sup>23</sup> He also noted in 2008 that the British government “got away with extreme misgovernance” over Ireland and that the British “did little to stop the starvation, and in many ways, even helped to aggravate it.”<sup>24</sup> In addition the above academics there is Irish rock group U-2’s frontman, Bono, and his view that all famines are man-made, providing popular support for the view that the Famine could be classified as genocide.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Tasha R. Howe, “Lessons Learned from Political Violence and Genocide in Teaching a Psychology of Peace: An Interview with Linda Woolf,” *Teaching of Psychology* (Society for the Teaching of Psychology), (April 2004): 149-153.

<sup>21</sup> David Nally, ““That Coming Storm”: The Irish Poor Law, Colonial Biopolitics, and the Great Famine,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Association of American Geographers) 98, no. 3 (February 2008): 714-741.

<sup>22</sup> Nally, “That Coming Storm”: The Irish,” 714. Nally also notes that the Famine struck Ireland while the rest of Britain maintained relative prosperity.

<sup>23</sup> Amartya Sen, “Ingredients of Famine Analysis: Availability and Entitlements,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 96, no. 3 (August 1981): 433-64.

<sup>24</sup> Amartya Sen, “Violence, Identity and Poverty,” *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 1 (January 2008): 11, 12. Sen also notes that the movement of food from Ireland to England due to market forces exacerbated the Famine. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 172.

<sup>25</sup> Bono, The F Word, 2011 4-October, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bono/famine-africa-sudan-\\_b\\_992939.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bono/famine-africa-sudan-_b_992939.html) (accessed 2012 19-January). Bono was referencing Africa in this blog post. However one wonders how Ireland’s own famine experiences have shaped his views on this subject.

The greater problem for including the study of the Great Irish Famine under state-mandated frameworks examining the Holocaust and genocide might be less in a classification of the Famine than in creating a working definition of genocide. Drew University professor William Rogers noted this issue when conducting a discussion of the “Famine-as-genocide” in one of his classes.

The students’ discussion led me to the conclusion that most of the definitions of genocide, and particularly the UN convention, were written in response to a singular event—the Holocaust. In the Armenian genocide, and in the slave trade, the devastation of Native Americans, and the aborigines in Australia, there were some opposing forces within the dominant society. In none of these other examples did the government actually formulate a precise plan, devoting scarce resources in time of a life and death national struggle to the extermination of various relatively harmless groups in society... Thus I conclude that it is the definition of genocide that is at fault—nothing but a Holocaust-like state-planned, supported, and implemented destruction and mass murder of a group or groups will ever be considered genocide by most historians. Just as we find criminals guilty of first-degree murder, second-degree murder, or manslaughter in various degrees—depending on the depravity of the act—so we should have varying levels of genocide.<sup>26</sup>

Rogers’ conclusion on the nature of defining genocide supports the statement made earlier by Ó Gráda; historians do not consider the Famine genocide because the definition of genocide is too often associated with the Holocaust. The definition of genocide is too limiting.

Recent work on the Holocaust supports Rogers’ views. Yale University historian and author Timothy Snyder in his 2011 book, *Bloodlands*, notes that the United Nations’ definition of genocide is problematic when used with reference to the Holocaust—ironic, considering the nature of the definition of genocide and its popular application to the Holocaust. Snyder’s book details the events of Eastern Europe from the end World War I

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<sup>26</sup> Rogers, “The Great Hunger: Act of God or Acts of Man,” in *Ireland’s Great Hunger*, 253.

to the end of World War II, specifically detailing the crimes committed by the Nazis and the Soviets against the Jewish, Polish, Ukrainian and other Eastern European peoples. Snyder maintains that much of what we collectively “know” about the Holocaust is oversimplified and needs revision.<sup>27</sup> Snyder also maintains that Josef Stalin’s forced famines in the Ukraine and Adolf Hitler’s mass killing in Eastern Europe were similar in that they were not necessarily part of an overall plan for mass extermination.<sup>28</sup> Snyder notes,

I prefer mass killing to genocide for a number of reasons. The term genocide was coined by the Polish-Jewish international lawyer Rafał Lemkin in 1943. Through a miracle of energy and persistence, he managed to encode it in international law....This legal instrument has allowed for prosecutions, if only recently. As a guide to historical and moral interpretation, however, the term genocide has limitations.

The term genocide gives rise to inevitable and intractable controversies. It relies upon the intention of the perpetrator in two places: “intent to destroy” a certain group “as such.” It can be argued that policies of mass killing were not genocide, because rulers had some other “intent,” or because they intended to kill someone, but not a specified group “as such.”

Though the term genocide in fact has wide application, it is often thought to refer only to the Holocaust. People who associate themselves with victims will wish to define past crimes as genocide, thinking that this will lead to recognition of the kind awarded to the Holocaust. Meanwhile, people associated with states that perpetrated a genocide resist the term with great energy, because they believe that its acceptance would be tantamount to acceptance of a role in the Holocaust. Thus, for example, Turkish governments resist the classification as genocide of the mass killing of a million or more Armenians during the First World War.

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<sup>27</sup> Snyder makes this argument in his book and in a 2011 podcast. “Timothy Snyder, ‘Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin,’” *New Books Network - New Books in Eastern European Studies*, podcast audio, October 25, 2011, accessed December 30, 2013, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/new-books-in-eastern-european/id425676769?mt=2>. Also: “The image of the German concentration camps as the worst element of National Socialism is an illusion, a dark mirage over an unknown desert.” Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 382.

<sup>28</sup> Drew University professor William Rogers warns against comparing genocides in his article, and in the process agrees with Snyder’s conclusions: “Much has been made of ‘comparative’ genocides, that is, questions such as, which was worse, the slave trade of the Holocaust?...While instructive to the student, this exercise may well be an irrelevant debate for the victims of these tragedies.” See: Rogers, “The Great Hunger: Act of God or Acts,” in *Ireland’s Great Hunger*, 247.

A final problem arises from a known political modification of the definition. The Soviets made sure that the term genocide contrary to Lemkin's intentions, excluded political and economic groups. Thus the famine in Soviet Ukraine can be presented as somehow less genocidal, because it targeted a class, kulaks, as well as a nation, Ukrainians. Lemkin himself regarded the Ukrainian famine as genocide. But since the authors of the policy of starvation edited his definition, this has been controversial. It is remarkable that we have the legal instrument of genocide; nevertheless, one must not forget that this particular murder statute was co-drafted by some of the murderers. Or, to put the matter less moralistically: all laws arise within and reflect a certain political setting. It is not always desirable to export the politics.

In the end, historians who discuss genocide find themselves answering the question as to whether a given event qualifies, and so classifying rather than explaining. The discussions take on a semantic or legalistic or political form. In each of the cases discussed in this book, the question "Was it genocide?" can be answered: yes, it was. But this does not get us far.<sup>29</sup>

Snyder was not specifically referencing the Irish Famine in writing the above passage, yet one can see similarities in the use of specific language and the classification of the events surrounding Eastern Europe during the interwar years and the mid—nineteenth century Ireland. As Snyder noted, simply calling the Famine genocide or simply refusing to refer to the Famine as genocide will not get us very far.

Snyder's work on the Holocaust is not without its critics, and his voice is certainly not the only one examining the role of language as it applies to the Holocaust.<sup>30</sup> However, taken together with Rogers, Snyder presents educators with questions about the nature of how important terminology is used when addressing the Holocaust, the Irish Famine, the Slave Trade, the Killing Fields and other events in human history that are taught under the larger frameworks of Holocaust/genocide education. Snyder's work on

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<sup>29</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 412 -413.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Semelin, "Timothy Snyder and his Critics," trans. Kate McNaughton, *Books & Ideas.net*, last modified February 14, 2013, accessed January 2, 2014, <http://www.booksandideas.net/Timothy-Snyder-and-his-Critics.html>.

the Holocaust and the use of semantics provides pause as to the nature of how one defines “genocide,” and how one applies that definition to world events.

The designation of the Irish Famine as genocide is unclear, and the placement of the Irish Famine curricula under greater Holocaust/genocide education frameworks remains controversial. However, an examination of the role and mission of those frameworks needs to occur in order to determine if the Irish Famine curricula are appropriately placed. A secondary issue regarding the placement of the Great Irish Famine curriculum under Holocaust/genocide frameworks, but also related to the use of language, has to do with human rights education. Most reputable historians would agree that the Holocaust constituted a tremendous violation of human rights; the study of the Holocaust and study of other genocides and attempted genocides provides teachers and students with an opportunity to examine means by which human rights can be secured in the future. Joyce Aspel notes, “Courses in genocide and human rights present students and teachers with the challenge of confronting the history of attempts to promote human dignity and rights in the face of ongoing inequities, pain and suffering, and mass murder in history.”<sup>31</sup> Samuel Totten and Karen Riley note the similarity between studying the Holocaust and examining human rights.<sup>32</sup> The New Jersey and New York legislation mandating instruction of the Holocaust (and the Famine) requires students to learn about those events in an effort to understand the importance of human rights.

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<sup>31</sup> Joyce Aspel, “Moral Dilemmas and Pedagogical Challenges in Teaching about Genocide,” *Human Rights Review* (July - September 2004), 104.

<sup>32</sup> Karen Riley and Samuel Totten, “Understanding Matters: Holocaust Curricula and the Social Studies Classroom,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 541-562.

An earlier criticism of the existence of Irish Famine curriculum concerned the political support behind it and the support these curricula were seeking to secure. It would be naïve to ignore the politics and demographics of the region in considering both Holocaust studies and the Irish Famine curricula. In examining Holocaust education in the state of New Jersey, it becomes evident that ethnic politics likely had an influence in the development Holocaust curriculum. New Jersey has a Jewish population of just over 500,000 people, making the total Jewish population of New Jersey 5.7% of the total population of the state. This number makes it the second most populous Jewish state in the Union by percentage, behind New York and ahead of California by almost two full percentage points. In terms of raw numbers, New Jersey has the fourth highest number of Jewish people, behind California, New York, and Florida.<sup>33</sup> One cannot help but see a similarity between one of the first Holocaust curricula mandated by legislature in a state with a significant Jewish minority and the creation of the nation's first curriculum dedicated to the Irish Famine in a state with a significant Irish descendant population.<sup>34</sup> But politics or political influence should not destroy the validity of the curricula. As

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<sup>33</sup> Ira Shaskin and Arnold Dashefsky, *Jewish Population in the United States*, 2011, *Berman Institute-North American Jewish Databank-University of Connecticut* (Storrs: University of Connecticut, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Thomas D. Fallace, "The Origins of Holocaust Education in American Public Schools," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 88. The US government estimates that New Jersey's Irish-American population in 2010 was approximately 1.3 million people, while New York's Irish-American population was approximately 2.5 million. Connecticut's Irish-American population was a little under 600,000. This would indicate that the Tri-State area has a total Irish-American population of 4.4 million out of a nation-wide Irish-American population of about 35 million people. See: American Fact Finder, last modified 2012, accessed January 2012, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>. In addition, *Irish Central.com* noted in an article that Spring Lake, NJ was fighting to be recognized as the most Irish city in the United States, see: Patrick Roberts, "New battle over most Irish town in America - SEE POLL," *Irish Central*, last modified January 12, 2012, accessed January 19, 2012, <http://www.irishcentral.com/news/>.

Archdeacon noted, “[t]rivializing the famine curriculum movement because it involves ethnic politics would be wrong. Denying a group its history is a means of reducing its political and social influence.”<sup>35</sup>

In an attempt to make the study of the Holocaust relevant to all students, the framers of Holocaust education classes have taken great pains to shape Holocaust education as study that focuses beyond the experience of Jews in Europe.<sup>36</sup> That students should know about and remember the devastation of the Holocaust and of other genocides is not in question amongst reasonable people.<sup>37</sup> Yet the framers of Holocaust education have implemented objectives designed to educate students beyond the “Jewish experience.” The framers of the New Jersey Holocaust Curriculum established goals and objectives that require students to know specifically about the events that affected European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s. However their objectives call for students to use the knowledge gained through the curriculum to examine events of prejudice, intolerance

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas J. Archdeacon, “The Irish Famine in American School Curriculum,” in *New Directions in Irish-Amer History*, 280-302 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> While the Holocaust curriculum maintains objectives that apply to groups other than those that suffered in the Holocaust, the legislation passed by the State of New Jersey legislature states, “During the period from 1933 to 1945, six million Jews and millions of other Europeans were murdered in Nazi concentration camps as part of a carefully orchestrated program of cultural, social and political genocide known as the Holocaust...” see State of New Jersey, *New Jersey Permanent Statutes Database*, 2010, accessed January 19, 2012, <http://lis.njleg.state.nj.us>.

<sup>37</sup> Tragically, Holocaust deniers are still present in American social and political life. As recently as 2012 a rather prominent Holocaust denier sought high political office in Illinois. See: Menachem Rosensaft, A Neo-Nazi in the GOP: Where’s the Outrage From On High?, March 1, 2012, accessed March 5, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/menachem-rosensaft/arthur-jones-holocaust\\_b\\_1312530.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/menachem-rosensaft/arthur-jones-holocaust_b_1312530.html).

and hatred throughout history.<sup>38</sup> Some of the objectives identified by the New Jersey Holocaust Curriculum are identified below and are meant to apply to events beyond the European Holocaust.

- Students will examine aggression and cruelty as parts of human nature.
- Students will examine the positive and negative behaviors associated with obedience, conformity and silence.
- Students will recognize the positive behavior associated with acts of courage, integrity and empathy.
- Students will compare and contrast the behavior of the perpetrator, victim, collaborator, bystander, resister and rescuer.
- Students will define and explain the nature of prejudice as a universal human phenomenon.
- Students will define and examine contemporary examples of prejudice, scapegoating, bigotry, discrimination and genocide.
- Students will define and examine the history of anti-Semitism from ancient times to 1933.
- Students will investigate current extremist groups and examine whether advanced education and culture reduce the potential for genocide.
- Students will develop and articulate a definition of genocide.
- Students will explain the political difficulties involved in labeling an occurrence genocide.
- Students will analyze the root causes of events other than the Holocaust that have been identified as genocides.
- Students will reassess their generalizations about human nature in light of their study of genocide.<sup>39</sup>

To further bolster their argument, the framers of that curriculum have included a 12-point justification for the existence of their work:

**New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education's Rationale for Holocaust and Genocide Education**

1. The teaching of tolerance must be made a priority if New Jersey's cultural diversity is to remain one of the State's strengths...Study of the Holocaust assists students in developing understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. It helps students develop an

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<sup>38</sup> *The Betrayal of Humanity. A Curriculum Guide for Grades 9–12* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> *The Betrayal of Humanity. A Curriculum Guide for Grades 9–12* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 2003), 13-14.

awareness of the value of pluralism, and encourages tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society.

2. National studies indicate that fewer than 25% of students have an understanding of organized attempts throughout history to eliminate various ethnic groups through a systematic program of mass killing or genocide.
3. Instruction shall enable students to identify and analyze applicable theories of human nature and behavior.
4. Students need to understand that genocide is a possible consequence of prejudice and discrimination.
5. A study of the Holocaust and genocides can help students understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life.
6. Students need to learn that each citizen bears personal responsibility to fight racism and hatred wherever and whenever it happens.
7. The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the 20th century but in the entire history of humanity.
8. It is important for students to understand those factors that contributed to the gradual and systematic process that led to what the Nazis termed The Final Solution of the Jewish Problem, and that the Holocaust was preventable.
9. The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of others' oppression.
10. Holocaust history demonstrates how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.
11. A study of the Holocaust and genocides helps students think about the use and abuse of power, and the role and responsibilities of individuals, organizations and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.
12. As students gain insight into the many historical, social, religious, political and economic factors that cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust, they gain a perspective on how history happens and how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of civilized values. Part of one's responsibility as a citizen of a democracy is to learn to identify the danger signals and to know when to react.<sup>40</sup>

While several of the above goals and justifications are applicable only to the experiences of the European Holocaust, others can easily be applied to the experiences of other groups of people who suffered mass killings or massive violations of their human rights.

Literature examining the teaching of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies indicates that the examination of the Holocaust and other genocides is greater than a

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<sup>40</sup> *The Betrayal of Humanity.*, 12.

simple examination of man's inhumanity to man or of attempted extermination of a sub-culture.<sup>41</sup> While all note the importance of remembrance in studying the Holocaust, the rationale behind examining the Holocaust or genocide has more to do with securing basic human rights and freedoms in the present and the future than with a collective condemnation of past sins and a collective mourning of victims.<sup>42</sup>

Essentially the moral lessons that the Holocaust is often used to teach reflect much the same values that were being taught in schools before the Holocaust, and yet—in themselves—were evidently insufficient to prevent the genocide. Notions of tolerance and of human rights have been advocated since the Enlightenment; belief in the intrinsic value of human life, the “golden rule” of treating others as you would have them treat you, ideas of kindness, courage, charity and goodwill to those in need are all part of the ethical and moral teaching that have underpinned the values of Western society for centuries. And yet it was from that same society that the Holocaust sprang.<sup>43</sup>

The examination of human rights abuses through studying the Holocaust is seen as a motivation for examining the event. April Bannon, writing about Holocaust education, noted,

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<sup>41</sup>A few articles examining the importance of Holocaust Education and Genocide Studies: David H. Lindquist, “Meeting a Moral Imperative: A Rationale for Teaching the Holocaust,” *The Clearing House* 84, no. 1 (2011): 26-30, David A. Shiman and William R. Fernekes, “The Holocaust, Human Rights, and Democratic Citizenship Education,” *The Social Studies* (March/April 1999): 53-62, Joyce Aspel, “Moral Dilemmas and Pedagogical Challenges in Teaching about Genocide,” *Human Rights Review* (July - September 2004): 104-129, Tasha R. Howe, “Lessons Learned from Political Violence and Genocide in Teaching a Psychology of Peace: An Interview with Linda Woolf,” *Teaching of Psychology* (April 2004): 149-153, Karen Riley and Samuel Totten, “Understanding Matters: Holocaust Curricula and the Social Studies Classroom,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 541-562, Samuel Totten, “A Holocaust Curriculum Evaluation Instrument: Admirable Aim, Poor Result,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 148-66, Samuel Totten, “Teaching the Holocaust: The imperative to move beyond clichés,” *Canadian Social Studies* 33, no. 3 (1999): 84-87.

<sup>42</sup> Shiman and Fernekes, “The Holocaust, Human Rights,” 55.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Salmons, “Universal meaning or historical understanding? The Holocaust in history and history in the curriculum,” *Teaching History*, no. 141 (December 2010): 57-63.

If we are truly committed to impacting the world through education, it is important we do not objectify history into a series of facts or reduce historical literature to just another text to analyze; instead we need to show students the relevance of our lessons and situate those lessons in the immediate present.<sup>44</sup>

Also writing about Holocaust education programs in *The History Teacher*, Kean

University's Jeffrey Glanz wrote,

We (teachers) realize that our task...is not just to help our students do well in school, but, more importantly, to succeed in life. We encourage our children by teaching them to be caring, moral and productive members of society...Holocaust study provides a forum to sensitize students to human suffering and oppression as well as to encourage an "ethic of caring" for all people.<sup>45</sup>

Teaching the Holocaust has importance beyond examining the crimes perpetuated against European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s. The act of teaching the Holocaust serves as an examination of the significance of human rights and how those human rights are precious to all peoples.

It was this objective, the examination of human rights, that the framers of the New York Curriculum had in mind when they created the Famine curriculum. Dr. Maureen Murphy of Hofstra University provided the following justification for the New York Famine Curriculum, indicating that the goals and objectives of Famine education are more in line with Holocaust/genocide education than generally assumed by critics of the Curriculum.

The Great Irish Famine occurred in a period where England, countries in continental Europe, and the United States were developing industrially and as modern states. The famine challenged the British government, international humanitarian organizations and philanthropic private individuals to provide aid to massive numbers of poor Irish, many living in remote areas, who were suffering from starvation and famine-related disease. The degree to which those involved

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<sup>44</sup> April Bannon, "Teaching They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky: An Opportunity for ...," *The ALAN Review* 36, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 80-81.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Glanz, "Ten Suggestions for Teaching the Holocaust," *The History Teacher* 32, no. 4 (August 1999): 562.

responded continues to draw praise and condemnation more than a century later. The ideas they debated about the responsibility of government are still being discussed today.

Studies of the Great Irish Famine suggest that famine-related deaths and the accompanying mass emigration were the result of multiple causes, including a food shortage, the lack of individual resources to obtain food, and the failure of the government to adequately regulate markets and provide sufficient support. It is important to note that the economy of England in the 1840s was probably roughly equivalent to the economy of Indonesia today; however, it was the most advanced economy of its time. Economic conditions in Ireland were probably very similar to those contemporary Somalia....

Perhaps the most compelling reason to study the Great Irish Famine is that hunger and homelessness are still with us; that there is want in a world of wealth. The famine's legacy has affected the psyches of the Irish and the Irish of the diaspora teaching us that distress and dislocation have long-term consequences on its victims and their descendants. The lessons of the Great Irish Famine have a claim on our fundamental humanity; they remind us that we have an opportunity to help our neighbors who face similar suffering. Students studying the Great Irish Famine in the context of other famines will develop a better understanding of the factors which contribute to famine in today's world and may, as a result, become actively concerned about the human right to adequate nourishment....<sup>46</sup>

If the Famine fails to meet the standards of genocide, does it meet the standards of a massive violation of human rights? Philosopher Thomas Pogge indicates his view that deaths as a result of extreme poverty (specifically the Irish famine) do constitute violations of fundamental human rights.<sup>47</sup> Irish President Michael D. Higgins maintains “global hunger in the 21st century represents the grossest of human rights violations, and the greatest ethical challenge facing the global community.”<sup>48</sup> Amnesty International

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<sup>46</sup> New York State Department of Education, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum, Curriculum* (Albany, NY: State Education of New York, 2000), 31-32.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Pogge, *Severe Poverty as a Human Rights Violation to Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right: Who Owes what to the Very Poor?* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 51-53.

<sup>48</sup> Michael D. Higgins, “Official Opening Remarks by President Michael D. Higgins at Hunger-Nutrition-Climate Justice Conference Dublin Castle, 15 April 2013,” speech presented at Dublin Castle, Dublin, Ireland, April 15, 2013, *Áras an Uachtaráin*, last modified April 15, 2013, accessed February 8, 2014,

notes that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights maintains that the right to food is an inherent human right and the responsibility of states to provide to its citizens.<sup>49</sup> These views indicate that the Famine presents a case study in human rights violations, if not genocide. Classifying the Famine as a human rights violation does enable the Famine to be examined under both New Jersey and New York's Holocaust/genocide education legislation.<sup>50</sup> This is the tone that the New York State Famine Curriculum takes in its teaching of the Great Irish Famine.<sup>51</sup> Examining human rights violations as part of a Holocaust/genocide studies framework does not cheapen those frameworks:

Not all human rights violations are steps toward genocide. To make too tight a fit between specific violations and genocide might encourage our students to dismiss as farfetched the relationships being considered. Nevertheless, the damage done to those whose rights are being violated is very real and must be halted. We must find ways to communicating this to our students on behalf of the victims and the principles of human rights.<sup>52</sup>

As a human rights issue, it falls short of genocide, yet its study still promotes the mission statement of Holocaust/genocide education, and therefore is a legitimate topic of study within this curriculum.

This chapter and the preceding chapter attempted to address four questions. The

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<http://www.president.ie/speeches/official-opening-remarks-by-president-michael-d-higgins-at-hunger-nutrition-climate-justice-conference-dublin-castle-15-april-2013/>.

<sup>49</sup> *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, last modified 2014, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/economic-social-and-cultural-rights>.

<sup>50</sup> Section B of New Jersey's statute reads: "All people should remember the horrible atrocities committed at that time [the Holocaust] and other times in human history as the result of bigotry and tyranny and, therefore, should continually rededicate themselves to the principles of human rights and equal protection under the laws of a democratic society..." See: *New Jersey Permanent Statutes Database*, A. Res. 18-A, 1991 Leg. (N.J.). Accessed January 19, 2012. <http://lis.njleg.state.nj.us>. New York State's legislation regarding Holocaust education and human r

<sup>51</sup> New York State's legislation regarding Holocaust education and human rights: *Laws of New York*, last modified 2013, accessed January 2, 2014, <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menugetf.cgi?COMMONQUERY=LAWS>.

<sup>52</sup> Shiman and Fernekes, "The Holocaust, Human Rights," 57.

first two questions sought to define the nature of genocide and determine if the Irish Famine constituted genocide. These questions were important to answer considering the placement of the Irish Famine under state mandates examining the Holocaust, genocide and human rights. Considering the changing nature of defining genocide, and considering the differing interpretations of the Irish Famine, no clear verdict on this issue can be reached in this paper. It is unlikely that any consensus among historians will exist in the near future. The term “genocide” evokes visceral and emotional reactions, and it remains unlikely that those who view the Famine as genocide are likely to change their minds (or vice versa). Likewise Irish historians, Irish-American historians and historians who examine Irish and Irish-American history often possess very strong emotions and viewpoints on how to properly interpret Irish history.<sup>53</sup>

As to the placement of the Irish Famine curricula under the Holocaust/genocide studies frameworks, this issue is easier to address. The purpose of examining the Holocaust and other genocides is to (ideally) prevent further genocides from occurring, encourage tolerance and understanding, and instill moral lessons in our students. Even if the Irish Famine fails to meet the criteria of genocide, its purpose should be to examine the human rights violations (with regard to homelessness, hunger, and poverty) that

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<sup>53</sup> See Peter Berresford Ellis and his views on Revisionism. Peter Berresford Ellis, “Revisionism in Irish Historical Writing: The new anti-nationalist school of historian,” *Irish Democrat: Four Provinces Bookshop: Publications: Revisionism in Irish Historical Writing*, last modified June 16, 2005, accessed February 17, 2014, <http://www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/bookshop/publications/revisionism/>. Additionally, the classification of Irish historians as “Traditionalist/Nationalist, Revisionist, or Post-Revisionist” is difficult. See Michael Böss’ article on “Revisionist” historian Colm Tóibín. Michael Böss, “‘Belonging without Belonging’: Colm Tóibín’s Dialogue with the Past,” *Estudios Irlandeses* (2005): 22. Consider also Melissa Fegan and her views of Irish and Irish-American historians and the role of emotion in determining historical study. Fegan, *Literature and the Irish*, 10-35.

occurred during the Famine.<sup>54</sup> Considering that both New Jersey and New York mandate the teaching of Holocaust/genocide studies with the larger objective of examining human rights, and given the literature examining a link between the study of the Holocaust and the study of human rights, the presence of both curricula is justified. However, to paraphrase Professor Snyder, does this get us very far?

The New York curriculum objective is to examine the Famine with respect to the issues of homelessness, hunger, and poverty; the New Jersey curricular objectives are not so clearly defined. That is only one area in which the two curricula are very different in their approach to teaching the Famine. The next chapters will compare and contrast how the New Jersey and New York Irish Famine Curricula examine the event and instruct teachers on how to teach the Famine to their students.

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<sup>54</sup> While the New York Famine curriculum provides a strong justification for studying the Famine as an element of human rights education, the New Jersey curriculum fails to provide a similar justification.

## Chapter 4

### THE NEW JERSEY GREAT IRISH FAMINE CURRICULUM

The first chapters of this paper examined the relationships among the various interpretations of the Irish Famine, the different definitions of genocide, how those genocide definitions might apply to the Irish Famine, and how the Irish Famine could appropriately be examined in class under state-mandated genocide and Holocaust education frameworks. The New Jersey and New York Famine Curriculum provide very different interpretations of the Irish Famine, as well as very different interpretations of genocide; the two curricula also differ on how they recommend the Famine should be taught in a classroom setting. This chapter will examine the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum and how it purports to teach the Irish Famine.

Based on the lesson plans present, the information provided and the overall tone of the curriculum, it is evident that the document supports the view that the Irish Famine's devastation and lasting influence on Ireland was a direct result of British maltreatment of the Irish people and misadministration of the Irish economy. The document presents a perspective (with little room given to any differing viewpoint) that the British were guilty of racism and bigotry in their treatment of the Irish people and in their administration of Ireland as an occupied territory within the British colonial sphere. While the document never explicitly maintains that the British were concretely perpetrators of genocide, the evidence it presents in the lesson plans heavily supports the genocide interpretation.

Published in 1996, the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum is a 117-page document consisting of a seventeen-page teacher synopsis of the events leading up to the

Irish Famine in the mid-nineteenth century, an eleven-page student summary that largely repeats the information present in the first section, and six unit chapters detailing elements of the Irish Famine. These units are titled “Laws,” “Racism,” “Eviction,” “Mortality,” “Emigration,” and “Genocide.” Bibliographies and recommended sources appear throughout the document, as do objectives for students to reach, suggested lessons for teachers to implement in their teaching of the Famine and review questions for students to answer.

The Traditional/Nationalist perspective and tone of the curriculum is not what first strikes the reader of the document, however.<sup>1</sup> The first characteristic that strikes the reader of the document is its physical appearance. The document was commissioned in the mid-1990s, and the work and reflects the publishing style of that time period in regard to typesetting and general word-processing features.<sup>2</sup> This is a shallow criticism, to be sure: that the document does not possess the pleasing attributes of a work produced by a more contemporary publishing program. But the physical features of the work reveal an unpleasant truth about the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum: it is quite old. School districts routinely revise and re-write their curriculum models over time to reflect the nature of most recent education research, teaching methods and current political, social

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<sup>1</sup> There are two versions of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. The first version was published in 1996 and distributed to public schools throughout the state and is available on the New Jersey Holocaust Commission web site. A 1999 version was also published and is available through a number of different agencies and organizations. This is significant because the 1999 presents itself as a much more professionally produced document. This chapter will examine the original version, given that it is the curriculum that is posted by the state.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 1 includes images present from the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum, other Holocaust/genocide and human rights curricula and one image from the New York curriculum. These images demonstrate that there are elements of the New Jersey curriculum that are not aesthetically appealing.

and economic realities.<sup>3</sup> New Jersey’s administrative code requires of school districts, “District boards of education shall be responsible for the review and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction based upon changes in knowledge, technology, assessment results.”<sup>4</sup>

Even if the Famine curriculum was revised once per decade, it passed one revision anniversary and is quickly approaching a second. At the very least, the curriculum is in need of alignment with the New Jersey Core Content Curriculum Standards adopted by the by the State Department of Education. In 2010 the New Jersey Department of Education made the decision to adopt the curriculum model known as *Understanding by Design* (UbD).<sup>5</sup> UbD is a curricular model developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. UbD holds that all curricula should be based on a thematic approach and asks that curriculum be developed with a “focus on teaching and assessing for understanding and learning transfer, and design curriculum “backward” from those ends.”<sup>6</sup> Additionally, all curricula in all New Jersey public schools were to be aligned

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<sup>3</sup> My own district, Millburn Township Public Schools, tries to revise curriculum every five to seven years. A neighboring district in Essex County, Glen Ridge Public Schools, indicates that it seeks to review its 230 different curricula in 13 content areas every five years. See: Glen Ridge Public Schools 5-Year Curriculum Renewal Cycle, last modified 2013, accessed July 9, 2013, <http://www.glenridge.org/Page/158>. Other public schools in New Jersey possess similar policies with regard to curriculum review and revision. Nutley Public School District - Strategic Plan Curriculum, last modified January 2014, accessed January 15, 2014, [http://www.nutleyschools.org/content\\_page2.aspx?cid=144](http://www.nutleyschools.org/content_page2.aspx?cid=144), and the web page explaining curriculum revision for the Bridgewater-Raritan School District, Curriculum, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://www.brrsd.k12.nj.us/curriculum.cfm?subpage=108>.

<sup>4</sup> NEW JERSEY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1 (New Jersey Office of Administrative Law 2002 & Supp. 2013). Accessed January 15, 2014. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/njcode/>.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on UBD, see Grant Wiggins, last modified 2011, accessed October 28, 2012, <http://www.authenticeducation.org/whoweare/grant.lasso>.

<sup>6</sup> Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, “INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS UbD

with the new Core Content Standards.<sup>7</sup> Since it has not been revised since its adoption, the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum is not in compliance with the state's own guidelines on how to teach the humanities.

Because the curriculum is nearing its twentieth anniversary, it does not reflect the most recent scholarship conducted on the Irish Famine. Since the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Famine, much scholarly and popular research has taken place on the study of the Famine and its impact on the Irish people.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, because the curriculum has not been revised in almost twenty years, the supplemental materials recommended by the framers of the document fail to include the most recent developments in technology, as well as topical research. The document only provides one audio/visual resource for a teacher to use: a VHS tape.<sup>9</sup> This would seem to indicate that a major revision of the curriculum is necessary.

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FRAMEWORK?," UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN® FRAMEWORK, last modified 2012, accessed April 1, 2014, [http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/UbD\\_WhitePaper0312.pdf](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/UbD_WhitePaper0312.pdf). While the New Jersey Famine Curriculum is not in line with UbD guidelines on how to teach subject matter, the New York curriculum was created with Grant Wiggins ideas on education as a basis. Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer, "Asking the BIG Questions: Teaching about the Great Irish Famine and World History," *Social Education* 65, no. 5 (September 2001): 287.

<sup>7</sup> Core content standards are the objectives that a student in New Jersey public schools should be able to complete by the end of their high school experience. Core Curriculum Content Standards, last modified 2009, accessed July 12, 2012, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/standards/6/6-2-12.htm> as a reference. The NJCCCS fail to mention the Famine as a required fact of knowledge.

<sup>8</sup> In the last three years alone major works on the Famine that have been produced include previously mentioned books by Tim Pat Coogan, John Kelley, as well as works by Susan Bartolometti, Diarmaid Ferriter and Christine Kinealy.

<sup>9</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, The Great Irish Famine, 17. The video referenced, When Ireland Starved, is available on youtube.

The instructional methods advocated by the curriculum are also knotty, particularly given that the instruction of the Famine is likely to fall under the greater field of the social studies.<sup>10</sup> There is a glaring lack of geography-centered activities or visual references and resources. There is no map of Ireland presenting the rates of death during the Famine, nor a map explaining immigration patterns of Irish to other nations. This is no map of Ireland at all.<sup>11</sup> There are no charts, graphs or tables examining the Famine's impact on the Irish people and the world.<sup>12</sup> While the curriculum seeks to explain what the fungus *phytophthora infestans* (or potato blight) is and how it affected the potato crop of Ireland and Europe, it has no images of how the disease physically affects the potato crop. The curriculum does try to include images present from newspapers and magazines of the nineteenth century that implicate the British of being guilty of racist behavior towards Irish and other non-English peoples. However, the images themselves are not easy to discern without a detailed explanation.<sup>13</sup> Most of the resources and activities present center around reading, writing and discussion; it is difficult to imagine a student (or a teacher) not stimulated through written material being engaged in the New Jersey

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<sup>10</sup> The survey indicates that most of the teachers of the Irish Famine taught the subject in social studies classes. This will be examined later in the work.

<sup>11</sup> Paul G. Fitchett and Amy J. Good note that “[e]xposing student to a geographic perspective of genocide can elicit a critical dialogue on resulting social and ecological ramifications...” Paul G. Fitchett and Amy J. Good, “Teaching Genocide through GIS: A Transformative Approach,” *The Clearing House* 85 (2012): 86.

<sup>12</sup> There are photocopies of charts from Kinealy's book, *This Great Calamity*, 77 (page 167 of the Curriculum). There is one chart in the document that examines slave trading at British ports of call, New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 108.

<sup>13</sup> Appendix 1, Figure 4.

curriculum. The lack of visual references, resources and arts-related activities hinder the effectiveness of the curriculum.<sup>14</sup>

The activities that do appear in the curriculum reflect objectives that are not objectively measurable.<sup>15</sup> Each unit that appears in the curriculum possesses only one “main performance objective” that is difficult to measure against a given standard. Unit # I, for example, asks that students “understand that the mass starvation in Ireland resulted from historical political forces as well as the potato blight itself.”<sup>16</sup> Unit # II asks students to “define and give examples of anti-Irish racism and relate them to the Irish Famine experience.”<sup>17</sup> Unit #III requires that “the student will determine what role mass eviction played in exacerbating the condition of the poor during the Great Famine.”<sup>18</sup> Units IV and V require students to “examine the levels of mortality,”

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<sup>14</sup> David E. Gullat of Louisiana Tech notes, “recent developments in cognitive science and neuroscience help explain the power of the arts as enhancing teaching and learning in numerous ways.” David E. Gullat, “Enhancing Student Learning Through Arts Integration: Implications for the Profession,” *The High School Journal*, April/May 2008, 14. This is supported by an article appearing in Educational Leadership 2006. See: Nick Rabkin and Robin Redmond, “The Arts Make a Difference,” *Educational Leadership* 63, no. 5 (February 2006): 60.

<sup>15</sup> Measurability has become a rather important issue in educational circles in the last few years. Due to No Child Left Behind testing at all levels of public education has increased. New York Times, No Child Left Behind Act News - New York Times, July 6, 2012, accessed September 18, 2012, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/n/no\\_child\\_left\\_behind\\_act/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/n/no_child_left_behind_act/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier). Beginning in 2013, all schools in New Jersey must begin using “benchmark assessments” to measure student growth as a means to measure teacher effectiveness. See: AchieveNJ: Teach. Lead. Grow. Improving Educator Evaluation in the State of New Jersey, last modified 2013, accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/AchieveNJ/>.

<sup>16</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 31.

<sup>17</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 66.

“humanize numbers and statistics” and “describe conditions” of mass immigration.<sup>19</sup> The last unit’s objective requires that the “student will weigh the opinions of historians and attempt to come to a conclusion about genocide in Ireland during the Great Famine.”<sup>20</sup>

While the curriculum wants the student to draw conclusions about the Famine, it does not make the teacher’s job particularly easy in reaching this objective. There are no means provided by which to measure the “understanding” or “determining” the curriculum asks students to accomplish. The curriculum provides no list of key vocabulary terms, no important individuals or references for the teacher to present to the students. There are key questions to be answered by the students, but the evaluative questions themselves are tricky, in that they direct the student to an interpretation that is pre-determined by the framers of the document (this will be examined later). There are no test models or test bank questions to allow a teacher to easily generate a test to check for student understanding. These elements would make the curriculum much more user-friendly and would allow teachers an easier time of teaching and measuring learning of the Famine within their history or social studies class.

It likely would be high school students who are exposed to this curriculum, given the sophisticated nature of the reading selections placed in the document and recommended to the teacher for use. While the curriculum provides both teacher and student summaries for reference, it would require a student and a teacher to possess at least a rudimentary knowledge of European history to connect the gaps in history that are

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<sup>19</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 101.

presented in both the teacher and student summaries. For example, the curriculum attempts to confine the history of the Irish people from 1000 years to a few pages:

### **THE NORMANS**

The first Normans from England and Wales landed in Wexford, Ireland in 1169. They conquered the disunited Irish using armor, horses and fortified castles. The Normans brought with them the tradition of Common Law, based upon the personal ownership of property, in contrast with life under Irish Brehon Law where ownership was vested in the extended family or clan. However, the newcomers quickly adopted the Irish language, married into Irish families, and “it was said of them that they became more Irish than the Irish themselves.” (4.)<sup>21</sup>

On the next page, however, the next section proceeds:

### **STATUTES OF KILKENNY**

The English crown wished to preserve the racial purity and cultural separateness of the colonizers. They instituted the Statutes of Kilkenny. These decreed that the two races, Norman and Gaelic (Irish) should remain separate. Marriage between races was made a capital offense.<sup>22</sup>

A teacher of world (or American) history or a teacher of English literature who is unfamiliar with the details of British history could easily mistake the connection between the Normans and the English.<sup>23</sup> The curriculum also fails to note a date for the Statues of

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<sup>21</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> A social studies teacher charged with teaching history might not be an expert in history. In New Jersey, certification to teach social studies requires only one course in World History and one course in American History. Social Studies Standard Certificate (ENDORSEMENT CODE: 2300), last modified 2004, accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/educators/license/endorsements/2300S.pdf>. New York State makes slightly more requirements of its teachers, indicating that social studies teachers in that state be “proficient in American History and Geography, World History and Geography, New York State History and Geography, basic Civics and Economics.” To receive a certificate requires 30 credits in social studies courses, with 21 of those credits in history-based collegiate courses. See: New York State Department of Education. Curriculum and Instruction: Social Studies, accessed February 12, 2011, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gt/gif/curriculum.html>.

Kilkenny, and portrays those statues as evolving not long after the first Normans arrived, when, in fact, these statutes were passed nearly two hundred years after the first Norman invasions.<sup>24</sup> The next major topic in the “Student / Teacher Summary” deals with the Protestant Reformation and its influence on Anglo-Irish relations, meaning that the document essentially covers over 500 years of English, Irish and general European history in the span of about six paragraphs. Later, the curriculum references laissez-faire economic theory and practice through a short segment from Helen Litton’s *Illustrated History of the Irish Famine* and provides a definition of laissez-faire economics through a photocopied selection from Grolier’s *Encyclopedia Americana* written by William Kinnard of the University of Connecticut.<sup>25</sup> It provides a selection from the *Encyclopedia Americana* explaining the life and philosophy of Thomas Malthus.<sup>26</sup> The original work produced for the state does little to develop who Malthus was, what laissez-faire economic theory is and how those two historical elements had an impact on the development of the Irish Famine.<sup>27</sup>

In another section, the curriculum cites John Mitchel’s quote, “God sent the blight, but the British brought the Famine.”<sup>28</sup> The document does not develop or explain

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<sup>24</sup> The document should be lauded for pointing out that the statues existed, a revision would likely indicate the reasons behind the statutes as well as a year for when they were created.

<sup>25</sup> Litton’s work was published in 1994. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards mentions laissez-faire economic theory, one could assume that the framers of The Great Irish Famine would have felt that topic would be covered by the teacher. Core Curriculum Content Standards - Social Studies, last modified 2010, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/standards/6/index.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick McGregor, “The Times Higher Education - The Treasury's Fatal

who Mitchel was, except to mention that he was a leader of the Young Ireland Movement.<sup>29</sup> The document fails to fully explain the Young Ireland Movement, or, for that matter, the differences between the Young and Old Ireland political movements.<sup>30</sup> A good deal of gray area is left in a document that is supposed to be heavily focused on history. The teacher without a firm foundation in European history may find the curriculum difficult to implement, and the student with the same lack of knowledge may find the information difficult to comprehend.<sup>31</sup>

The students learning from this document should be students who are motivated by reading and writing and discussion activities, since most of the suggested activities surround those types of learning activities. The suggested readings provided by the curriculum are rather intense for the average high school student. Selected curriculum readings scored a 14 on the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test, meaning that students in

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Choice,” *The Times*, last modified April 10, 1998, accessed August 4, 2012, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=106806&sectioncode=26>, and New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 105.

<sup>29</sup> There is no further mention of the Young Ireland Movement in the document beyond that distinction.

<sup>30</sup> The history of Ireland is not something covered in many general European history texts. My own experience reflects this. I had never heard of either John Mitchel or the Young Ireland Movement until I had taken classes at Drew University. By that point I had been teaching for about fifteen years and had obtained a Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership from New Jersey City University. John Kelly, in his 2012 book *The Graves are Walking*, quickly explains the basic differences between the Young and Old Ireland Movement and their relationship to the Famine. See: John Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People* (New York: Henry Holt, 2012), 116-117. Kindle.

<sup>31</sup> While not specifically referencing the Irish Famine, the A.P. European Course curriculum as dictated by the college board notes in one of its objectives that students should be familiar with “The influence of sanitation and health care practices on society; food supply, diet, famine, disease, and their impact.” See The College Board, *A.P. European History Course Description* (Princeton, NJ: The College Board, 2010), 39.

high school would find the suggested reading a challenge.<sup>32</sup> Teachers of students not enthralled with history as a subject matter, or not interested in Irish history, or not interested in learning through reading and writing activities may find the curriculum challenging to implement.

The historical perspective of the Famine curriculum is the most troubling element of the document. The framers of the document intend that students hold the British people in as much contempt as possible, given the evidence they present to convince the student that the Famine was a genocidal event (if not genocide) and the British were guilty of committing it against the Irish people or were at least complicit in allowing a genocidal famine to occur. In the process, the document blames the British for being an imperial, racist power that created conditions in Ireland that allowed the potato blight to have an adverse effect on the native peoples. When the blight and Famine occurred, the curriculum contends, the British rulers of Ireland saw an opportunity to re-make and change Irish social, political and economic life rather than provide immediate relief and aid to the Famine victims.<sup>33</sup> The Chairman of the New Jersey Curriculum Committee, James Mullin, noted that it was his desire to allow students to draw their own conclusions about the nature of the British treatment of the Irish during the Famine as genocidal.<sup>34</sup>

While the desire of the New Jersey Curriculum Committee may be to have students draw

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<sup>32</sup> The Flesch-Kincaid test was designed to determine readability. It is a tool utilized by educators to determine if a particular document is age-appropriate for its audience. See Readability index calculator, <http://www.standards-schmandards.com/exhibits/rix/index.php> (accessed January 20, 2012), and the NJ Irish Famine Curriculum.

<sup>33</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 61-62.

<sup>34</sup> James V. Mullin, "Irish Famine Education and the Holocaust 'Straw Man,'" American Chronicle (blog), entry posted July 8, 2008, accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/67720>.

their own conclusions, the path the curriculum leads them down provides little room for any conclusion other than that the British were guilty of genocide by direct action or by complicity.

This is most evident in the unit chapters of the curriculum that seek to expose the students to British racism and to make the case that genocide occurred. Unit #II makes the argument that the British were guilty of treating the Irish people as inferiors, noting, “Anti-Irish prejudice is a very old theme in English culture.”<sup>35</sup> The objectives for that unit of study ask students to define and give examples of anti-Irish racism and then relate them to the Irish Famine experience.<sup>36</sup> That objective can never be reached because the chapter never explains how the racist behavior of the British led to the devastation of the Famine. The Chapter Unit goes to great lengths to make connections among the Irish experience, the African slave experience and the experience of Asians. It also presents a great deal of anecdotal evidence examining the attitudes of nineteenth-century British writers and politicians as to their attitudes toward the Irish.<sup>37</sup> However, there is no firm connection between the racist attitudes of the British people, or the British government, and the devastation of the Famine. Nor is there any material that would indicate that every Briton was a racist, bigoted imperialist. The review questions present at the end of that Chapter Unit read:

- How were racism and religion used by the British to justify the economic exploitation of Ireland?

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<sup>35</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 45.

<sup>37</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 56-62.

- Why is it necessary to examine racism against the Irish in the context of British racism against a variety of peoples?
- Given that radio and television did not exist during the Irish Famine, a few British Ministers and powerful newspapers could have used racism, religion and propaganda to control British public opinion about Ireland. How could such a tragedy happen today, in the age of mass communication?
- How is Britain's role in the slave trade relevant to a study of anti-Irish racism?

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The questions above lead the student (or the teacher) to conclude that Britain was a racist, religiously bigoted nation that sought to exploit Irish economic resources as well as African human resources. The Unit Chapter does not fully explain or connect the bigoted treatment of the Irish to the greater issue of genocide, nor does it make the connection as to how that racist behavior manifested itself in British treatment of the Irish during the Famine.

The concluding Unit Chapter, “Genocide,” seeks to build on the earlier work in “Racism.” The goal of the Unit Chapter is for students to “weigh the opinions of historians and attempt to come to a conclusion about genocide in Ireland during the Great Famine.”<sup>39</sup> Only a few resources are provided for the student to examine in order to make this evaluation. Among those evidentiary resources are the definitions of Genocide from the American Heritage Dictionary, the United Nations Convention on Human Rights and Holocaust scholar Richard Rubenstein.<sup>40</sup> Following those definitions are short readings from Oxford Professor James Anthony Froude, historians Peter Gray, Dennis Clark, James Donnelly, Cecil Woodham-Smith, Christine Kinealy, and R. Dudley

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<sup>38</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 59.

<sup>39</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 101.

<sup>40</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 102.

and T. Desmond Williams. Interspersed between those short readings are statements by Edward Twistleton, Lord Clarendon, Nassau Senior, Lady Wilde, and John Mitchel.<sup>41</sup> There is little provided to the teacher or the student in terms of biographical information of the writers of these short readings or their viewpoints on the Irish people and the Famine. Students and teachers are left to research on their own about the careers of John Mitchel, Nassau Senior and Lord Clarendon. Following that evidence, the curriculum provides short readings as to the nature of British imperial rule; these segments are titled: “British Starved American Revolutionary War Prisoners,” “During the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, England was the Leading Slave Trading Nation,” “The British used Warships and Troops to Force China to Accept Imported Opium,” and “At the Beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the British Starved Thousands in Boer War Concentration Camps.”<sup>42</sup> For a curriculum that is supposed to be focused on the Great Irish Famine, a good deal of information is presented on British imperialism outside of Ireland.

Following this, the Curriculum presents a five-point “Case for Genocide: A Summary.” No case for the Famine being anything less than genocide is presented, leading to the conclusion that the final student evaluation was pre-determined. The end-of-chapter questions in the original curriculum support this conclusion. The chapter review questions that appear in the 1996 curriculum read,

1. Which historian or author provides the weakest arguments about genocide? Which the strongest? Why?
2. Which, if any, of the three definitions of genocide, applies to British rule in Ireland?

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<sup>41</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 102–107.

<sup>42</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 107–109.

3. Why is it important to consider the other acts of starvation imposed by the British in the historical period before and after the Famine?
4. Do the actions of the British government related to the Revolutionary War prison ships, the slave trade, the Opium War and the Boer War concentration camps, influence your opinion about whether or not the British were capable of genocide in Ireland?<sup>43</sup>

It is not evidently clear why the British treatment of other peoples with regard to starvation would apply to the study of the Irish Famine, unless the framers of the document were trying to “build a case” that this behavior was part of a greater pattern in how the British treated other indigenous peoples. It is unclear why the framers of the curriculum would otherwise include the information about British behavior during the Revolutionary War, the Opium War or the Boer War if not for the singular purpose of influencing student opinion as to the British and their historical legacy.

One wonders what the curriculum is trying to accomplish by having students examine the Irish Famine. While the Famine curriculum is designed to teach students and teachers about the Famine, this chapter seems to possess a few hidden purposes. Firstly, it seeks to expose students to the fact that the British people were racist in their views of non-European (and non-British) peoples during the nineteenth century. Secondly, it seeks to inform students that the Irish were victims of racist treatment during their colonization by the British. Finally, the curriculum itself seeks to have students become aware of the idea that the British people were an inherently evil empire, or at least that there was a perspective of the British Empire that was not well-received by much of the world. It appears that the ultimate hidden objective of the curriculum is to indoctrinate students into the Traditional/Nationalist perspective of Irish history, and specifically that

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<sup>43</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 110.

interpretation of the Famine. In the teacher summary portion of the curriculum appears a passage that indicates that the source of the potato blight was Britain: “The spores of the blight were carried by wind, rain and insects and came to Ireland from Britain and the European continent.”<sup>44</sup> If one were to consider the above quote, it might appear that the British began the Famine through biological warfare.

The negative view of the British is evidenced in the lack of attention paid by the curriculum to those English people who attempted to intervene in the Famine and provide relief, however inadequate those efforts proved. Unlike the Nazi regime in Europe, whose sole attitude toward European Jews was extermination by 1942, the British did try (perhaps parsimoniously and definitely ineffectively) to aid the Irish for at least a limited time. The New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum does indicate that the Society of Friends were quite dedicated to Famine relief, but it focuses on condemning the government of Lord John Russell and the relief efforts of Charles Trevelyan.<sup>45</sup>

In examining the nature of racism directed at the Irish, the curriculum fails to fully explore the treatment the Irish emigrants received once they came to the United

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<sup>44</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 6. Some recent scholarship maintains that the disease that devastated Ireland’s potato crop came from America, likely Mexico. See John Reader, *The Fungus that Conquered Europe*, March 17, 2008, accessed January 20, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/17/opinion/17reader.html>. Others note that the first signs of the blight were recorded in the United States as early as 1843, see: Eric Vanhaute, Richard Paping, and Cormac O’Grada, “The European subsistence crisis of 1845-1850: a comparative perspective,” in *International Economic History Congress* (Helsinki, Finland, 2006), 11. Regardless of where the disease originated, it is clear that the authors wish to put the responsibility for the blight’s existence in Ireland and the resulting Famine on the shoulders of the British. It also demonstrates why the curriculum should be revised.

<sup>45</sup> The curriculum allows for about 320 words detailing the work of the Society of Friends, while spending more than twice that examining the export of food from Ireland to England during the Famine. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine*, 8-10.

States. While British racism/prejudice are fully explored, little attention is paid to nativist America in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> The rise of Nativism as a political force in the United States, the anti-Catholic movements that existed in early nineteenth-century America and the general hatred that was displayed toward the Irish as the first “outsiders” arriving to America is certainly worth exploring in any curriculum that seeks to address the impact of the Famine, especially a Famine curriculum to be used in American schools. The presence of this evidence might increase the accessibility and usefulness of the document to teachers of American history and American studies.<sup>47</sup> Yet it does not appear. The framers of the document spent great effort to create an anti-British feeling, yet they failed to fully examine the prejudices the Irish felt from the Anglo-American community upon their arrival to the United States.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, the curriculum fails to account for the racist behavior the Irish and Irish Americans themselves displayed in the United States. It would appear that while the creators of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum had little fear of offending British feelings, they were careful not to offend Americans or Irish Americans.

The State Department of Education could also have more effectively enabled teachers to access the Famine Curriculum. It is not hyperbole to indicate that the curriculum had a legendary nature to it. Until 2011 if one searched for the curriculum

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<sup>46</sup> In the cartoon section of the revised, 1999 edition, one of Thomas Nast’s many cartoons slandering the Irish is present, but that is the lone source of evidence that the Irish suffered from the same Anglo racism they experienced as members of the British Empire.

<sup>47</sup> This is particularly important considering the number of teachers of US History who address the Famine in their classes. This will be addressed later in this paper.

<sup>48</sup> Timothy G. Lynch, ““A Kindred and Congenial Element”: Irish-American Nationalism’s Embrace of Republican Rhetoric,” *New Hibernia Review* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 82.

through the New Jersey Education Department's web pages, one would not find it. Before 2011 the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum could be downloaded through the Nebraska Department of Education's web page and the Illinois State Department of Education provided a download link to the Nebraska Department of Education for Illinois teachers.<sup>49</sup> The American Committee on Irish Studies also provided a link on their web page to the NJ Famine Curriculum Committee.<sup>50</sup> In 2011 the New Jersey Department of Education finally posted the curriculum under its New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission web page.

Referencing John Mitchel's interpretation of the Famine, Melissa Fegan notes, "Mitchel's Famine is as evangelical as it is revolutionary, as personal as it is historical, and the reader is ruthlessly manipulated."<sup>51</sup> Much the same could be said about the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. What is clear about the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum is that it was a first draft for a curriculum that sought to expose secondary school students to the Irish Famine. However, it was still a very rough first draft that could have (and likely should have) undergone revision since its initial publication. This is apparent when the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum is compared with the New York model, which will be examined in the following chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> In 2012 the Nebraska Department of Education changed its link on the Irish Famine to the on-line textbook offered through the History Place web page. See: History Links that Help Support the Nebraska K-12 Social Studies/History Standards. accessed March 3, 2011, <http://www.education.ne.gov/ss/history.htm>, and The History Place: The Irish Potato Famine (n.p.: n.p., 2000), accessed October 1, 2012, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/famine/>.

<sup>50</sup> "Resources," American Conference for Irish Studies, last modified 2005, accessed June 2012, <http://www.acisweb.com/resources.php?type=links#hist>.

<sup>51</sup> Fegan, *Literature and the Irish*, 27.

## Chapter 5

### THE NEW YORK GREAT IRISH FAMINE CURRICULUM

The New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum stands in stark contrast to the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. Published only six years after the New Jersey curriculum, the New York curriculum appears to be a more professionally produced document. The typesetting, use of color images and more sophisticated layout in the New York document provide a more polished appearance than its New Jersey counterpart. It provides lessons in which students can engage beyond traditional reading and writing activities. The document contains maps of Ireland, charts detailing the loss of potato crop and color photos detailing the effect of potato blight.<sup>1</sup> The curriculum contains easy-to-view black-and-white and color images for student and teacher use in class. In generating a famine curriculum the writers wanted to create a work that possessed lesson plans that almost any teacher could utilize in almost any class setting.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum, which examines the Famine from a Traditional/Nationalistic perspective, New York's model is clearly in the Post-Revisionist vein. The only major drawback of the New York curriculum has to do with the size of the work, an element that was noticed by New York state teachers and critics of the document.<sup>3</sup> The length of the curriculum presents a challenge to the teacher looking to download a hard copy from the New York State Department of Education's

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* (Albany, NY: New York State Department of Education, 2001), 248-255.

<sup>2</sup> Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer, "Asking the BIG Questions: Teaching about the Great Irish Famine and World History," *Social Education* 65, no. 5 (September 2001): 286 - 291.

<sup>3</sup> Jacquelyn Swearingen, "An Irish History Lesson Goes Untaught," *Albany Times Union* (Albany, NY), March 17, 2002, sec. A, 1.

web page, as the document is split over eleven separate web links and requires more than one binder to physically carry the document.<sup>4</sup>

The size of the document can be explained in that the curriculum often presents several versions of lesson plans that are adjusted for differentiated learning abilities, styles and grade levels. For example, one particular lesson titled “Why Was There a Famine in the 1840s?” addresses the historical interpretations for the causes of the Irish Famine.<sup>5</sup> The New York model presents summaries of four traditional arguments that explain the devastation of the Irish Famine and historians providing their views to illuminate the arguments.<sup>6</sup> The summaries are all primary resources and examine the historical charges surrounding the causes of the Famine (including the assertion that the Famine was the result of British actions). Also, unlike the New Jersey curriculum, the New York curriculum presents the same arguments in an appropriate manner for students with less-than-fully-developed reading skills and abilities. Page 356 presents the original statements made by historical figures (John Mitchel among them) and page 357 presents simplified versions of the above arguments with the note at the bottom of the page reading, “Edited for purposes of The Great Irish Famine Curriculum.”<sup>7</sup> The presence of the repeated primary resources, edited and adjusted for different learning styles and age groups, adds to the overall length of the curriculum. The New Jersey curriculum was likely aimed at high school students; the New York curriculum includes lesson plans and ideas that could be utilized in classrooms ranging from fourth grade to senior year in high

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gt/gif/curriculum.html>

<sup>5</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 353.

<sup>6</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 356.

<sup>7</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 357.

school.<sup>8</sup> These specialized lessons for students at the elementary, middle and secondary level also adds to the heft of the curriculum.

The size of the document is also a reflection of the time, attention and care the framers of the curriculum put into creating self-contained lesson plans with specific instructions for teachers to implement and utilize in their teaching of the Famine.<sup>9</sup> Each lesson presented in the document possesses a historical background for the teacher unfamiliar with Irish, European or American history. Specific objectives are listed, and the learning activities often have more than one objective toward which the teachers should direct their students. The activities are directly linked to New York State Social Studies and English & Language Arts Standards, as well as to a list of skills each activity is designed to enhance. Several learning activities are offered for teachers to utilize within their classes, as well as optional assessments and suggestions for teacher reflection. An activity might require only one page of written material for a class to view; however, that one page might be surrounded with five or six “supporting” pages for the teacher to reference. Despite these specific instructional elements, the curriculum encourages teachers to use whatever methods or lessons presented they choose: “The curriculum can be approached in a number of different ways. The following options demonstrate that teachers can use the curriculum when they know the topic they wish to

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<sup>8</sup> “Plan for Irish Famine Study Under Fire,” last modified April 23, 2001, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/plan-irish-famine-study-fire-article-1.908031>.

<sup>9</sup> The final product lists (among other organizations) more than forty different teachers who either field-tested or helped to develop lessons involved in the document. There are more than five pages of acknowledgements to the individuals and organizations that helped to develop the curriculum; the “table of contents” alone is four pages long. New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, v.

teach, or when they have determined the objective of a lesson, or when they are addressing a specific learning standard.”<sup>10</sup> This is different from how the New Jersey curriculum instructs its teachers on how it should be utilized:

The necessary historical and political context for a study of the Irish Famine is provided to you in the Teacher’s Synopsis, immediately following the Table of Contents.

Following the Synopsis is a Student Summary, covering the same material as the Teacher’s Synopsis, but without footnotes or bibliography. It would be very difficult for the student to understand any of the six study units that follow without first reading the Summary.<sup>11</sup>

The New Jersey curriculum provides little in terms of student objectives for the teacher to reach or benchmarks for the teacher to monitor progress, unlike the New York curriculum.

One of the suggested activities in the New York curriculum requires students to compare and contrast methods of relief that were engaged by private charity relief agencies (in this case the Society of Friends, or Quakers) and the government relief agencies by comparing and contrasting the soup recipes produced by the Quakers and by Alexis Soyer for British government.<sup>12</sup> After reading the recipes used by the Quakers and by the British government for feeding the starving Irish, students would then determine which one would have been more effective in preventing hunger and which method of feeding the Irish people was more humane. Since this lesson (and several

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<sup>10</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996), introduction.

<sup>12</sup> Soyer was a French chef who invented a form of soup to prevent the Irish from starving to death during the Famine. His soup was decidedly less nutritious than the soup developed by the Society of Friends during the same time. See New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 278-283.

lessons similar to this one) present learning about the Famine beyond the traditional reading and writing activities (read a historical interpretation, write a reaction and discuss), the student who is disinterested in “traditional” learning activities may find some interest in the lessons presented in this curriculum. Likewise the teacher of a student who is uninterested in those “traditional” reading- and writing-based learning activities might find a lesson that would reach those students.

While the New York curriculum is certainly the result of hard work and serious reflection in its production, it also has a few shortcomings that need to be addressed. First, it was published in 2001, hinting that perhaps a revision of the document is due after nearly thirteen years. As was indicated earlier in examining the New Jersey curriculum, recently there has been a good deal of research on the Irish Famine, resulting in the production of both scholarly and popular works of history; a revised curriculum would reflect that recent research.

Secondly, while the New York curriculum is available on-line, its size requires that it be split into eleven different .pdf files, requiring that a teacher download or view the .pdf files and then skim through the more than one thousand pages to find a lesson to utilize in class.<sup>13</sup> A teacher seeking one or two critical lessons or learning activities to meet a specific class need could easily get lost in the finished product.<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> This might also explain why the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum is often linked to other state departments of education. Until 2012, The states of Nebraska & Illinois maintain links to the NJGIFC, (see: The Nebraska Department of Education, <http://www.education.ne.gov/ss/history.htm> and [http://www2.isbe.state.il.us/ils/social\\_science/mandates\\_2.htm](http://www2.isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_science/mandates_2.htm)) while the City University of New York maintains links to both the New Jersey and New York curricula (see: <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/lehman/irishamericanstudies/fam.html> )

<sup>14</sup> Kevin Sheehan, in a review of the curriculum in the 2002 *Social Studies Docket*, indicated that he felt he was reading “...a Harry Potter novel. I was drawn into

curriculum provides 150 different lessons that surround twenty-seven different “clusters” to be utilized by teachers in instructing their students on the Great Famine. The clusters, listed on pages 10 through 14 of the curriculum, range from an overview of Irish history to an examination of the role of government in meeting the crisis of the Famine, to lessons examining elements of Irish culture.<sup>15</sup> The New York curriculum identifies the clusters that a teacher could utilize in teaching about the Famine; those clusters are not the means by which the curriculum is organized. Instead, the document is broken down into major topics with accompanying subtopics:

- Background reading and student activities
- Ireland before the Great Irish Famine
- Was the Great Irish Famine an Act of Nature?
  - Part 1
  - Part 2
  - Part 3
- How did the Great Irish Famine Change Ireland and the World?
  - Part 1
  - Part 2
  - Part 3
- What is the Legacy of the Great Irish Famine?
  - Part 1
  - Part 2<sup>16</sup>

For a teacher to utilize the document and find an appropriate lesson to fit a grade/ability level, a good deal of cross-referencing, reading and research would have to take place.

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another world.” See Kevin Sheehan, “Review of the New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum Guide,” *Social Studies Docket* (Winter-Spring 2002): 21-23.

<sup>15</sup> New York State Department of Education, *The Great Irish Famine*, 10 - 14.

<sup>16</sup> This is how the New York State Department of Education has organized the NYGIFC on its web page. See: New York State Department of Education, NYSED: Curriculum and Instruction, September 3, 2009, accessed February 12, 2012, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gt/gif/curriculum.html>.

While there is certainly a great deal of gripping information present, a better organizational structure would make the finished work more practical.<sup>17</sup>

A much more damaging criticism of the curriculum is that several of the lessons present in the document have little or no association with the Irish Famine. It is possible that a teacher could honestly answer (if questioned) that he is using the Great Irish Famine Curriculum in his teaching and never actually teach about the Famine.<sup>18</sup> In one cluster (designed to be taught to elementary or middle school students), there is an activity exploring the voyages of St. Brendan the Navigator. The lesson appears in the second major topic area of the curriculum, with the idea that it will cause students to understand how the Famine changed Ireland. The curriculum provides the following student objectives for that specific activity:

#### STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Describe the exploration of St. Brendan and the significance of the voyage.
- Trace the route of St. Brendan and of Tim Severin.
- Reflect on the characteristics of explorers and record observations in a journal.

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The document then provides handout summaries, pictures, maps and links to other resources about St. Brendan (including Shaun Davey's uilleann pipe suite commemorating the voyage). High marks should be given to the document for providing

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<sup>17</sup> The recent revisions in New Jersey's Holocaust Curriculum reflect this idea. Different curricula are divided based on grade level groupings. It is possible for a teacher to access lessons for K-4th grade, 5-8th grade, and high school students separately, New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/curriculum/>.

<sup>18</sup> As it happens, several teachers in New York State indicated that they used the Famine curriculum, but did not teach the Famine in their classes.

<sup>19</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 567-574. The curriculum explains that Tim Severin was the subject of a 1977 National Geographic documentary exploring the likelihood of a real voyage similar to St. Brendan's legendary one in the sixth century.

audio and visual references and activities, but it provides no information in this particular lesson about the Famine. While there might be a connection between a legendary figure in Ireland's sixth century to the devastation that was the potato blight and subsequent Famine of the mid-nineteenth century, it is not explicit in the document.

That lesson is followed by a lesson exploring the construction of the Erie Canal. Any New York State curriculum (that was history-or social studies-based) would benefit from some connection New York's unique state history and perhaps to the creation of the Erie Canal. While Irish workers helped to develop that technological marvel, one wonders why it appears in a curriculum that is dedicated to the Great Irish Famine. One wonders if the lesson is appropriate, particularly since the Canal was completed in 1825.<sup>20</sup> The next lesson explores the Irish community of Albany in the 1850s, and Albany's growth was certainly linked to the presence of the Canal. Albany would also become a center of Irish-American culture.<sup>21</sup> Because the curriculum is so vast, the typical teacher might not see the greater connections between those specific lessons and the Irish Famine, particularly since that lesson appears in the section titled "How did the Great Famine Change Ireland and the World?"<sup>22</sup> Additionally, the curriculum identifies as one of its performance indicators that students could "[c]omplete well-documented and historically accurate case studies about individuals and groups who represent different ethnic, national, and religious groups, including Native American Indians, in New York

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<sup>20</sup> The NY Famine Curriculum asserts that the workers on the Canal were (largely) Irish, yet does not make an overt connection beyond that reality to the Irish Famine. New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 575-588.

<sup>21</sup> Albany today is the location of the Irish-American Heritage Museum.

<sup>22</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 566.

State and the United States at different times and in different locations.”<sup>23</sup> It is unclear how a curriculum about the Irish Famine relates directly to Native Americans.

A third lesson, falling under the topic *Ireland Before the Famine*, and within the cluster *Ireland Today*, calls for students to be able to make a St. Brigid’s Cross. That a public school would engage in creating a pre-Christian or early Irish Christian religious symbol could raise some problems, regardless of its association with the Irish Famine.<sup>24</sup>

The framers of the curriculum justify this activity:

#### BACKGROUND

It is important for student to realize that Ireland’s families, even if they were poor farmers, had an active, vibrant culture full of music, art and dance. The Great Irish Famine may have had a profound impact on family life, but many cultural traditions managed to survive.

Rural Ireland follows the old Irish calendar with an orientation built around the seasons, not the months. Ireland has the same seasons as the United States, but they fall earlier in the year. Seasons begin on the first days of February, May, August, and November. Each season brings changes in weather and with it a change in rural life. Each rural activity requires good luck as well as skill, so celebrations of the seasons always have an element that was practiced for good luck.

The old name for the first day of February (the first day of spring) was Inbolc [Inbollick]. In later times, it was called the feast of St. Brigid or St. Brigit; it was a feast taken over from an earlier Celtic Brigid who was associated with fire and fertility. (The Christian saint is much tamer; she is a gentle creature often described as a serving girl.)<sup>25</sup>

While one can argue over the importance of studying Irish pre-Famine culture and knowing how to create a St. Brigid’s cross, there can be a strong concern over the lack of evident connection to the Famine, particularly since this tradition (as claimed by the

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<sup>23</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 590.

<sup>24</sup> ACLU Defense of Religious Practice and Expression in Public School, accessed January 1, 2014, <https://www.aclu.org/aclu-defense-religious-practice-and-expression-public-schools>.

<sup>25</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 115-118.

curriculum) survived. The objective behind this activity is that students will be able to “[d]escribe calendar customs in rural Ireland and the part the St. Brigid’s cross played in traditional observances.”<sup>26</sup> While the framers of the curriculum might have intended the teachers to have students find the degree to which the Famine changed Irish cultural patterns, there is no explicit direction for the teacher to make this step in the classroom.<sup>27</sup> Similar lessons in the New York curriculum include a lesson titled, “Ballads: Writing the Emigrant’s Experience,” and “Irish Stereotypes in Paddy Songs” and “Lyddie: The Irish in New England Mill Songs.”<sup>28</sup> Each of the above activities seeks to explain the Irish immigrant experience to students, but there is a rather casual connection to the events of the Famine itself. These very Irish-specific activities contrast with one of the objectives of the framers of the curriculum: to create a document that would appeal to students who were not of Irish ancestry.<sup>29</sup>

That objective—appealing to students who possess no noticeable Irish identity—is one of the great strengths of the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum. It attempts to analogize the experience of the Irish suffering in the Famine years to experiences other

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<sup>26</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 116.

<sup>27</sup> Christine Kinealy, *A Death-dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland* (Chicago, Ill.: Pluto Press, 1997), 151-155. While referencing Holocaust Curriculum, Robert P. Welker notes: “Any curriculum that employs interdisciplinary instruction, therefore, must give students and teachers explicit directions about how to make connections and must point out those materials or activities that provide solid instructional bridges.” Robert P. Welker, searching for the educational imperative in holocaust curricula to *New Perspectives on the Holocaust: A Guide for Teachers and Scholars*, ed. Rochelle L. Millen (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996), 101.

<sup>28</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 624, 648, 659.

<sup>29</sup> Murphy and Singer, “Asking the BIG Questions,” 286-91, and Murphy, *Teaching Hunger: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to Holodomor and Gorta Mor*, 110.

than the specific experience of the Irish people and teach the Famine as an example of human rights education. In creating the Famine curriculum for New York, the framers wanted to create a document that would explore the topics of poverty, hunger, homelessness, the status of refugees, immigration and political oppression—topics that have appeal beyond the historical experiences of one specific group of Europeans in the middle of the nineteenth century. The objective is to have students who are themselves non-Irish and living in the twenty-first century make an empathetic connection with the experiences of Irish people in the middle of the nineteenth century. Given the diversity of the student population within New York State, the framers may have wanted to find a way to appeal to those students who would not feel any particular ethnic connection to the plight of the Irish people in the Famine.<sup>30</sup> It is that reasoning that might explain why Native Americans were referenced in a performance objective for a lesson about the Erie Canal.

Evidence of this desire was expressed on the part of the framers and within the activities of the curriculum itself.<sup>31</sup> The last section of the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum is labeled, “What is the Legacy of the Great Irish Famine?” and contains activities examining the very themes the framers want students to examine and reflect upon. It includes lessons that detail the impact of the Irish Famine on Irish and Irish-American culture, as well as lessons examining the impact of hunger and poverty on

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<sup>30</sup> New York State Department of Education indicates that about 50% of the student population in public schools are non-white. New York State Education Department, Education Statistics for New York State, at 4 (N.Y. 2012).

<sup>31</sup> See Kate Zernike, “Using the Irish Famine to Explore Current Events,” New York Times (New York, NY), March 21, 2001, sec. B, 7, Maureen Murphy, “Teaching About the Great Irish Famine: A Response,” *Social Studies Docket* (Winter/Spring 2002): 19, and Murphy and Singer, “Asking the BIG Questions,” 286 - 291.

people living in India, Somalia and during the Holocaust. While there is no specific analogy to the events of the Holocaust and other genocides in history, it is clear that the framers want to identify hunger and poverty as human rights issues that need to be explored.<sup>32</sup> It is that focus of the document that legitimizes the New York curriculum existing under the New York State Holocaust/Genocide Studies Frameworks. The curriculum takes great pains to include a number of other ethnic, religious, and racial minorities and compare their historical and cultural experiences to those of the Irish people. One lesson calls for the students to draw comparisons between British relief efforts during the Famine and American efforts in Kosovo during the late 1990s.<sup>33</sup> A series of activities examine the efforts of the Choctaw Nation in the United States to help provide aid to the Irish people.<sup>34</sup> There are activities relating to Frederick Douglass and his experiences with the Irish people during the Famine and lessons comparing Robert Peel's efforts to deal with the Famine with that of Franklin Roosevelt's efforts in combating the Great Depression in the United States.<sup>35</sup> One particular activity allows for a trial of James Hasty for the murder of Major Mahon – an activity in which students

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<sup>32</sup> The last activity present in the curriculum seeks to have students see the symbolism connection between the Famine and greater human rights issues. New York State Department of Education, *The Great Irish Famine*, 1013.

<sup>33</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 287 – 290.

<sup>34</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 342 – 352.

<sup>35</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 404 – 411. Both the NYGIFC and the NJGIFC take a rather dim view of laissez-faire capitalist thought that (they contend) worsened the condition of the Famine. In the case of the NYGIFC, the connection to Franklin Roosevelt could also be explained in the document making an attempt to include a New York Governor.

engage in a mock trial experience.<sup>36</sup> That lesson engages students by having them enact a trial during a class setting and teaches the Famine as part of that mock trial.

In examining these lessons, one sees a curriculum that was the product of a group of educators with a very challenging objective: specifically, the creation of a curriculum examining the events of the Irish Famine that potentially any teacher from the elementary, middle or secondary level could utilize in an urban, suburban or rural setting at any level of academic achievement within the state of New York. Additionally, the framers sought to create a final work that would write the Irish experience into world and American history and appeal to students who possessed no Irish identity.<sup>37</sup> Considering that mission, one can see how some of the lessons present in the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum examine elements of Irish culture that have little do with the specific events of the Famine; lessons that have little explanation of how the Irish cultural elements are connected to the Famine; and lessons that examine hunger, poverty and disease with little explicit connection to Irish culture.<sup>38</sup> This reality also leads to a document that is much larger than perhaps it needs to be. Columbia University's Teachers College in 2002 noted,

New York's state-mandated Great Irish Famine curriculum...has been largely underused in most schools...many critics also point to the vastness of the curriculum as problematic as well. Stephen Thornton, Associate Professor of

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<sup>36</sup> Mahon was a resident Irish landlord who was found dead after he cleared his lands of over 900 tenants and shipped them to America. Some of those tenants were passengers on a ship that lost 158 out of 500 passengers.

<sup>37</sup> "NCSS Celebrates Excellence Hofstra University School of Education Receives NCSS 2002 Programs of Excellence Award," *The Social Studies Professional*, March/April 2003, 1,6.

<sup>38</sup> One activity for students to engage in deals with "Hurler Christy Ring: Ireland's Greatest Athlete." New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 127. This activity appears in a section of the Curriculum labeled, "Ireland Before the Great Irish Famine." Ring lived from 1920 to 1979.

Social Studies at Teachers College, agrees and suggests that the enormity of the guide is a large contributor to its lack of use. “Some groups’ interest in a specialized topic often produces ‘materials that are so ambitious and so unaligned with the rest of the curriculum that they don't get used as effectively as they might.’”<sup>39</sup>

There is the possibility that it is this wide-ranging nature of the curriculum that has hindered its utilization in New York schools.

Regardless of the positives elements or the drawbacks of the curriculum, the document reflects the Post-Revisionist interpretation of the Great Irish Famine. The New York curriculum and the committee that wrote it refuse to concretely blame to the British for beginning or perpetuating genocide against the Irish people.<sup>40</sup> The New York curriculum does allow students to evaluate the role of the British (and current American) government in solving the problems generated by a natural disaster or a crisis, but does not go so far as to assert that the Famine was simply a naturally occurring event (as Revisionists might assert). It also fails to completely absolve the British government of responsibility, instead requiring students to make that determination themselves.<sup>41</sup>

Examples of this tone can be seen in the following activities and student tasks:

<b><u>Page #</u></b>	<b><u>Activity Title:</u></b>	<b><u>Student Task:</u></b>
353	“Why was there a	Students are asked to explain the causes of

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<sup>39</sup> Teachers College, Columbia University, New York’s Great Irish Famine Curriculum, April 4, 2002, <http://www.tc.edu/news.htm?articleID=4000> (accessed January 15, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> One of the creators of the NYGIFC, Alan Singer, wrote that in making the Curriculum, “We never pretended that the famine did not take place or tried to minimize its impact on Ireland and the world. Neither did we condemn Great Britain for acts of genocide. Instead of presenting British action or inaction in Ireland during the famine as an example of genocide, we provided documentary evidence that makes it possible for students to examine the question from different perspectives and to arrive at different conclusions.” Alan Singer, “Multiple Perspectives on the Holocaust?,” *Social Science Docket* 3, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2003): 2.

<sup>41</sup> Murphy, *Teaching Hunger: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to Holodomor and Gorta Mor*, 107.

	Famine in the 1840s?"	the Irish Famine from a variety of perspectives. Students are also reminded that "[t]he most highly contentious political debate is whether the British government consciously pursued genocidal policies designed to depopulate Ireland by death and emigration. The Great Irish Famine has been the source of nationalist anger, it has been an historical problem to be studied critically and demythologized, and it has been a reminder of the realities of hunger and poverty in the contemporary world." <sup>42</sup>
430	The Great Irish Famine: An Act of Genocide?	Among other objectives, students are asked to "[d]ebate the question of whether the Great Irish Famine was genocide, based on past knowledge and current research using the democratic dialogue technique." <sup>43</sup>
		This activity has students examine other evidences of genocidal behavior from historical events, including the Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935, images of the Rwandan Genocide in 1995, accounts from Oludah Equiano's voyage on the Middle Passage and Native American population numbers in Mexico. <sup>44</sup>
693	The Great Irish Famine And The Quest For Irish Independence	This activity requires students to evaluate the connection between Irish nationalism of the late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century and the British relief policy during the Famine years.

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<sup>42</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*.

<sup>43</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*. In this case the democratic dialog seeks to "...promote community examination of complex issues rather than to have winners and losers. Emphasis is placed on supporting opinions with evidence, helping team members prepare for presentations, and listening and responding to ideas presented by students on the other team."

<sup>44</sup> This activity appeared to make the framers rather nervous. In the teacher notes section the framers wrote, "It is important for students to realize that the study of genocide is particularly sensitive, not only because of the graphic nature of the content, but because it is critical that they gather thorough information before drawing conclusions about the cause of massive starvation and death. Students will have to do extensive research in order to determine whether genocide had occurred in Ireland, and they may not agree with each other." New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 430.

Here the framers note, “some have used the modern term genocide to describe the failure of the British government to respond in a timely and appropriate way.”<sup>45</sup>

The evidence demonstrates that the New York Curriculum embraces as Post-Revisionist interpretation of the Famine. In doing so, it allows the student to debate the question of genocide without embracing one particular interpretation regarding the “Famine-as-genocide.”

This is not to suggest that there is not a radical edge to the finished work. One of the last activities present in the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum requires the students to evaluate the nature of food and hunger as political weapons. As part of that activity, students are required to learn about the hunger striker Bobby Sands and examine a poem celebrating his life and sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> The curriculum also includes the “Famine Apology” speech, given by British Tony Blair in 1997, in which he commented, “Those who governed in London at the time failed their people through standing by while a crop failure turned into a massive human tragedy. We must not forget such a dreadful event.”<sup>47</sup> On page 44 of the document, in a section titled “Addressing the Political Debate,” the writers of the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum explain their views with regard to genocide:

A highly contentious political debate is over whether the government of Great Britain consciously pursued genocidal policies designed to depopulate Ireland through death and emigration. Explaining the causes of the famine and analyzing

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<sup>45</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*.

<sup>46</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 945 – 948. The title of the unit lesson is “Hunger as a Political Weapon.”

<sup>47</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 1008-1012. This lesson is called, “Hunger in Memory: Reflecting on Events Like the Great Irish Famine.”

the impact of British policy have been complicated by continuing conflict over whether the six counties of Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom. While we do not believe that British policies during the Great Irish Famine meet the criteria for genocide established by the United Nations (1951) in a treaty signed by the United States, we believe it is a legitimate subject for discussion.

One way to approach the political debates is to explore the differences between the goals of political activists and historians. The primary concern of activists is to win support for their political position in an effort to bring about political, social and economic changes in society. While historians also have political views and goals, their professional commitment requires that they examine events from multiple perspectives and that they hold themselves to a higher standard when they draw conclusions based on evidence. As students read excerpts from primary source documents and interpretations of the causes of the Great Irish Famine and the reasons for British policies, they need to consider the following questions: a) “Is this commentator writing as a political activist or an historian?”; b) “What is her/his point of view about the Great Irish Famine and other events in Irish history?”; c) “Does her/his point of view aid in their examination of events or interfere with their analysis?”; d) “How could the argument be made more effective?”; and e) “Can someone be impartial when researching and writing about a topic like the Great Irish Famine?”<sup>48</sup>

The curriculum does not shy away from the very contentious issue surrounding the “Famine-as-genocide” accusation and interpretation.

Rather than present one very specific viewpoint on Irish and Irish-American history and the Famine, the framers of the document have generated activities and presented evidence that enables students to make a final judgment with regard to the genocide charge. The first major section of the document asks the larger thematic question, “Was the Irish Famine an Act of Nature?” Students are empowered to make their own judgments about the nature of genocide as it applies to the Irish Famine; students could presumably answer “no” to the question relating the Irish Famine to an act of nature. In presenting its arguments for and against the “Famine-as-natural-event” question, the curriculum notes the significance of the efforts of Prime Minister Robert

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<sup>48</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 44.

Peel, the presence of British relief agencies (such as the Society of Friends) and the existence of organizations such as the British Association for Relief of Extreme Distress in Remote Parishes of Ireland and Scotland.

Page 40 of the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum notes that “[a] long term result of the Great Irish Famine was the nurturing of Irish nationalism, both among those who never accepted the Union between Great Britain and Ireland and those embittered by perceived British indifference to Irish suffering.”<sup>49</sup> The curriculum does allow for student reflection and evaluation as to the causes of the Famine. The lesson noted earlier in this chapter allows students to examine different historical analyses of the Famine and asks them to evaluate each. In examining the various interpretations of the Irish Famine, the New York Curriculum notes the contentious arguments over classification of the Famine as genocide and tries to make connections between the Famine and other contemporary economic, social and political conditions that would not be considered genocide. The lesson exploring the interpretation of the Famine begins with the following introduction:

### **Causes of the Great Irish Famine**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Central to the discussion of the Great Irish Famine is the question of its cause (or causes). This activity introduces students to the explanations that have been offered since the mid-nineteenth century. Carr’s observations and Malthus’s population theory were written before the Great Irish Famine; however, their points of view were revisited by those trying to make sense of the crisis.

It is important for students to realize that historians today continue to debate questions about the Great Irish Famine. The questions about causes and responses and the interpretations proposed continue to remind us that history is never simple. What is clear is that people died of hunger and famine-related disease in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century and continue to die from those causes today. Students might think about these documents discussing causes as they confront

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<sup>49</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 40. This ends the section in the NYGFIC explaining why the Famine was worth exploring.

the problems of hunger today. Are some of the causes the same? Are there new causes?<sup>50</sup>

Later in the curriculum appear activities that possess charts detailing landlord eviction rates during the worst years of the Famine, as well as a chart detailing the number of livestock exported to England during 1846 – 1849. The curriculum also provides a cartoon that shows the “Irish Monkey” and the British Lion that could do well to support the New Jersey curriculum’s contention that the British were guilty of racist ideology before, during and after the Famine years.<sup>51</sup> In due course the New York curriculum does not take a stance that the Famine was (or was not) genocide, and it allows students to determine that condition for themselves by providing balanced evidence to the students.

When compared with the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum, the New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum is a more professionally produced document and a curriculum that allows for a variety of interpretations in its teaching of the Irish Famine. While the document itself may be a “better” curriculum than its counterpart in New Jersey, does that mean that it is being more effectively used within the classroom? The press release from Columbia’s Teacher’s College would appear to indicate that it is “gathering dust.”<sup>52</sup> The next chapter will examine the construct of the survey that was used in determining if teachers in New Jersey and New York utilized their respective Famine curricula in their classrooms, as well as determining their depth of teaching of the

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<sup>50</sup> New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great*, 364.

<sup>51</sup> Appendix 1, Figure 10.

<sup>52</sup> Teachers College, Columbia University, “New York’s Great Irish Famine Curriculum,” news release, April 4, 2002, accessed January 15, 2012, <http://www.tc.edu/news.htm?articleID=4000> and Jacquelyn Swearingen, “An Irish History Lesson Goes Untaught,” *Albany Times Union* (Albany, NY), March 17, 2002, sec. A, 1.

Famine and their own views in regards to the classification of the Famine as a genocidal event.

## Chapter 6

### THE SURVEY

Screenwriter Aaron Sorkin maintains that all writing consists of two contradicting elements: an intention and obstacles to that intention.<sup>1</sup> The intention behind the creation of both the New Jersey and New York Famine curricula may have been to expose students to the significance of the Irish Famine and the effect it had on the Irish people and their descendants now living in America and other nations.<sup>2</sup> This intention likely emerged from a lack of formal study of the Irish Famine or the Irish historical and cultural experiences in American public schools; the Famine did not (and perhaps still does not) act as an important historical topic in the minds of many teachers.

Former social studies teacher and current co-director of the Zinn History Project Bill Bigelow noted in a 2012 blog entry for the *Huffington Post* that Irish and Irish-American history are unknown in public education, and the examination of Irish and Irish-American heritage has largely been reduced to clichés and stereotypes surrounding St. Patrick’s Day.<sup>3</sup> In reviewing many popular textbooks used in American schools, Bigelow noted the failure of those books to examine Irish history or the Great Irish Famine with any breadth or depth:

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<sup>1</sup> HBO Connect: The Newsroom Q&A with Aaron Sorkin, last modified July 27, 2012, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://connect.hbo.com/events/the-newsroom/aaron-sorkin-newsroom/>.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Murphy of the New York Irish Famine Curriculum Writing Committee indicated that this was one of the objectives in writing the New York State Irish Famine Curriculum. “NCSS Celebrates Excellence Hofstra University School of Education Receives NCSS 2002 Programs of Excellence Award,” *The Social Studies Professional*, March/April 2003, 1,6.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Bigelow, The Real Irish American Story Not Taught in Schools, March 14, 2012, accessed July 31, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-bigelow/the-real-irish-american-s\\_1\\_b\\_1345521.html?view=print&comm\\_ref=false](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-bigelow/the-real-irish-american-s_1_b_1345521.html?view=print&comm_ref=false).

Sadly, today's high school textbooks continue to largely ignore the famine, despite the fact that it was responsible for unimaginable suffering and the deaths of more than a million Irish peasants, and that it triggered the greatest wave of Irish immigration in U.S. history. Nor do textbooks make any attempt to help students link famines past and present...Holt McDougal's U.S. history textbook *The Americans*, devotes a flat two sentences to "The Great Potato Famine." Prentice Hall's *America: Pathways to the Present* fails to offer a single quote from the time. The text calls the famine a "horrible disaster," as if it were a natural calamity like an earthquake. And in an awful single paragraph, Houghton Mifflin's *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* blames the "ravages of famine" simply on "a blight," and the only contemporaneous quote comes, inappropriately, from a landlord, who describes the surviving tenants as "famished and ghastly skeletons." Uniformly, social studies textbooks fail to allow the Irish to speak for themselves, to narrate their own horror.<sup>4</sup>

Bigelow's criticisms can be described as unfair since the books he identifies are American history textbooks. It is unlikely that those texts would examine with any detail (if at all) the forces that drove Italian, Greek, Russian, Chinese or any other ethnic, racial and religious group to the United States.

However, an examination of world and European history texts reveals a similar condition in regards to their coverage devoted to the Great Irish Famine. Mark A. Kishlansky's *The Unfinished Legacy: A Brief History of Western Civilization* spends one page (658) examining the Famine. Kishlansky's words, however, could be considered a Revisionist interpretation of the Famine, seemingly indicating that the responsibility for the Irish Famine's devastation is best placed on the Irish themselves:

Proverbs warned peasants against putting all their eggs in one basket, but no folk wisdom prepared the Irish for the potato disaster that struck them. In 1845 a fungus from America destroyed the new potato crop...The Irish Great Hunger was the most striking example of the problem that plagued all Western societies in the

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<sup>4</sup> Bigelow, "The Real Irish American," The Blog.

first half of the nineteenth century: what to do with the poor. The Irish famine was an extreme case of crisis that Great Britain was unable to handle.<sup>5</sup>

As a textbook, *The Unfinished Legacy* is not specifically recommended by the College Board for Advanced Placement European History, but other works by Kishlansky (and co-authors Patricia O'Brien and Patrick Geary) are recommended for that particular class.<sup>6</sup> Donald Kagan's *The Western Heritage* has managed to show some growth over recent editions with regard to coverage of the Famines. The Third Edition, published in 1987, mentioned the Irish Famine in two sentences. The Eighth Edition however, provides much greater coverage to the Irish Famine—almost three paragraphs and a special section devoted to the Irish and their place within greater European history.<sup>7</sup> John McKay's Advanced Placement European text, *A History of Western Society*, devotes ten paragraphs to the Famine, providing a Post-revisionist interpretation of the Famine as a complex event in European and world history.<sup>8</sup> Jackson J. Spielvogel's book dedicated specifically to A.P. European History, *Western Civilization*, provides a comparatively detailed examination of the Irish Famine, three paragraphs and a sidebar of John Mitchel's *The Last Conquest of Ireland*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary and Patricia O'Brien, *The Unfinished Legacy: A Brief History of Western Civilization* (New York, New York: Harper-Collins, 1993). Kishlansky's text is almost one thousand pages in length.

<sup>6</sup> AP European History: Example Textbook List, accessed January 3, 2014, [http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/european\\_history\\_textbook\\_list.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/european_history_textbook_list.html).

<sup>7</sup> See: Donald Kagan, Steven E. Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), and Donald Kagan, Steven E. Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage: Since 1300*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> John P. McKay, *A History of Western Society*, 10th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011), 704-705.

<sup>9</sup> Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, 4th ed. (Australia: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 1999), 596. A later text co-written with William J. Duiker fails to

Other texts do not cover the Famine in great detail. Spielvogel's *World History: The Human Odyssey*, devotes two paragraphs to the Famine in a book over one thousand pages in length.<sup>10</sup> Howard Spodek's *World History* fails to note the Irish Famine at all, and the only mention of Ireland is in reference to the tribal migrations following the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>11</sup> Eugene Weber's *Western Tradition* and Bentley and Ziegler's *Traditions and Encounters: Global Perspectives on the Past* also fail to mention the Famine.<sup>12</sup> Mortimer Chambers' *The Western Experience* examines the death of one million Irish in three sentences.<sup>13</sup> Robert W. Strayer's Advanced Placement Global History textbook, *Ways of the West*, provides the following summary of the Irish Famine: "Potatoes especially allowed Ireland's population to grow enormously and then condemned many of them to starvation or emigration when an airborne fungus, also from the Americas, destroyed the crop in the mid-nineteenth century."<sup>14</sup> Finally, Richard Bulliet's *The Earth and its Peoples: A Global History* details the Irish Famine in two sentences in one part of the text, and four words in another.<sup>15</sup> The College Board recommends the books referenced or other books produced by the same authors as

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mention the Great Irish Famine at all. It does, however, reference the Irish Republican Army on page 805. See: William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History: The Human Odyssey*, teacher's wraparound ed. (Cincinnati, OH: West Educational Pub., 1998), 656-657.

<sup>11</sup> Howard Spodek, *The World's History*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2010), 186.

<sup>12</sup> Eugene Weber, *The Western Tradition*, 5th ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1995), and Jerry Bentley and Herb Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*, 3rd ed. (New York, N.Y.: McGraw-Hill Education, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Mortimer Chambers, *The Western Experience*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2010), 792.

<sup>14</sup> Robert W. Strayer, *Ways of the World with Sources*, High School Edition: A Global History (n.p.: Bedford/St Martins, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Richard W. Bulliet, *The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 586, 685.

appropriate for Advanced Placement World or European History classes.<sup>16</sup> For the writers of both Irish Famine curricula, the first major obstacle to students learning about the Famine would be the attention already paid to it by textbook writers and companies, and by extension, the teachers' (who use those texts as resources) lack of knowledge on the subject.

If it is possible that a lack of textbook coverage influenced the teaching of the Irish Famine, did the presence of the Irish Famine curricula increase the teaching of that subject? To determine if the Great Irish Famine was being examined in humanities-based classes in New Jersey and New York, a voluntary survey through email was conducted in the spring of 2012. This chapter will explain the survey and the survey procedures. Results will be examined in a later chapter.

A survey of teachers as to how (or if) they teach the Famine in their classrooms is going to have limitations. Firstly, no baseline assessment of instruction about the Irish Famine was given in the early 1990s or 2000s. It is impossible to know how many teachers examined the Irish Famine in their classrooms before the respective curricula were created; how many teachers examine the Famine as a result of the respective curricula would therefore remain a mystery. Secondly, the survey results were going to

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<sup>16</sup> The College Board A.P. European History: Example Textbook List, accessed September 30, 2012, [http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/european\\_history\\_textbook\\_list.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/european_history_textbook_list.html), and College Board A.P. World History: Example Textbook List, accessed September 30, 2012, [http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/world\\_history\\_textbook\\_list.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/world_history_textbook_list.html).

be voluntary and anonymous, providing only a small window into the actual numbers of teachers that examine the humanities within their classrooms.<sup>17</sup>

Four basic questions formed the basis of the survey:<sup>18</sup>

1. Do teachers teach the Famine in their classrooms? If they did, how much time was devoted to the study of the Famine? In what context was the Famine examined?
2. Do teachers use their respective State Famine Curricula when they teach the famine within their classrooms?
3. Do teachers feel that the Great Irish Famine was tantamount to genocide? Did the classification of the Famine as genocide increase the likelihood that it would be examined in classrooms?
4. Did teachers' ethnic backgrounds shape their own views or determine their teaching of the Famine?

The survey was intended to be simple to answer without sacrificing the essential purpose. Before any surveys were emailed to prospective teachers, the building principal, department supervisor or district superintendent was emailed for permission to begin the survey. Teachers were made aware that responses would be kept confidential (names

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<sup>17</sup> The teachers who would be asked to take part in the survey would be teachers of the humanities: that is, teachers of social studies, language arts, and the fine arts (music, practical and applied arts). Considering the importance human rights education occupies in social studies and humanities (David A. Shiman and William R. Fernekes, "The Holocaust, Human Rights, and Democratic Citizenship Education," *The Social Studies*, [March/April 1999]: 55.), teachers in the sciences, mathematics and physical education were not targeted in this survey. Given the rather sophisticated nature of both the New Jersey and New York models in regards to the reading material present, high school and middle school/junior high school teachers were targeted.

<sup>18</sup> Appendix 2 contains the survey questions sent out to teachers.

were not required to complete the survey) and that their results would be part of an academic work.<sup>19</sup>

The first four questions in the survey were relatively simple questions addressing the responders' school districts, grade levels they taught and how many years they had been teaching, as well as respondent teachers' subject areas. The fifth question on the survey was perhaps the most important one for the purposes of this survey. In a simple "yes or no" format, teachers were asked if they taught the Famine in their classroom settings. Those respondents who said "no" were then directed to question #10, while those who responded "yes" were further questioned about their teaching of the Famine (see Appendix 2 for the survey questions). "Yes" respondents to Question #5 were then asked about the amount of time they dedicated to the teaching of the Irish Famine. Considering that all teachers are under constant time constraints in dealing with relevant material, the survey sought to determine exactly how much time was dedicated to the examination of this specific event.<sup>20</sup> It was expected that most of the teachers responding to the survey would be teachers of social studies, and since the social studies can encompass a number of different and specific subjects, the survey wanted to determine both time dedicated to the Famine and specific context in which the Famine was

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<sup>19</sup> Copies of the letters sent to district administration and teachers can be found in Appendix 2. Since my email address was available as part of the survey, several teachers reached out to me to ask me about the survey and this study.

<sup>20</sup> Erik Robelen, "Most Teachers See the Curriculum Narrowing, Survey Finds," *Curriculum Matters* (blog), entry posted December 8, 2011, accessed January 16, 2014, [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2011/12/most\\_teachers\\_see\\_the\\_curricul.htm](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2011/12/most_teachers_see_the_curricul.htm) l.

examined.<sup>21</sup> Teachers were also asked if they felt they spent enough time examining the Famine in their classrooms.

The ninth question sought to determine bias due to ethnicity. Teachers were asked about their own ethnic heritage, or the ethnic heritage of people whom with they were in a personal relationship. This question sought to determine if a form of identity politics was at play when the teaching of the Irish Famine took place.<sup>22</sup> Teachers who did not teach the Famine were not asked if they possessed some form of Irish identity.

Every respondent was then asked question #10, which sought the subjects' views on the Famine as an act of genocide. All respondents were also asked question #11: whether they were aware of the Famine curriculum. Those that responded "no" were asked to complete the survey. Those that responded "yes" were asked four more questions. Teachers who were aware of their respective state Famine curriculum were asked to evaluate it. While many teachers are not necessarily experts in evaluating curriculum, teachers have important roles in implementing curriculum and have important feedback to provide about the effectiveness of curriculum since they are the

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<sup>21</sup> E. Wayne Ross, the struggle for the social studies curriculum to *The Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems, and Possibilities, Third Edition* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>22</sup> On a personal note, I am one of five Irish-American social studies teachers at Millburn High School and (when teaching World History) spent the most time (two class periods) exploring the intricacies of the Famine in World History classes. This fact, and the study that I conducted, created for me a certain reputation in the building. This issue was also raised by Rogers in his examination of the Irish Famine as genocide. Rogers, "The Great Hunger: Act of God or Acts," in *Ireland's Great Hunger*, 236, as well as other writers. Colm Tobin, "Erasures Colm Tóibín on the Great Irish Famine," *London Review of Books* (July 1998): 17-23, and Harry Browne, "US using Irish past to shape its future Billed alongside slavery and the Holocaust, The Great Irish Famine Curriculum is being introduced to schools in New York State. Harry Browne went to find out what Irish history could possibly teach one of the world's most ethnically-mixed school populations and what the Irish education system could learn from this radical initiative," *Irish Times* (Dublin, Ireland), April 24, 2001, Education and Living, 53.

individuals most responsible for utilizing it.<sup>23</sup> Question #13 was one of the two areas of free response in the survey. Those teachers who wished could provide additional feedback on their views of their respective state curriculum. Question #15 asked teachers who responded “yes” to #14 to elaborate on how they utilize the curriculum in their classrooms.

Between February and June 2012, 253 teachers from forty different districts in New Jersey and 119 teachers from more than fifty districts in New York completed the surveys. Attempts were made to survey every high school each state; however, several districts refused to participate and many districts did not respond to emails that sought to survey teachers of a particular district. In some instances middle school teachers were surveyed, due to particular grade construction of individual districts.

Teachers were classified into four groups: teachers of social studies, teachers of language arts, teachers of fine arts and teachers who taught more than one discipline (multi-disciplinary).<sup>24</sup> In New Jersey, most of the teachers who responded (144) taught social studies, eighty-six taught language arts classes, eleven taught fine arts and twelve taught more than one subject. New York State teachers responded far less than New Jersey teachers did, and of those that did several were teaching in districts in which one or two buildings housed all students from kindergarten to senior year. Therefore, there was a higher rate of what New Jersey would term “middle school teachers” (thirty-five to forty-one) who responded to this survey. Again, most of the teachers who responded were teachers of social studies (seventy-one), while thirty-four were from language arts,

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<sup>23</sup> Ross, *The Struggle for the Social Studies Curriculum to The Social Studies Curriculum*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> A list of specific school districts as well as respondents appears in Appendix 3.

nine were from fine arts, and five were from more than one discipline. In both states the majority of teachers had between six and fifteen years of experience, meaning that they possessed significant time in front of the classroom, but were not yet at a point in their careers where retirement was an issue.<sup>25</sup>

Before any attempt is made to digest what these numbers mean in regards to the teaching of the Famine within the public schools of New York and New Jersey and the utilization of those states' respective curricula, attention should be paid to the open-ended elements of the survey and how individual teachers responded. Two questions allowed teachers to provide responses to their reactions on both the Famine curricula and how they utilize it within their classroom teaching. Additionally, many teachers and administrators took the time to email me about their experiences in teaching the Famine. These elements will be explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>25</sup> Appendix 3, Table 5.

## Chapter 7

### TEACHERS RESPOND

This study sought to examine if humanities teachers examine the Famine in the course of their teaching and how (if at all) teachers utilize the official state Famine curricula. While trying to reach that objective, this survey sought a means by which teachers could provide feedback and voice their professional opinions about teaching the Irish Famine and using the official state curricula. Teachers have important feedback to provide beyond simple “yes/no” answers available in an on-line survey, and their feedback as to the efficacy of the respective state Famine curriculum guides provides insight as to how the average teacher views each document. Often teachers are the lowest rungs in the political ladder of public education, and this study felt their views on the teaching of the Famine would provide valuable insight.<sup>1</sup>

Question #13 asked teachers to provide feedback about their state’s Irish Famine curriculum. Twenty-five New Jersey teachers provided open-ended responses. Despite the overall smaller New York State respondent pool, twenty-six teachers answered question #13. These responses provide some insight as to what the respondent pool was considering when they took the survey and how the average teacher views both the Famine and the Famine curriculum. Many teachers took the opportunity to write assessments of the means and the methods of contemporary teaching. The fifty-one teachers that took the time to respond to this question present perspectives on the

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<sup>1</sup> Reacting to the most recent “Education Nation” summit held by the National Broadcasting Corporation in September 2012, Huffington Post blogger Randy Turner noted how teachers have been the targets for political posturing on both sides of the aisle. Randy Turner, “It’s Not Bad Teachers; It’s the Economy, Stupid,” *The Blog*, entry posted September 25, 2012, accessed September 28, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-turner/its-not-bad-teachers-its-b\\_1912219.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-turner/its-not-bad-teachers-its-b_1912219.html).

challenges facing teachers when attempting to incorporate the Famine in their classrooms as well as when they are teaching other subject matter.

Two of the more dramatic responses, which could be labeled as the “yin and yang” of the open-ended responses, provide insight as to the extreme views present in the debate surrounding the Famine experience in the classroom, how a curriculum would reflect those views and how the Famine is often interpreted by historians. The first came from a social studies teacher in the High Point, New Jersey district: “I DO NOT call what happened in Ireland a ‘famine’, it was a ‘HUNGER’. There was plenty of food in the country other than the potato. It was a crime carried out by the British Government on a people they had slaughter(ed) for centuries.”<sup>2</sup> The opposite perspective was provided from a middle school teacher in Vernon, NJ: “Other topics in history are more pressing than the Irish Famine. In a global context it should play a role in the effects of natural disasters...but this event does not require massive amounts of time.”

Reactions like this were also present from teachers in the Empire State. A Fairpoint High School social studies teacher felt the inclusion of the Irish Famine in the greater world history curriculum was not necessary: “I think that the inclusion of a special unit on the famine is a bit over the top-if there was a special unit on every awful event in history, we would teach world history for a decade. It is unreasonable.” A fine arts teacher from the Norwich City School District had few kind words to say about the Famine curriculum for New York State. In particular, that teacher did not see the need for the cross-disciplinary elements of that document:

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<sup>2</sup> The raw data from the survey as well as the responses from the teachers surveyed appears at the end of this paper.

To be honest the first time I looked over this curriculum I thought it was a joke. It seems a large amount of time was used to create curriculum on the Great Irish Famine. If it is looked at as a basis for writing curriculum it makes sense, however the topic is strange for such a large unit. The unit itself has enough information to fill at minimum a full year of classes. To include the visual arts was an odd choice in my opinion also, as the topic does not easily lend itself to the NYS Visual Arts Standards.

Chapter 1 examined the views of those opposed to the placement of the Irish Famine under greater Holocaust/genocide education frameworks. At least some teachers in New York as well as New Jersey agreed with those assessments.

Other teachers believed that the Famine was a legitimate subject for examination in a public school setting. Three language arts teachers, one from the High Point, New Jersey district and two from Livingston, New Jersey district responded that the Famine merited discussion and examination in public school classrooms. One of the Livingston language arts teachers responded: “I teach a lesson on Irish History every St. Patrick's Day, and I also reference Ireland on occasion because I have traveled there and am the grandchild of Irish immigrants.” The language arts teacher from High Point responded: “I believe the Famine was a historic abuse. It was a horrible disregard for humanity. I tend to feel it falls short of the term genocide. Was it a willful annihilation of a group or the blatant disregard for their lives? I lean towards the latter.” Another language arts teacher from Livingston responded:

I am surprised we don't spend more time on Famine poetry/writing. The only time I have taught this material has been in connection with St. Patrick's Day, in past years. I have used the song “The Fields of Athenry” and it does reference the famine (stealing the corn so our children will see the morn). The Famine is not taught in the English classroom as a part of the curriculum at the high school.

The above response contradicts the earlier statements made by teachers with regard to the validity of the study of the Famine.

Several New Jersey teachers supported Famine education in the greater public school mission, but did not see it being properly implemented through the current curricular models. A language arts teacher from Livingston responded: “I never had an opportunity to relate the famine to my teaching. It warrants investigation to determine if there is an interdisciplinary connection that can be utilized.” Other teachers responded in a similar manner:

The effects of the famine on the role and perception of the fine arts is almost non-existent. Although some literary references and social commentary derived from political and editorial cartooning are available, the arts are poorly represented. Perhaps a consideration of contemporary monuments (in Philadelphia on the Delaware River) could be mentioned and explored. Questions about nationalism, ethnic association and heritage could be pursued. The bishopric and ministry to the Irish by Saint John Neumann should be mentioned.

*-Fine Arts Teacher from Hopewell Valley*

I use the famine to address governance, economics (ideas of laissez faire, etc) (sic), human dignity, social responsibility, etc. We DO discuss the idea of genocide. While I have not used the STATE materials, I think the material I DO use a Trial format, accessible by searching: Hunger on Trial: An Activity on the Irish Potato Famine and Its Meaning for Today. Teaching Activity PDF. By Bill Bigelow

*-West Milford social studies teacher*

As an educator that is personally connected to the subject matter I feel that the NJGIFC creates a useful platform to: Contextualize the Irish Famine Convey the most essential elements of the Famine

*-Social Studies Teacher from Vernon, NJ*

Some of the curriculum could use a facelift-- I wind up cutting and pasting so much-- which is very time consuming. I find the materials to be very useful, however.

The political cartoons are a little hard to see—but, they work!

Additionally, I use documentary 'The Irish in America, Vol. 1 (of 3)- about half way into the first tape --when I have the time-- and it depends on the elective I'm teaching at the time. This focuses on the famine and it's impact in Ireland, the

response of the British government, and deaths. It's very moving and is narrated by the prosecutor from *Law and Order*!<sup>3</sup>

*-Holmdel High School Social Studies Teacher*

The curriculum is a good guide. Unfortunately I believe that we need to develop in our instruction of History Teachers (American or European) the techniques of how to integrate topics such as the Irish Famine. For example-in the context of American History-the Irish immigration directly related to the “famine” is the 1840’s. What needs to be done is to have the students become aware of why people immigrate to America (general question) then have them identify why the Irish came, and then ask them to examine the issue so as to have a better understanding of why the Irish came and perhaps identify contemporary examples. In the context of European History it becomes necessary to examine the ongoing controversy politically/culturally between Ireland and England in the 19th century within the context of the Sinn Fein movement. Perhaps having them read through literature of the time both fictional and non-fictional

*-Westfield High School Social Studies Teacher*

In general, the New Jersey teachers felt that the Irish Famine Curriculum was a good

idea, but that the document itself needed to be given (in the words of one Ridgewood

High School teacher and the previously referenced teacher from Holmdel) a “facelift”:

The document is quite old and could definitely use a face-lift, if not a complete revision. I looked at it as part of some work that I have done with Facing History in terms of reconsidering my approach to the teaching of the Holocaust.<sup>4</sup> I do suspect that under ordinary definitions of the word, the famine represents a genocide (sic). It was deliberately deepened and directed at the Irish population. Yet this remains a difficult and politically divisive issue. Many scholars are sympathetic to the British perspective. That would need airing as well. It would be a shame to over-simplify the issue, particularly because students need to understand that genocides are often not the 'easy calls' of the Holocaust or the massacre in Rwanda. If the Irish Famine is taught, it needs full contextualization and room for vigorous and rigorous evaluation of the political circumstances and

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<sup>3</sup> While well intentioned, this teacher was incorrect. The narrator of the series *Irish in America* was the actor Michael Murphy. Michael Moriarty played the role of Ben Stone in the *Law and Order* series.

<sup>4</sup> *Facing History and Ourselves* is an educational program that provides textbook and curricular materials for the study of the Holocaust and other genocides. A number of New Jersey and New York schools utilize the Facing History program. “Resource Collections,” Facing History and Ourselves, last modified 2012, accessed September 29, 2012, <http://www.facinghistory.org/resource-collections-0>.

actions of the British government during the 19th century. This simply cannot be done in the context of a course dedicated to 20th century American history.  
*-Ridgewood High School Social Studies teacher*

With the exception of the social studies teacher from Vernon, and a social studies teacher from the Ramapo-Indian Hills district (“Content standards plus testing plus time restrictions means not enough time to cover it all--must condense.”) most of the respondents to Question #13 felt that the Irish Famine was a significant historical, cultural event and merited time and attention within the schools.

The written responses from New York teachers were similar, as one teacher responded:

I have a deep regard of our state history. This lesson must be taught to the newest generations. I go into detail about the “blight” and the environmental causality connected to the peruvian potato. (sic) As well as massive migration into North America, I am somewhat weak as to British culpability, however this is hugely appropriate in 10th grade wolrd (sic) history. I know this is well taought (sic) in NCHS 10th grade.  
*-North Collins Social Studies Teacher*

New York teacher responses noted attention paid to the reality of time constraints in teaching specific material and increased use of testing as challenges to teaching. Teachers indicated the negative impact that standardized testing was having on their ability to explore topics that may not appear on Regents examinations, Advanced Placement exams and Scholastic Aptitude Tests. The testing of students appeared to put pressure on a few teachers. A Millbrook Middle School social studies teacher responded, “We do not have enough time in our year to do justice to the topics we have to teach that relate more directly to US history.” A North Rockland High School Social Studies teacher agreed, “State Curriculum, while it does not say so only allows the teacher to focus on Regents exam questions and very little else. Over the years the Regents exams

have developed into a JOKE!!!!” One of his fellow social studies teachers at North Rockland noted, “I believe that the state curriculum allows too little time to delve into any unit (i.e. wars, famines, etc.).” Other responses:

Although a part of the curriculum, this topic was rarely (if ever) addressed on the NYS Social Studies Assessment before it was eliminated. At my level the content is so broad that spending much time on this lone topic is nearly impossible. A brief mention of it is made in my unit on immigration.

*-Potsdam Middle School Social Studies Teacher*

W/all the demands put upon us based upon the NY state world history & geography curriculum, the Irish famine barely fits in. I mention it in relation to immigration, touch upon it in AP European History and expand it a bit in AP World History. But to elaborate in any detail for the 10th grade world history, it is unrealistic to focus much time based upon the few questions it has fostered in the last 2+ decades of NY state regents.

*-South Jefferson High School Teacher, Social Studies and Fine Arts*

Unfortunately, due to time constraints the Global History and Geography curriculum in NY State high schools follows the mantra: “An inch deep and a mile wide”. We touch on all topics, then move on to the next one. The Irish Famine/Great Hunger is usually not connected to genocide (the way the Armenians/Holocaust/Yugoslavia/Rwanda are.)

*-Liberty High School Social Studies Teacher*

I teach AP US History. My time spent on the Famine is limited by the constraints of preparing students for the AP exams, and the never-ending race to cram info about 500 years of history into 144 class days.

*-Gloversville High School Social Studies Teacher*

NYS demands too much content in the time allotted. If I had more time, I would spend my time teaching about topics such as this.

*-Cazenovia High / Middle School Social Studies Teacher*

The problem with NYS Global History and Geography is that there is so much material to cover and not enough time. I am unable to spend more than a few days on any topic due to the necessity of moving forward. The Irish Potato famine is another casualty of High Stakes testing by New York State.

*-Byron-Bergen High School Social Studies Teacher*

It has good resources and suggestions but time constraints require adaptations.

*-Baldwinsville High School Social Studies Teacher*

The open-ended response section appeared to reveal that many teachers reacted to issues surrounding the implementation of the Irish Famine curricula rather than the curricula itself.

The last question of the survey also allowed for teachers to provide their own individual response. Question #15 asked for teachers to elaborate on how they use the respective state Famine curriculum within their classrooms. In New Jersey only fourteen teachers and in New York only eleven teachers responded to this question. Of the fourteen New Jersey teachers who responded, ten indicated that they used the curriculum to explore the greater global topics of genocide or ethnic conflict. Teachers from Livingston High School and James Caldwell High noted that they used elements of the New Jersey curriculum within a Holocaust Studies class or to examine the issue of genocide. Other responses:

I've used the pieces dealing with how the Irish were viewed by the British prior to the Famine- comparing them to the "Negros"-- as part of my lesson on Social Darwinism. The political cartoons are great--as I said, a little tough to see, but they speak a thousand words. I use the sections dealing with the famine itself, reactions of the people, stories, etc.  
*-Holmdel High School Social Studies Teacher*

I adapt the information to form the basis in establishing an understanding of the global mentality esp. European and British at the time of the famine. I intend this to be a major component to be included in an activity centered on a visual approach to counter prejudice and bias. We discuss negative terms assoc. w/racism and include "white negroes." Most students are ignorant about this connotation and its association with (Irish) Europeans. It is a very effective starting point. We discuss racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and age related biases.

We discuss the Holocaust Memorial in Paris, Washington DC, etc. I then give the assignment to design a contemporary memorial/monument. We then design memorials that must include literary references and visual imagery that are based on the imagery of the exodus of Irish, the Irish famine and immigration to the American shore.  
*-Hopewell Valley Fine Arts Teacher*

In my Social Studies elective the NJGIFC is useful to the degree that it helps some of my students engage in a Unit on Case Studies of Genocide. Their projects become part of a Tolerance Fair held toward the end of May and is somewhat of a capstone of their year's work.  
*-Vernon Township Social Studies Teacher*

These responses indicate that each curriculum has positive elements that teachers can take from and lessons they can implement in their classrooms.

In reading some of the responses from the New York teachers, one gets the impression that the NY Famine curriculum could be rather restraining. A high school social studies teacher from Arlington, New York led to this conclusion with their answer for question #15:

My lessons are based on the New York State Standards and what the state requires me to teach. That said, I often create my lessons with the standards and then create the actual activities and individual lessons with the intent of having my students learn the material. This upcoming school year we are required to align all of our lessons to the New York State curriculum and focus on the standards via different lesson models.

Another teacher used humor to mask the concern they felt in meeting the state's (and perhaps the nation's) curricular requirements:

I use it keep me up all night afraid of the trivialization and multiplechoicification (*sic*) of Social Studies that is occurring all across our country. I expect full credit for the statement above!  
*-High School Social Studies teacher from Lansing*

Another teacher again indicated the overwhelming presence of state testing that often dominated their teaching and how that testing manifested itself in the Famine Curriculum.

The NYS curriculum is our guideline for constructing our locally formatted Social Studies Curriculum Maps. Every school district in NYS must utilize the state curriculum standards and content guidelines as they create their own curriculum maps, used in individual teacher classrooms. Because of the NYS Regents Examinations in US History and Global History, we are bound by these

guidelines and would not be able to prepare our students for their state assessments if we deviated from this content.

*-Fairport High School Social Studies Teacher*

Perhaps the most thoughtful and reflective answer to this question came from a high school social studies teacher in the Pittsford Central School District. It also may be the most honest:

I never totally implement any lesson I find word-for-word/step-by-step, but rather use the ideas to generate my own lesson based on the needs of my class/timing/topic, etc. I have used several of the primary source documents in one of the lessons regarding Genocide. This is an unfortunate recurring theme in Global History....I introduce/review the 1948 UN definition (they have already studied about Rwanda, Sudan & Cambodia during their 1st year of Global) and then we look for examples of whether or not the Irish Famine could be considered a genocide. Students examine multiple perspectives and form their own opinions based on the definition. We then discuss their opinions as a class (I give them a statement about the Famine & they have to move to the side of the room that fits their opinion: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). 98% of my students have never studied about this topic before, so they are very intrigued. I also use this as a way to talk about the development of the modern Republic of Ireland and some of the tensions that still exist in the North (I show them pictures from when I was in Belfast-- one of the murals reads "The Great Potato Famine: Ireland's Holocaust"-- it's a great lesson on perspective/point of view). We go back to the question of genocide as the year progresses when we study the Armenian genocide, Ukrainian Famine, Holocaust & Bosnia.

Unfortunately, there are too many examples throughout history!!!! I have also used some of the maps to show the size of Ireland in comparison to NYS.

The teachers who responded indicated that they had mixed views of their respective state Famine curriculum. While there were a variety of responses with respect to the evaluation of and the utilization of the curricula, the teachers did indicate an element of agreement over the issue of "Famine-as-genocide."

The responses provided by the teachers do not appear to contain the level of angst or anger over the issue of genocide that seemingly took place in the greater public arena when both curricula were approved and adopted. With the exception of one or two teachers who responded, one does not get the sense that the genocide issue was a great divide or a “deal-breaker” for these teachers. Many teachers utilized their states’ respective curricula to incorporate lessons about the Irish and the Irish-American experience.

The extent to which I have used it is to lend it to students who were pursuing independent research in the study of Irish heritage.

*-Westfield, NJ Social Studies Teacher*

I use certain aspects that are contained within the curriculum. I include source materials from primary documents and historical records that make a mention of the famine. By using these docs I am able to paint a clear picture of how a monocrop society can fail and the affects on the society.

*-Jersey City, NJ Social Studies Teacher*

Info on the famine is used. I have made a PowerPoint on the Irish Famine that I use in both World History and U.S. History I classes (not currently teaching U.S.I). The PowerPoint contains factual info and pictures relevant to the famine. Students discuss a variety of issues related to the Famine and complete a written assignment. Genocide is always an important topic.

*-Roxbury, NJ Social Studies Teacher*

I believe that we do not spend enough time in middle school teaching American history and immigration to our country.

*-Gloucester Township, NJ Social Studies Teacher*

Many teachers indicated that they viewed the Famine as a period of historic abuse, if not an attempted genocide.

More than one teacher responded that they did not know enough about the Irish Famine to make a comment in terms of evaluating the Famine curriculum or to evaluate the Famine as a historical event:

Not having had a formal course at the college level makes answering the questions about the quality of the document difficult. However, I value it as helpful in analyzing ethnic conflict and genocide.

*-James Caldwell High School Social Studies Teacher*

I never had an opportunity to relate the famine to my teaching. It warrants investigation to determine if there is an interdisciplinary connection that can be utilized.

*-Livingston High School Social Studies Teacher*

I really don't know that much about it (the Irish Famine Curriculum). I know it exists, but we spend so little time on it as it is really only used as an example and connection to a more recent Irish conflict in my course. My course focuses on Ireland during the 1960s through the present day (the Troubles, IRA/Northern Ireland, etc.)

*-Scotch Plains – Fanwood High School Social Studies Teacher*

I don't know is the answer. I don't know anything about it. Sad to admit. Good luck with your research.

*-Moraiva, NY Fine Arts Teacher*

The responses appear to prove one very important point about the Irish Famine and its teaching in the public schools: people who teach the Famine or use the curriculum to teach other elements of Irish history or the Irish-American experience tend to be rather passionate about this subject. This passion mirrors the passion demonstrated by historians in discussing the Irish Famine.<sup>5</sup> The next chapter of this work will examine the teacher responses and determine what those responses mean about the teaching of the Irish Famine.

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<sup>5</sup> Fegan writes at length about the placement of emotion in the historiography of the Famine. Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine*, 10-34.

## Chapter 8

### SURVEY RESULTS

Surveys were emailed to districts during the spring semester of 2012. Teacher responses began in February and stopped in late May. While efforts were made to include every high school teacher in both states, only 372 teachers participated in the survey. Those respondents tended to teach at school districts whose populations enjoyed a higher-than-average socio-economic status.<sup>1</sup> According to the New Jersey Department of Education District Factor Grouping rating method (DFG), most of the teachers surveyed taught in some of the wealthiest school districts in the state; New Jersey teachers participating in the study taught in very prestigious public schools.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, of the more than forty school districts that agreed to participate in this survey, fourteen of *Newsweek* magazine and *The Daily Beast.com* ranked those New Jersey districts in the top 1,000 school districts in the nation.<sup>3</sup> Thirteen of the New York school districts whose teachers responded to the survey were also on the *Newsweek/ The Daily Beast.com* best 1,000 schools list. The web page *Buffalo Business First* included those schools and the

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 3, Table 3 for a breakdown of schools by DFG.

<sup>2</sup> New Jersey's Department of Education categorizes its school districts according to a measure known as District Factor Grouping (DFGs). DFG's represent an approximate measure of a community's relative socioeconomic status. DFG's represent an approximate measure of a community's relative socioeconomic status. The districts are then assigned a letter (lowest A, highest J) based on this ranking NJ Department of Education District Factor, last modified 2010, accessed July 12, 2012, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/sf/dfg.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> The Daily Beast, *Newsweek and the Daily Beast - America's Best High Schools*, May 20, 2012, accessed August 1, 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/features/2012/americas-best-high-schools.html>.

web page *DailyBeast* included these and added three other districts in their top 100 school rankings for the state of New York.<sup>4</sup>

Teachers from both states' largest (and urban) districts did not participate in this survey in great numbers. Survey requests were sent to the Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Toms River, Camden City, Woodbridge, Hamilton, Edison and Brick Township school systems.<sup>5</sup> Despite the requests made, only five teachers from the Jersey City Public School system responded to the survey. Similar developments occurred with regard to the New York School Systems. Survey requests were sent to the New York City Public School System, yet no responses were provided. Requests were also sent to Buffalo City, Rochester, Yonkers, Syracuse, Brentwood, Sachem, Greece, Newburgh and Wappingers districts, which comprise the largest districts in New York.<sup>6</sup> Again, there are no results from those districts.<sup>7</sup>

New York's respondent pool could also be described as more scattershot. While the number of districts that participated in the survey was greater (57 as opposed to 41), many of those districts (28) supplied only one respondent, and only two districts provided eight or more respondents. This is different from the New Jersey pool of respondents; ten districts provided eight or more respondents and only seven districts provided one

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<sup>4</sup> 2011 Guide to Western New York Schools, last modified June 3, 2011, accessed August 2, 2012, <http://www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/feature/schools/2011-wnyschools/2011/06/2011-guide-to-western-new-york-schools.html?page=all>.

<sup>5</sup> These districts represent the largest districts in the state of New Jersey. New Jersey Public Schools Fact Sheet, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/fact.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Boces School District Enrollment: Educational Management: NYSED, last modified 2011, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/boces/enrollment/>.

<sup>7</sup> That many of those districts were also urban districts with urban-style challenges might have been a reason behind the small or non-existent survey response.

respondent. It bears repeating that there were less than 400 total teachers who took part in this survey, indicating a very clear minority of teachers in both states. The New York City School system claims to have 75,000 teachers working in its district alone.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the potential respondent pool of New York's teachers was much larger and broader than New Jersey's potential respondent pool. The New Jersey model of the curriculum was most likely meant for high school or middle school students, based on the activities and the reading samples provided in the document. New York's model sought to create lessons that could be utilized from grade levels 4 – 12.<sup>9</sup> This survey sought out high school teachers in part to gain a comparison between New Jersey and New York teachers and to obtain a consistent measure of Famine education; a large population of teachers who potentially address the Famine in their classes was not examined.

Considering those above caveats, it is more appropriate to assert that the survey data can lead to inferences or indications rather than firm conclusions about how the Irish Famine is taught in each state's public schools. The information gleaned from the surveys conducted points to the following indications:

- The teaching of the Irish Famine at the middle and high school level remains largely the responsibility of social studies teachers.

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<sup>8</sup> About Us - New York City Department of Education, last modified 2014, accessed January 6, 2014, <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/default.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Maureen O. Murphy, *Teaching Hunger: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to Holodomor and Gorta Mor: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, ed. Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen, and Vincent Comefort (New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2012), 105.

- Those middle and high school social studies teachers that responded that they taught the Famine largely did so within the context of three social studies classes: World History, European History, and United States History.
- The amount of time dedicated to the Famine is often limited to a class period or less.
- Classifying the “Famine as genocide” may be symptomatic of the time allocated towards its study; teachers who classify the Famine as genocide tend to spend more time on it as a topic.
- Ethnic heritage or identity of the teacher may play a role in determining if that teacher examines the Famine in class as much as or more than the classification of the Famine as genocide, particularly in those subject areas other than social studies.
- While many historians feel that the Irish Famine fails to meet the standards of genocide, the teachers surveyed from both states are almost evenly divided on this status.
- Middle and high school teachers in both states are unaware of their respective state Irish Famine curriculum.
- New York middle and high school teachers teach the Famine more than New Jersey teachers and are more aware of their state’s curriculum than are New Jersey teachers. This might lead to a conclusion that the New York curriculum is more successful or more effective than the New Jersey curriculum.

Two hundred and fifty-three teachers from New Jersey and 119 teachers from New York participated in the survey. The respondent pool should be grouped into three

large divisions. The first group is the total 372 teachers who took part in the survey. Their responses can be examined to gain an idea as to how typical teachers of the humanities view the Famine, how typical humanities teachers utilize the respective state Famine curriculum and how they interpret the Famine in regards to genocide. These results are not positive indications as to the teaching of the Famine in public schools in New Jersey and New York. The results indicated that of the 372 teachers who participated less than half of the teachers (181) examined the Irish Famine within their classes.<sup>10</sup> Of those 181 teachers who responded that they did teach the Famine as a subject, sixty-six responded that they spent less than one half of a class period examining the Famine, and thirty-six indicated that they spent only about one half of a class period examining the Famine.<sup>11</sup> With respect to the individual states, in New Jersey, ninety-three of the 115 teachers who responded “yes” to teaching the Famine indicated that they spent one class period or block or less in examining the subject. For New York teachers, fifty-nine of the sixty-six teachers who responded spent one class period or block or less teaching about Famine.<sup>12</sup> In terms of viewing the Famine as genocide, the survey resulted in an almost even split between those teachers who felt that it was a genocide (186 teachers) and those who did not qualify the Famine as genocide (187 teachers).<sup>13</sup> The survey data was unable to determine conclusively if classification of the genocide increased its examination as a subject matter. One hundred and one teachers who responded that they taught the Famine also described it as genocide, while 107 teachers who did not teach the Famine also did not agree with a genocide distinction in regards to

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<sup>10</sup> Appendix 3, Table 6.

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 3, Table 8.

<sup>12</sup> Appendix 3, Tables 6 & 8.

<sup>13</sup> Appendix 3, Table 14.

the Famine. This did not mean that classification of the Famine guaranteed its examination as a subject matter in the crowded social studies curriculum, at least based on the results of this the large group of responding teachers. Eighty teachers taught the Famine but did not classify it as genocide, while eighty-four did classify the Famine as genocide, but did not teach the event in the normal course of their teaching.<sup>14</sup> Classifying the Famine as genocide may have an influence on how much time a particular teacher devotes to an examination of the Famine. Survey results indicated that teachers who classified the Famine as genocide appeared to spend more time on the topic during class. Fifty-four teachers who viewed the Famine as genocide dedicated one full class period or more to examination of the Famine; twenty-three teachers spent the same amount of time on the Famine and did not view it as genocide.<sup>15</sup> The main difference between the Famine teachers who differ on the issue of genocide and teach the subject in classes appears to be in the amount of time they dedicate to its study.

The survey data were unable to determine if ethnic heritage had a definite influence on the examination of the Famine in the classroom, although there did appear to be some form of a connection. The survey did not ask if teachers who did not teach the Famine possessed some form of Irish identity (either of Irish heritage themselves or involved in a personal relationship with someone of Irish heritage), but the survey found that many teachers who responded to teaching the Famine also possessed some form of Irish identity; seventy of the 115 New Jersey teachers and forty-seven of the sixty-six

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<sup>14</sup> Appendix 3, Tables 15, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Appendix 3, Tables 17, 18.

New York teachers who taught the Famine indicated they did have a personal connection to Irish ethnicity and heritage.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of their interpretation of the Famine, or ethnic identity, teachers in both states were largely unaware of the existence of official state curriculum examining the Famine. While ninety-two teachers in total responded that they were aware of the Famine curriculum's existence (forty-seven in New Jersey and forty-five in New York),<sup>17</sup> forty teachers responded they were aware that the documents existed, but never consulted them in any serious manner.<sup>18</sup> Utilization of the documents reflected the awareness responses. Only fourteen teachers in New Jersey, and only fifteen in New York, responded that they utilized the Famine curriculum in their teaching.<sup>19</sup>

In examining the data, however, it may be prudent to examine those teachers who specifically teach social studies courses. While teachers can obviously choose in what field they wish to be certified (determining what subject they teach), most teachers do not possess control over their specific subject; that control belongs to school boards and administrators. A teacher certified in the language arts may have no choice in teaching an American literature class as opposed to an English literature class. This means that they may find the Famine interesting or important (or even genocidal), but might not necessarily teach a class that would “naturally” include the Famine as a topic.<sup>20</sup> A teacher of fine arts or literature may wish to examine the Famine in class, but might never have the opportunity to examine it due to curricular demands beyond an individual

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<sup>16</sup> Appendix 3, Table 11.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 3, Table 20.

<sup>18</sup> Appendix 3, Table 21.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix 3, Table 22.

<sup>20</sup> Much the same could be said of teachers certified in the social studies.

teacher's control. An examination of the respondent pool also indicates that the largest group of subject area teachers (from both states) was social studies teachers, totaling 214 respondents (144 from New Jersey, seventy from New York).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in examining the data, social studies teachers provide an important sub-group within the greater respondent pool.

Of that sub-group, the responses in regard to positively teaching the Famine were much higher. It is not surprising that the Famine is addressed within social studies classes, given that the term "social studies" can cover a wide variety of subject matter and course material often dealing with historical topics. Since the Famine was a historical event and a "watershed" in the history of a specific people, it is logical that it would be covered in classes that deal with history, politics, economics, and sociology and human rights, in addition to genocide.<sup>22</sup> While any humanities-based class could address the above topics, those topics tend to fall within the domain of social studies education, and both states' Famine curricula are written largely to reflect a social studies or history-based classroom teaching style.<sup>23</sup> One hundred and forty-five of those 214 social studies teachers responded that they addressed the Famine in their classes.<sup>24</sup> As indicated earlier,

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<sup>21</sup> Appendix 3, Table 4.

<sup>22</sup> The watershed status might be applicable only to Traditional/Nationalist or Post-Revisionist interpreters. Cormac Ó Gráda, "Ireland's Great Famine: An Overview" (Working Paper., University College Dublin, 2004), 4, 13, 20.

<sup>23</sup> About National Council for the Social Studies, accessed February 14, 2014, <http://www.socialstudies.org/about>. The writers of the NY Famine Curriculum conceded that most of the lessons within the curriculum were intended for the social studies. Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer, "Asking the BIG Questions: Teaching about the Great Irish Famine and World History," *Social Education* 65, no. 5 (September 2001): 286.

<sup>24</sup> Appendix 3, Table 6.

when the Famine was taught within a particular social studies class, it was taught mainly within World History, United States History, and European History.<sup>25</sup>

The general respondent pool of teachers indicated that most teachers did not spend more than one class examining the Famine; similar results were found in the social studies sub-group. Of the 145 social studies teachers (from both states) who responded that they taught the Famine in their classrooms, eighty-five indicated that they do so for one half of a class period or block or less. One hundred and twenty-six responded that they would spend one class period or less discussing the Famine. Only nineteen indicated that they would spend more than one class period, including homework and outside projects.<sup>26</sup>

Identity politics may have played a role with regard to Famine instruction and teachers from the general respondent pool. This trend continued when examined, specifically among social studies teachers. Of the 145 social studies teachers surveyed who taught the Famine, eighty-nine indicated that they did possess some form of Irish identity. However, for teachers who did not teach social studies, the data revealed an even higher relationship; among teachers in the language arts, fine arts and those teachers classified as multi-disciplinary, the relationship was more noticeable.<sup>27</sup> Of the twenty-seven language arts teachers who indicated they taught the Famine, twenty-one responded that they possessed some form of an Irish identity. Seven teachers who taught more than one discipline responded that they taught the Famine; five of these teachers claimed a personal Irish identity. Both teachers of fine arts who taught the Famine also

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 3, Tables 7. For this reason, a further sub-group of social studies teachers who taught world, European or United States history will be examined later.

<sup>26</sup> Appendix 3, Tables 6 & 9.

<sup>27</sup> Appendix 3, Table 11.

claimed an Irish identity. The survey data are not large enough to draw definite conclusions, but some form of a link appears to be present between individual teachers examining the Famine in their classroom and those same teachers having some connection to Irish identity.

Identity politics might also play a role in how much time a particular teacher dedicates to the Famine in the course of a classroom, particularly in the course of a social studies class. Survey data revealed that eighty-nine social studies teachers who taught the Famine who possessed an Irish identity, and fifty-four social studies teachers who taught the Famine did not. Irish teachers tended to spend more time examining the Famine than those teachers who were not Irish.<sup>28</sup> Since teachers who did not teach the Famine were not asked their heritage, it is possible that as many “Irish identity” social studies teachers do not examine the Famine as those who do cover it.

As a sub-group, social studies teachers mirrored the results of the general respondent pool with regard to classifying the Famine as genocide; 110 social studies teachers from both states believed the Famine was genocide, while 105 social studies teachers disagreed with that assertion.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the general respondent pool, in the social studies teachers sub-group, classifying the Famine as genocide appeared to make it more likely to be examined. Eighty-one social studies teachers indicated that they taught the Famine within their classes and felt the Famine qualified as genocide, while forty-one indicated they did not teach the Famine and that it did not qualify as genocide. However, sixty-four social studies teachers responded that they taught the Famine in class and did

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<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 3, Tables 25 & 26.

<sup>29</sup> Appendix 3, Table 14.

not feel that the Famine qualified as genocide. Conversely, twenty-eight teachers responded that they felt the Famine was genocidal, but did not teach the subject.<sup>30</sup>

Within the social studies, thirty-seven teachers in both states responded that they were aware of their respective state curriculum, and twelve teachers from each state responded that they used the state curriculum in the course of teaching the Famine.<sup>31</sup>

This information, taken in conjunction with the general respondent data, would appear to confirm earlier assertions made by the *Albany Times-Union* in 2001 that claimed the New York curriculum was “gathering dust.”<sup>32</sup> Columbia Teachers’ College and an article in the *Irish Voice* presented similar criticisms almost immediately after the publishing of the New York curriculum.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, an article present in the periodical *Irish America* in 2010 indicated that the Famine Curriculum was being utilized within the public schools of New York, although the degree of use was not specifically detailed.<sup>34</sup> New York public school teacher Michael Pezone, writing in an issue of the *Social Studies Docket*, noted that the Irish Famine curriculum was being utilized, and that he found it

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<sup>30</sup> Appendix 3, Tables, 15, 16

<sup>31</sup> Appendix 3, Table 20.

<sup>32</sup> Jacquelyn Swearingen, “An Irish History Lesson Goes Untaught,” *Albany Times Union* (Albany, NY), March 17, 2002, sec. A, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Teachers College, Columbia University, “New York’s Great Irish Famine Curriculum,” news release, April 4, 2002, accessed January 15, 2012, <http://www.tc.edu/news.htm?articleID=4000>, and Tom Deignan, “SIDEwalks: Famine Curriculum Under Fire Again,” *Irish Voice*, April 16, 2002, 8. The article claimed that the reason the NY Famine Curriculum was not being utilized was due to the terrorist attacks on September 11.

<sup>34</sup> Tara Dougherty, “Education and Debate,” *Irish America*, June / July 2010, 86. New York Curriculum founder Alan Singer noted how the Curriculum was being used. Alan Singer, “Brooklyn Children Teach Irish Visitors About Potato Famine,” *Huffington Post* (blog), entry posted May 24, 2010, accessed February 7, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/brooklyn-children-teach-i\\_b\\_586151.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/brooklyn-children-teach-i_b_586151.html).

quite useful.<sup>35</sup>

While the social studies sub-group provides an important view as to how the Famine is being addressed in classes, this segment of the respondent pool can be narrowed even further. Since social studies is such a large and diverse subject matter, a similar condition exists when considering teachers from the larger respondent pool: teachers participating in this survey might never have a reason to examine the Famine in the context of their classroom teaching. Teachers of psychology or sociology or American government might never encounter the Famine experience as part of their duties. Social studies teachers are also often charged with teaching more than one type of social studies-based class during the school day, and many of the teachers in both New York and New Jersey indicated that they taught multiple subjects within the social studies.

Therefore, the data can be further narrowed to examine how the Famine is addressed in three courses where one might find it is “naturally” encountered as a topic of examination: World History, European History and American History; World History and American History serve as graduation requirements for both New Jersey and New York public school students.<sup>36</sup> In the survey, teachers were asked what classes they taught, and if they did teach the Famine as part of their duties, in what context they taught

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Pezone, “Implementing the Great Irish Famine Curriculum,” *Social Studies Docket*, Winter/Spring 2012, 16. Pezone also appears on the NY Famine acknowledgements page as one of the teachers who field-tested the Curriculum. New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* (Albany, NY: New York State Department of Education, 2001), v.

<sup>36</sup> Social Studies - Applicable Statutes and Regulations, last modified 2010, accessed February 18, 2014, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/ss/regs.htm>, and 100.5 Diploma Requirements, last modified August 2010, accessed February 18, 2014, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html>.

the Famine. The survey revealed that New Jersey teachers tended to examine the Famine within the context of American History more than did New York teachers, while New York teachers tended to examine the Famine as a World History topic more than did New Jersey teachers.<sup>37</sup> Teacher responses indicate that about one half of the World History and European History teachers who taught the Famine examined it within the context of World or European History. This means that about one half of the World History and European History teachers surveyed either did not teach the Famine at all, or examined it in a context different from World or European History.<sup>38</sup> One hundred and seventy-three teachers indicated they taught United States History I (colonization to Reconstruction); 119 teachers of that group responded that they taught the Famine as a topic of study, and 105 of those teachers indicated that the Famine was examined in the course of teaching United States History I.<sup>39</sup> Approximately one quarter of U.S. History I teachers indicated that they did not teach the Famine at all. The context of the Famine as a course of study in those courses identified above is significant. If the Famine is not occupying a place in classes students are required to take to graduate, it can be concluded that the Famine is not occupying an important presence in the educational experience of students in either state.

Within those three classes, identifying the Famine as genocide may influence its examination. Of the eighty World and European History teachers who indicated they taught the Famine, more than half (forty-seven) of those teachers viewed the Famine as genocide. Of the 105 United States History teachers that indicated they taught the

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<sup>37</sup> Appendix 3, Table 7

<sup>38</sup> Appendix 3, Table 23.

<sup>39</sup> Appendix 3, Table 24.

Famine, fifty-nine of those teachers responded that they viewed it as genocide.<sup>40</sup> This leads to the inference that classifying the Famine as genocide is a means of securing its teaching in public schools.

The survey results appear to indicate that the Famine is examined in many social studies classes, but that it is often given only limited attention as a topic of study. Classifying the Famine as genocide does not necessarily increase the teaching of the Famine among general teachers, but it does tend to increase the amount of time dedicated to the Famine in a given class within the social studies. Identity politics also plays an important factor in the teaching of the Irish Famine. It appears that those teachers who possess an “Irish identity” are more willing to examine the Famine and spend more time on the Famine than those teachers who do not possess that identity.

Ultimately, these numbers indicate that despite the efforts of both curriculum committees the teaching of the Famine as a consistent subject in New Jersey’s and New York’s greater curriculum is not yet realized. Since so few responding teachers indicated they were either familiar with their respective state curriculum and even fewer indicated that they used them in developing lesson plans, one can conclude that for the Famine to be a regularly-examined topic in public education, much work needs to be done. The next chapter of this work will propose some modest suggestions towards making the teaching of the Famine a more regular element in public schools in both states.

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<sup>40</sup> Appendix 3, Tables 23 and 24.

## Chapter 9

### SUGGESTIONS

The first chapter of this paper examined the history of the Irish Famine curricula in both New Jersey and New York and their placement within greater Holocaust/genocide education frameworks outlined by each state. The second and third chapters of this paper then examined the various interpretations of the Irish Famine and how they shaped the teaching and learning of the Famine as a potentially genocidal event as well as an examination of how the various definitions of genocide might apply to the teaching of the Famine. The fourth and fifth chapters examined both curricula and their means of guiding teachers on how to instruct their students on the Famine. The sixth, seventh and eighth chapters examined how teachers actually utilize their respective Famine curricula and how they teach the Famine in the classroom. This was accomplished through the use of surveys that teachers in New Jersey and New York completed. The survey results do not provide definitive conclusions on the teaching of the Irish Famine in New Jersey and New York public schools. However, the survey results appear to indicate that much work needs to be done if the Famine is to experience a regularly-accepted place among other topics commonly addressed in humanities courses in both states' public schools.

The relatively low numbers of teachers aware of their own state's Famine curriculum is the best evidence to support this contention. While less than 400 total teachers responded to surveys, less than twenty-five percent of those respondents were aware that New Jersey or New York had published an official curriculum, and less than fifteen percent professed any familiarity with the documents. Despite all the work and effort that went into creating the documents, and despite the various criticisms leveled at

each by pundits, educational experts, and various historians, very few teachers admitted using the materials from either curriculum. This chapter will make some “modest suggestions” with the goals of encouraging both the utilization of official state curriculum and increasing the teaching of the Famine. Each state’s curricular model possesses its own issues and each will be addressed in turn. Aside from specific changes that could be made to a particular curriculum, general steps that would benefit both documents will be explored.

The New York curriculum is clearly the superior curriculum.<sup>1</sup> It is a more professionally produced document, a team of educators created it, and it was field-tested before its final adoption.<sup>2</sup> Despite the age of the curriculum, ten years after its publication the document holds up well in terms of activities and objectives, and it may have successfully planted a seed of increasing attention of the Irish Famine and Irish history into the consciousness of educators in New York.<sup>3</sup> The survey results appear to agree with this assertion. Less than half as many New York teachers than New Jersey

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<sup>1</sup> The National Council for the Social Studies recognized the curriculum in 2002. “NCSS Celebrates Excellence Hofstra University School of Education Receives NCSS 2002 Programs of Excellence Award,” *The Social Studies Professional* (March/April 2003): 1, 6.

<sup>2</sup> The New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum identifies a number of prominent scholars who consulted in the creation of the curriculum, including Mary Daly, James Donnelly, Cormac OGrada and Kerby Miller. Additionally, more than forty teachers from New York State districts are noted as field-testing the curriculum. New York State Department of Education, *An Gorta Mor: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* (Albany, NY: New York State Department of Education, 2001), v-vi. Maureen O. Murphy, *Teaching Hunger: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to Holodomor and Gorta Mor: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, ed. Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen, and Vincent Comerford (New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2012), 110.

<sup>3</sup> This is the view of Joseph Crowley in an interview given with the *Irish Echo* in 2011. Ray O’Hanlon, “Inside File Crowley sees both points,” *Irish Echo*, February 16, 2011, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://irishecho.com/2011/02/inside-file-crowley-sees-both-points-2/>.

teachers participated in the survey, yet higher percentages of New York teachers indicated that they taught the Famine in their classrooms. The same held true for teachers of social studies: more than twice as many New Jersey social studies teachers participated in the survey than their New York counterparts; however, twenty teachers in each state indicated that they knew about their state Famine curriculum, and a greater percentage of New York social studies teachers responded that they taught the Famine in their classrooms. The single biggest drawback with the New York curriculum may be that it includes too many good ideas, too many good lessons, and too many areas to examine.

These ideas and lesson plans create a challenging document to digest, and the size may be preventing its more effective utilization.<sup>4</sup> The heft of the curriculum has been noted earlier in this paper, and at over one thousand pages in length the document presents a challenge for any teacher to examine thoroughly and effectively. The creators of the curriculum maintained that one of their objectives was “writing Ireland into World History.”<sup>5</sup> That objective is a much broader and more inclusive objective than educating students about the Great Irish Famine. As a result, the New York State curriculum includes more than a few lessons that have little to do with the Famine itself.<sup>6</sup> The official title of the Curriculum is “The Great Irish Famine Curriculum,” leading one to

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<sup>4</sup> Jacquelyn Swearingen, “An Irish History Lesson Goes Untaught,” *Albany Times Union* (Albany, NY), March 17, 2002, sec. A, 1. and Teachers College, Columbia University, “New York’s Great Irish Famine Curriculum,” news release, April 4, 2002, accessed January 15, 2012, <http://www.tc.edu/news.htm?articleID=4000>.

<sup>5</sup> “NCSS Celebrates Excellence Hofstra University School of Education Receives NCSS 2002 Programs of Excellence Award,” *The Social Studies Professional*, March/April 2003, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the activities of the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum include lessons on “How to Grow Potatoes,” “Making a St. Brigid’s Cross,” “Dance in Ireland,” “Hurler Christy Ring: Ireland’s Greatest Athlete,” and “Irish Friends and Frederick Douglass’ Freedom.” While interesting and compelling lessons, their direct connection to the Famine is not apparent.

expect that the bulk of the lessons should be directed toward an examination of the Famine. While a rudimentary background of Irish history would be necessary to fully understand the impact of the Famine, the New York curriculum appears to be fulfilling a secondary goal of formalizing Irish and Irish-American studies in the New York public school setting. This reality might also account for the negative reaction among historians, educators and politicians and their view that New York State created a mandated instruction from a curriculum dedicated toward a specific ethnic group.<sup>7</sup> A “leaner” curriculum may benefit in that it would be more focused on the Famine. Despite the New York curriculum’s achievements and commendations, it could use revising after more than ten years since its publication.

The New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum presents the more problematic of the two documents examining the Irish Famine, and likely requires a wholesale rewrite rather than a revision. Published in 1996, the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum is quickly approaching the end of its second decade as an official state document.<sup>8</sup> The age of the curriculum weakens its ability to effectively teach students about the Famine, as it does not reflect the most recent scholarship on the Famine or the most recent methodologies regarding instruction.<sup>9</sup> A revised curriculum would reflect both recent historical research

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<sup>7</sup> Raymond Hernandez, “New Curriculum from Albany: the Irish Potato Famine, or One View of It,” *Times* (New York, NY), December 1, 1996, 52, and Kate Zernike, “Using the Irish Famine to Explore Current Events,” *Times* (New York, NY), March 21, 2001, sec. B, 7, and Elizabeth Llorente, “History or Propaganda? Genocide Studies; New Courses Tell Victims’ Side of Story,” *Bergen Record*, March 10, 1996, sec. A, 7.

<sup>8</sup> A second edition was published in 1999.

<sup>9</sup> As indicated in Chapter 4, much popular work and academic research has been devoted to the Irish Famine in the years since the production of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. As mentioned earlier, James Donnelly published *The Great Irish Potato Famine* in 2008 and John Kelly produced *The Graves are Walking* in 2012. In 1998 Disney Studios produced “*The Irish in America: Long Journey Home*” for PBS. In

and the most recent teaching trends. Additionally, a revised New Jersey curriculum would enable the document to harmonize with the New Jersey Department of Education's commitment to align its teaching and learning with the Understanding by Design (UbD) model published by Grant Wiggins.<sup>10</sup>

A revision the New Jersey curriculum would also allow for an increased use of art, literature, and music related to the Famine experience.<sup>11</sup> At least presenting clearer images for students to see and teachers to utilize would be an improvement.<sup>12</sup> The second edition of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum sought to include selections of poetry from the anthology *Hungry Voice*.<sup>13</sup> A revision would add to this text and would provide other resources for teacher and student use. The presence of maps, graphs and

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2012 Tim Pat Coogan published *The Famine Plot*. In 2009 Colm Tóibín and Diarmaid Ferriter published their examination of Famine-era documents in *The Irish Famine*. Susan Campbell Bartoletti published a second edition of her book, *Black Potatoes in 2005*.

<sup>10</sup> Since 2008 the State of New Jersey has phased in Grant Wiggins' program of Understanding By Design in its curriculum writing and lesson planning templates. See: New Jersey State Board of Education, "New Jersey State Board of Education Minutes of the Annual Policy Retreat," news release, November 5, 2008, 2. The New York Famine Curriculum, by comparison, was created with Grant Wiggins in mind. Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer, "Asking the BIG Questions: Teaching about the Great Irish Famine and World History," *Social Education* 65, no. 5 (September 2001): 287.

<sup>11</sup> "The importance of integrating literary voice with historical context is a critical aspect of Holocaust education." Jeffrey Glanz, "Ten Suggestions for Teaching the Holocaust," *The History Teacher* 32, no. 4 (August 1999): 554. See also David A. Shiman and William R. Fernekes, "The Holocaust, Human Rights, and Democratic Citizenship Education," *The Social Studies*, March/April 1999, 60.

Both Glanz and Shiman were writing in reference to Holocaust education, but their viewpoint can be translated into the study of the Famine.

<sup>12</sup> One social studies teacher from the Holmdel Township district commented about the images in the New Jersey curriculum, "The political cartoon are a little hard to see--but, they work!"

<sup>13</sup> This second edition is available through a number of on-line resources, but is not posted on the New Jersey Holocaust Commission web page. Chris Morash, *The Hungry Voice: The Poetry of the Irish Famine* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989).

charts to highlight the impact of the Famine would also be a welcome addition.<sup>14</sup> Most significantly, a revision of the current curriculum would enable better use of the limited visuals, clearer typesetting and would present a polished, professional appearance worthy of an official state document. Regardless of what appears in the document, or what particular interpretation of the Famine the official curriculum holds, for the State of New Jersey to publish a document and distribute it to schools with hand-written page numbers and hole-punches visible is not appropriate.

The last issue for the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum is one of tone. James Mullin, the chairman of the Curriculum Writing Committee, indicated that he wished the students learning about the Famine to make up their own minds regarding the Famine and its classification as genocide.<sup>15</sup> While this may be true, the document his committee produced appears to be designed to walk students down an interpretive path determined by the Traditional/Nationalistic interpretation of the Irish Famine, one view of which includes the “Famine-as-genocide.” Even if a teacher or student comes to the conclusion that the British were not guilty of genocide or attempted genocide, learning from the New Jersey curriculum will instill a negative view of the British in whoever utilizes it. The overt objective of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum is to present educational

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<sup>14</sup> The National Council for the Social Studies notes that map reading and other skills associated with geography are important, and that “Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.” National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Chapter 2—The Themes of Social Studies, accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>.

<sup>15</sup> James V. Mullin, The Christian Radical (blog), entry posted July 10, 2008, accessed February 8, 2012, <http://thechristianradical.blogspot.com/2008/07/irish-famine-education-and-holocaust.html>, James V. Mullin, “Irish Famine Education and the Holocaust ‘Straw Man,’” American Chronicle (blog), entry posted July 8, 2008, accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/67720>, and Murphy, Teaching Hunger: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to *Holodomor and Gorta Mor*, 104.

materials about the Famine. The covert objective behind the New Jersey curriculum appears to be to depict the British in as negative a light as possible.<sup>16</sup> Melissa Fegan was noted earlier as referring to John Mitchel's interpretation of the Irish Famine as evangelical and manipulative.<sup>17</sup> Much the same could be said of the New Jersey curriculum.<sup>18</sup> A revised curriculum should at least consider giving equal time and weight to the Revisionist and Post-Revisionist interpretations of the Famine.

Both states' curricula would benefit from an upgrade in terms of delivery. While both documents are available on-line in .pdf format, the process of downloading and reading those files (particularly the New York curriculum) is cumbersome. If teachers do decide to download either document(s), they are going to spend a good deal of time reading, researching and cross-referencing to obtain useful information and lessons that they could use in class. In regards to New York's curriculum, a teacher who decides to obtain a hard copy of that document is going to be using a good deal of paper—and willpower—to read two binders' worth of information at least two inches thick. The process of obtaining a hard copy of the whole New York curriculum requires a person to download eleven separate files.<sup>19</sup> This is going to be a challenge to the teacher who is looking for that one significant lesson to teach the Famine, particularly when survey data

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<sup>16</sup> As mentioned earlier, there are whole chapters examining British Racism and potential British blame for genocide. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996), 44-64, 100-111.

<sup>17</sup> Fegan, *Literature and the Irish*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Fegan made this connection in her work. Fegan, *Literature and the Irish*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Curriculum Guide: Great Irish Famine Curriculum, last modified September 3, 2009, accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gt/gif/curriculum.html>.

indicate that most teachers examine the Famine for one class period or less.<sup>20</sup> Teachers meeting the New York curriculum for the first time might be too dismayed to push further into the Famine as a subject matter based on the volume of information present in the document.<sup>21</sup>

Creating a web-based curriculum has several advantages. It would allow framers in the near future to update the curriculum without requiring wholesale revisions. It would be environmentally friendly (reducing the reliance on paper), and enable students to view maps, charts and visuals to be seen on-line in a clear manner. Interactive activities could be easily added.<sup>22</sup> New Jersey has already moved in this direction with its curriculum devoted to African-American history, *the Amistad Project*. One British school association, *Ireland in Schools*, has created a web-based project that “provides free teaching and learning resources for primary and secondary schools in Britain.”<sup>23</sup> Their aim is to “make Ireland a part of the normal curriculum in Britain, from primary schools to sixth-forms, by making it easy for teachers to draw upon Ireland in their teaching.”<sup>24</sup> Another example can be seen in *The History Place*, created by author Philip Gavin, which “is a private, independent, Internet-only publication based in the Boston area that is not affiliated with any political group or organization. The web site presents a

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<sup>20</sup> Appendix 3, Tables 8, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Teachers College, Columbia University, “New York’s Great Irish,” news release.

<sup>22</sup> A recent study indicated that the use of iPads in the classroom helped students grasp difficult scientific concepts. Could the same be expected in social studies classes? Anthony Rebor, “Study: iPads Help Students Grasp Challenging Science Concepts,” *Education Week Teacher*, last modified December 18, 2013, accessed January 27, 2014, [http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching\\_now/2013/12/study\\_ipads\\_effective\\_in\\_helping\\_students\\_grasp\\_challenging\\_science\\_concepts.html?qs=Computer+based+education](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2013/12/study_ipads_effective_in_helping_students_grasp_challenging_science_concepts.html?qs=Computer+based+education).

<sup>23</sup> About Us, last modified March 28, 2012, accessed January 24, 2014, <http://www.iisresource.org/Pages/aboutus.aspx>.

<sup>24</sup> About Us.

fact-based, common sense approach in the presentation of the history of humanity, with great care given to accuracy.”<sup>25</sup> *The History Place* maintains a chapter page on the Famine. Quinnipiac University maintains a web site examining the Famine, including links to the University’s museum dedicated to the Famine.<sup>26</sup> The American Conference on Irish Studies is in the process of developing a teacher resource page.<sup>27</sup> The validity or appropriateness of the material present in these sites is best left for another discussion, but the nature of the web sites provides a strong example of what could be accomplished by either states’ department of education. At the very least, the act of simply publicizing the revision of each state’s curriculum into internet-based vehicles might increase the awareness among average teachers—and with increased awareness could come increased use.

Failing a web-based upgrade, a state-approved text could be written to help guide teachers through this very delicate discussion. The New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission has employed the *Facing History and Ourselves* organization to help develop curriculum and activities dedicated to teaching not only about the Holocaust but also about racism and prejudice.<sup>28</sup> Based in Brookline, Massachusetts, *Facing History and Ourselves* specializes in exposing students and teachers to lessons and workshops that seek to end prejudicial behavior in schools. It offers resources on the Holocaust, the

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<sup>25</sup> Philip Gavin, “The History Place: The Past into the Future,” *The History Place*, last modified 2014, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.historyplace.com/index.html>.

<sup>26</sup> An Gorta Mor - The Great Hunger Archive, last modified 2014, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.thegreathunger.org>.

<sup>27</sup> Teaching ACIS, last modified 2014, accessed February 21, 2014, <http://acisweb.org/teaching/>.

<sup>28</sup> “State of New Jersey announces New Armenian Genocide Curriculum,” *Facing History and Ourselves*, last modified June 25, 2005, accessed April 5, 2011, [http://www.facinghistory.org/content/state\\_new\\_jersey\\_announces\\_new\\_armenian\\_genocide\\_curriculum](http://www.facinghistory.org/content/state_new_jersey_announces_new_armenian_genocide_curriculum).

Armenian Genocide, and the conflict in Darfur, Sudan as well as lessons in the American Civil Rights Movement.<sup>29</sup> In 1994 Margot Stern Strom produced a book named after the organization that contains short readings and activities for students to utilize in exploring issues related to anti-Semitism, prejudice, racism and bullying.<sup>30</sup> Teachers wishing to employ the official New Jersey Holocaust Curriculum will find that *Facing History* readings and lesson ideas are referenced throughout the *Betrayal of Humanity* Curriculum, and Strom's book is an often-quoted resource guide.<sup>31</sup> The *Facing History* text allows an individual teacher to utilize individual lessons. While it is a book of almost 600 pages, it is full of lessons that focus on issues related to racism, prejudice and hatred, as well as material specific to the European Holocaust.

A state-generated or state-sponsored text might also educate teachers as to the history of the Famine itself.<sup>32</sup> Teachers, particularly social studies teachers, cannot expect to rely upon history books often used in standard World, European or American History classes as effective resources about the Irish Famine. As examined earlier, many well-regarded Advanced Placement History books practically ignore Irish history and mention the Famine only briefly.<sup>33</sup> As also mentioned earlier, teachers of social studies

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<sup>29</sup> "Resource Collections," *Facing History and Ourselves*, last modified 2012, accessed September 29, 2012, <http://www.facinghistory.org/resource-collections-0>.

<sup>30</sup> Margot Stern Strom, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior: Resource Book* (Brookline, Mass.: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> *The Betrayal of Humanity. A Curriculum Guide for Grades 9–12* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 2003), 35, 51, 151, 171, 179.

<sup>32</sup> The earlier chapter examined how at least three teachers revealed that they were unaware of the nature of the Irish Famine to feel comfortable enough to teach it in class.

<sup>33</sup> The College Board lists books that it suggests are useful in studying for either European History or World History. Appearing on that list are the books previously mentioned in this paper; texts written by Mortimer Chambers, Donald Kagan, Mark Kishlansky, R.R. Palmer, Marvin Perry, Jackson J. Spielvogel, Dennis Sherman and Jerry

are not required to necessarily be well-versed in American, European or World History in order to be certified as social studies teachers in New York or New Jersey. It can be assumed that many teachers rely on textbook resources in order to gain knowledge on specific historical events and movements. Since so many texts do not provide detailed information on the Famine (or in many cases—any information at all), a companion textbook devoted to the Famine might be helpful.<sup>34</sup>

The interpretation of the “Famine as genocide” and the placement of the Famine under Holocaust/genocide education frameworks is still a challenge for educators in both states and are still viewed with skepticism by many academics, politicians and educators. Irish historian Vincent Comerford noted this while reviewing (positively) the New York State curriculum:

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Bentley and Herbert Ziegler are all recommended by the College Board. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 6, each of these books fails to address the Irish Famine in specific detail and many of those texts fail to address the Irish Famine at all. See: The College Board A.P. European History: Example Textbook List, accessed September 30, 2012, [http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/european\\_history\\_textbook\\_list.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/european_history_textbook_list.html), and College Board A.P. World History: Example Textbook List, accessed September 30, 2012, [http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/world\\_history\\_textbook\\_list.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/courses/world_history_textbook_list.html). Ironically, two of the best-selling World History textbooks, *World History: Connections to Today*, and *World History: Patterns of Interaction*, exist as resources for general knowledge World History students and dedicate more pages to an examination of the Famine than many of the A.P. texts. Roger B. Beck, *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction* (Evanston, Ill.: McDougal Littell, 2001), 667-668, and Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis, Anthony Esler, and Burton F. Beers, *Prentice Hall World History: The Modern Era: Connections to Today*, modern era ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 600-602. Also Gilbert T. Sewall, *World History Textbooks: A Review* (New York, NY: American Textbook Council, 1989), 15.

<sup>34</sup> In order for a full and accurate accounting of the Irish Famine to occur in the public schools, it needs to appear in texts that are used at the collegiate level and in texts that are used in Advanced Placement Courses, as well as in traditional high school courses. James Hill, “The Special Role of the A.P. European History Course,” *The History Teacher* 32, no. 2 (February 1999): 269.

Certain Irish American interests have reacted to official acknowledgement of African American slavery and the Holocaust by seeking parallel recognition of the Great Famine. It is very appropriate that Irish Americans should seek to come to terms with the Great Famine and obtain support in so doing. But the temptation to demand parity by representing what occurred in Ireland in the 1840s as genocide needs to be resisted simply on the basis of honesty. To rebut the allegation of an Irish genocide is relatively easy in an academic setting; to refute it when faced with the emotive rhetoric of identity politics in the public arena is much more difficult. The Great Irish famine Curriculum described by Professor Maureen Murphy...provides a striking example of courageous assertion of the claims of evidence-based enquiry as against self-serving shibboleths. The curriculum turns what might have been an exercise in indoctrination into a superlative learning opportunity.<sup>35</sup>

Yet the idea of “Famine was genocide” (or at least genocidal) remains, particularly among the people charged with exposing students to the Irish Famine.

This paper has already examined how the definition of genocide is constantly changing and evolving and yet still remains in many minds too limiting.<sup>36</sup> The authors of the New Jersey and New York Curricula were critical of their counterparts’ view of Famine and genocide. Dr. Murphy noted that James Mullin was the most persistent critic of the New York Famine curriculum for failing to do more to link the Famine to genocide.<sup>37</sup> Mullin commented that the New York Famine curriculum did not go far enough in explaining to students the harsh rule of Britain over Ireland.<sup>38</sup> Murphy countered again that asserting the Famine was genocide was rooted in a political activist

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<sup>35</sup> Vincent Comerford, *Grievance, Scourge or Shame? The Complexity of Attitudes to Ireland’s Great Famine to Holodomor and Gorta Mor: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, ed. Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen, and Vincent Comerford (New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2012), 68-69.

<sup>36</sup> Rogers, “The Great Hunger: Act of God or Acts of Man,” in *Ireland’s Great Hunger*, 235-56.

<sup>37</sup> Murphy, *Teaching Hunger: The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to Holodomor and Gorta Mor*, 104.

<sup>38</sup> PLAN FOR IRISH FAMINE STUDY UNDER FIRE, last modified April 23, 2001, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/plan-irish-famine-study-fire-article-1.908031>.

argument.<sup>39</sup> She also noted that Mullin's creation, the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum, was "a narrative to be mastered," not necessarily a curriculum that requires students "to draw conclusions based on evidence and to speak and write clearly."<sup>40</sup> Dr. Murphy's work as chairman of the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum Committee sought to minimize or eliminate the power of political rhetoric in shaping interpretations of the Famine, however it was political rhetoric and machinations that enabled the New York Famine Curriculum to be created. As indicated in Chapter 3, politics in an important element in the development of curriculum, and was likely a significant factor in the creation of the first Holocaust education efforts.<sup>41</sup>

Considering the above realities, it may be appropriate for a revised curriculum (or in New Jersey—a new curriculum entirely) to directly allow students and teachers to evaluate the Famine as genocide as part of its instruction about the Famine. Since the existence of both Famine curricula is due to state legislation that mandated an examination of the Holocaust and genocide in public schools, and since the organizers of both curricula would like students to make up their own minds about the Famine as a genocidal event, it may be prudent to use the various definitions of genocide as a basis for examining the Famine. This thematic approach to Famine education ("Was the Great

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<sup>39</sup> PLAN FOR IRISH FAMINE STUDY UNDER FIRE.

<sup>40</sup> Murphy, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to Holodomor and Gorta Mor*, 104. Murphy's view of politics shaping views of history can be seen in the February 16th issue of the Irish Echo. In that issue Joseph Crowley, one of the individuals responsible for the New York Famine Curriculum's genesis is quoted: "The modern definition of genocide can be applied to 17th, 18th and 19th Century Ireland." Ray O'Hanlon, "Inside File Crowley sees both points," *Irish Echo*, February 16, 2011, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://irishecho.com/2011/02/inside-file-crowley-sees-both-points-2/>.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas J. Archdeacon, "The Irish Famine in American School Curriculum," in *New Directions in Irish-American History*, ed. Kevin Keeney (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 280-301.

Irish Famine Genocide?”) would be in line with the thematic approach to education advocated by Grant Wiggins and embraced by the State of New Jersey and the framers of the New York curriculum.<sup>42</sup> It would also allow students to ask and answer the “big questions” that Dr. Murphy and Dr. Singer wrote about when they were in the process of creating the Famine curriculum.<sup>43</sup> A curriculum with student debate and evaluation of the Irish Famine at its core would enable students to become involved in and take ownership of the study of the Famine as an important event.<sup>44</sup> It would also enable various interpretations of the Irish Famine to be examined by students and teachers.

The recommendations listed may move the Famine from its perception as a topic relevant to only Irish-Americans and into a new perception as a world event centered in Ireland during the nineteenth century. The survey results indicate that the Famine possesses a significant place within American history context and is largely the concern of teachers who are themselves of Irish heritage or possess some form of Irish identity.<sup>45</sup> Both of those realities need to change if the Famine is going to occupy greater relevance in public school curriculum.

The Irish Famine needs to have a more secure place in the world history and European history narrative (coverage in textbooks—particularly Advanced Placement textbooks would assist in this endeavor). Examining the Irish Famine within an American history context is valuable and worthy, particularly for students of Irish

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<sup>42</sup> Authentic Education - What is UbD?, last modified 2012, accessed January 31, 2014, <http://www.authenticeducation.org/ubd/ubd.lasso>.

<sup>43</sup> Maureen Murphy and Alan Singer, “Asking the BIG Questions: Teaching about the Great Irish Famine and World History,” *Social Education* 65, no. 5 (September 2001): 286.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Glanz, “Ten Suggestions for Teaching the Holocaust,” *The History Teacher* 32, no. 4 (August 1999): 550.

<sup>45</sup> Appendix 3, Table 7.

ethnicity. However, teaching the Famine within the American narrative is going to have limitations with respect to the complex nature of the Famine. Bill Bigelow's earlier criticism of the lack of coverage of the Irish Famine in American history textbooks might also note that those same textbooks fail to pay homage to the anti-Catholic *Kulturkampf* of Otto Von Bismarck's Germany that sparked immigration in the later nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Those same books do not cover the Italian revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century, which increased Italian immigration to the United States. As a matter of comparison to the Holocaust, those texts generally do not detail the Nuremberg Laws of Adolf Hitler's Germany or the *Einsatzgruppen* unleashed on Eastern Europe during World War II. When American History texts do examine the Holocaust, (for example David M. Kennedy's *The American Pageant*) they often note America's failure to do more to prevent it or end it sooner.<sup>47</sup>

That the Great Irish Famine was an event rooted in European politics and global biological changes is not in doubt. That it was a major event in Irish history and led to the deaths (perhaps indirectly) of an estimated one million people and the immigration of one million more is also not in question by even (some) Revisionist historians.<sup>48</sup> One wonders why the Famine itself appears as a footnote, a sidebar, or it is ignored all together in many world and European history textbooks. In order for the Famine to be

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<sup>46</sup> See Chapter 6, Bill Bigelow, The Real Irish American Story Not Taught in Schools, March 14, 2012, accessed July 31, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-bigelow/the-real-irish-american-s\\_1\\_b\\_1345521.html?view=print&comm\\_ref=false](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-bigelow/the-real-irish-american-s_1_b_1345521.html?view=print&comm_ref=false).

<sup>47</sup> David M. Kennedy, Elizabeth Cohen and Thomas Bailey, *The American Pageant* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Mary E. Daly, "Historians and the Famine: A Beleaguered Species?," *Irish Historical Studies* 30, no. 120 (November 1997): 591.

examined fully and accurately, it needs to take a greater place within a world history or European history narrative.

The story of the Irish Famine in an American history narrative is the story of the American immigrant, and the story of the American immigrant is a story that presents a happy ending.<sup>49</sup> Issues of colonialism, free market ideology, and religious bigotry and potential genocide are not as important in this narrative as is the narrative that the immigrant arrives in America (for whatever reason) and then thrives because of America. Considering that almost all American history students in the public schools are descended from immigrants, this tactic of making the immigrant story one with a happy ending serves a pragmatic purpose—the student is taught that being in America and being an American is a good thing. These students’ immigrant ancestors faced war, religious persecution, economic strife, lawlessness and oppressive governments and societies, and found a home in a (more or less) tolerant nation that enabled them to achieve a greater deal of success than their birth country could or would allow. Ellis Island’s own web page, for example, provides few details on why the majority of immigrants came to the United States.<sup>50</sup> If the Famine is simply a reason why the Irish immigrated, then an examination of the Famine is not necessary. As one history teacher from Montgomery School District in New Jersey wrote,

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<sup>49</sup> While not a particularly good movie, *The Devil’s Own* does possess one good line relative to this element of American history. “Don’t look for a happy ending. It’s not an American story. It’s an Irish one.” See: David Aaron Cohen, *The Devil’s Own*, directed by Alan J. Pakula, 1997.

<sup>50</sup> Ironically enough the web page provides the greatest detail on why the Irish came to the United States, specifically referencing the Famine. Other immigrant groups’ motivations are not detailed. The Peopling of America, last modified 2010, accessed September 28, 2012, [http://www.ellisland.org/immexp/wseix\\_5\\_3.asp?MID=05488008740892425792&](http://www.ellisland.org/immexp/wseix_5_3.asp?MID=05488008740892425792&).

In my capacity as a teacher of US History 1607-1900, I spend a lot of time teaching about the Irish contribution to American history in the 18th and 19th century and their lasting legacy. From how the British treatment of the Irish strongly influenced Ben Franklin's views on British subjugation to the Irish political dominance of the major American cities of the late 19th century. And of course their contribution to building the railroads and canals of the 19thc. As far as the Famine goes, I point it out as the reason for the mass immigration from Ireland which provided the labor necessary to drive the Industrial Revolution. And by escaping the famine they did not escape the prejudices upon their arrival in America.

A United States History class should not examine the causes or impact of the Famine on Ireland, any more than it would examine the causes of German, Italian, Greek, Russian or any immigration movement.<sup>51</sup>

An examination of the Irish Famine in a world or European history context would account for the complexity of the Famine as a historical, sociological and economic event. It would involve a discussion of European imperialism, Anglo-Irish relations, immigration patterns, governmental economic policy of the nineteenth century, and biological exchanges between cultures. As the New York curriculum asserts, the Famine presents the opportunity to examine lessons issues surrounding hunger, poverty, disease, political disempowerment, and religious bigotry.<sup>52</sup> The Famine has a valid place as a

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<sup>51</sup> In contrast, the NJIFC falls into this category in reverse; there is very little information present in that document examining the role of the Irish once they settled in the United States.

<sup>52</sup> Murphy, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum in New York State Schools to Holodomor and Gorta Mor*, 112, 114. . See the goals, objectives and rationale for the New Jersey State Holocaust Curriculum and the essay appearing by Professor Lillie Johnson Edwards on the Amistad Curriculum web page. *The Betrayal of Humanity. A Curriculum Guide for Grades 9–12* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 2003), 6-12, and Lillie Johnson Edwards, "What Is History? Rethinking History for a New Curriculum: Methodology, Interpretation and Perspective," NJ Amistad Commission Web-Based Curriculum, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.njamistadcurriculum.com>.

topic of study in a World History and European History narrative; it was not simply an event concerning the Irish and Irish Americans.<sup>53</sup>

Making the Irish Famine or elements of Irish history a regular element in general American curriculum was never going to be an easy task. Writing in 1999, Jeffrey Glanz of Kean University noted that history textbooks had not given much attention to the Holocaust.<sup>54</sup> Writing in the same time period, Holocaust scholar Samuel Totten noted that the teaching of the Holocaust was in danger of falling into a repeated pattern of clichés.<sup>55</sup> Yet Holocaust education remains an important element in a number of state educational departments.<sup>56</sup> The means and method of the teaching the Holocaust is, even today, examined and debated, but the Holocaust is still examined and explored in public education.<sup>57</sup> It stands to reason that it will take time to make the Irish Famine a regular topic of examination in public education.

The presence of both the New Jersey Famine Curriculum and New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum attempted to make that examination a reality. Both Mr. Mullin

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<sup>53</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, "Ireland's Great Famine: An Overview" (University College Dublin, 2004), 20.

<sup>54</sup> Glanz, "Ten Suggestions for Teaching," 547.

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Totten, "Teaching the Holocaust: The imperative to move beyond clichés," *Canadian Social Studies* 33, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 84.

<sup>56</sup> According to the United States Holocaust Museum, twenty-three states now have Holocaust education programs. Beyond Our Walls: State Profiles on Holocaust Education, accessed August 4, 2012, <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/states/index.php?state=HI>.

<sup>57</sup> Many articles and studies exist on how to appropriately teach the Holocaust; Glanz and Totten represent only two. See also: Deborah A. Abowitz, "Bringing the Sociological Into the Discussion: Teaching the Sociology of the Holocaust," *Teaching Sociology* 30, no. 1 (January 2002): 26-38, Paul Salmons, "Universal meaning or historical understanding? The Holocaust in history and history in the curriculum," *Teaching History*, no. 141 (December 2010): 57-63, James F. Farnham, "What is the value of teaching the Holocaust," *The Journal of General Education* 41 (1992): 18-22, Paul G. Fitchett and Amy J. Good, "Teaching Genocide through GIS: A Transformative Approach," *The Clearing House* 85 (2012): 87-92.

and Dr. Murphy and their respective committees sought means to increase awareness of the Irish Famine in their respective states' public schools. For this they should be commended. Awareness may have been increased, but teaching of the Famine as an important historical topic on a regular basis has not yet been secured. This is not to assert that the New Jersey Famine Curriculum and New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum are failures. They were the first efforts to install a sense of Irish history into the mainstream of American public education, and for a brief time period, it appeared that other states would follow suit. While it appears that the Famine is not yet accorded a formal place in the greater public school curriculum, the first efforts of dedicated individuals should be regarded as first efforts, not failures. The failure would be if they remained the last efforts to recognize the Irish Famine in American education.

## Appendix 1

### IMAGES

knighted for his services in Ireland.

#### WORKHOUSES

Initially, the greatest relief to the starving came through the Poor Law (1838), which aimed to provide housing for the absolutely destitute in workhouses. There were 123 of them in Ireland in 1845.

Conditions were very harsh in the workhouses and families were torn apart upon arrival. Children were kept apart from their parents, who were also separated. The food provided consisted of two meals a day and all inmates were forced to work and were forbidden to leave.

#### EVICTIIONS

Potato cultivation having ended because of the blight, tenants had nothing to live on and could pay no further rents. Sheep and cattle could pay "rent", so landlords decided to give the land over to them. During the worst months of the famine, in the winter of 1846-47, tens of thousands of Irish tenants were evicted from their homes. In 1850, over 104,000 people were evicted.

#### SOUP KITCHENS

In 1847 the government brought in the "Act for the Temporary Relief of Destitute Persons in Ireland Act", also called the Soup Kitchen Act. The soup given out was called "stirabout", a mixture of one-third rice and two-thirds Indian meal, cooked with water.

In some soup kitchens organized by Protestants, people were only allowed the soup if they gave up the Catholic Faith. The Protestants sometimes served meat soup on Fridays, (when Catholics were forbidden to eat meat), or they refused to give soup unless people came to Protestant church or bible class. The Quakers, who were among the most hard-working of the soup kitchen organizers, did not engage in these practices.

#### PRIVATE RELIEF EFFORTS

The Society of Friends, or Quakers, first became involved with the Irish Famine in November, 1846. The Quakers donated food, mostly American flour, rice, biscuits, and Indian meal along with clothes and bedding. They set up soup kitchens, purchased seed, and provided funds for local employment. During 1846-1847, the Quakers gave approximately 200,000

**Fig. 1.** Page 26 of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996), 26.

Irish Famine  
Unit I  
Activity 1

*The Statutes of Kilkenny*

So successful was this cultural assimilation that two hundred years after the first invaders arrived the English crown was forced to take severe measures at a parliament which assembled in Kilkenny, the heartland of Norman Ireland, in 1366. Its purpose was to preserve the racial purity and cultural separateness of the colonisers, thereby enabling the English crown to retain control over them.

It is a measure of the adaptability of both the Irish and the Normans that the crown was faced with such a problem. Not only were the Normans militarily superior, but their political, social and religious systems were different from those practised by the natives. They favoured central government, walled land cultivated intensively, inheritance through the first-born male, and large abbeys rather than small monastic settlements; and Norman French was their language. They secured their land by building castles, which functioned first as strong-points in the invasion and later as centres of control and power. The native Irish seemed to accept the new way of life as something they could, and had to, live with. Gradually, Gaelic culture prevailed and although the Normans controlled about two-thirds of the country in 1366, military might and political sophistication had not been sufficiently powerful to obliterate the native way of life.

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O hEithir, Breandan, *A Pocket History of Ireland*, The O'Brien Press, Dublin, Ireland, 1989

The Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III, presided over the parliament which passed the Statutes of Kilkenny. Their purpose was to prevent further assimilation, by legal and religious penalties. The settlers were forbidden to use the Irish language. They were also forbidden to use Irish names, marry into Irish families, use the Irish mode of dress, adopt any Irish laws and play the Irish game of hurling. The measures were a failure. Gaelicisation had gone too far and by now the native population, having failed to beat the invaders on the field of battle, was in league militarily with the conquerors. By the end of the fifteenth century the English crown ruled only a small area around Dublin, known from its fortifications of earth and wood as 'The Pale' (meaning a fence or boundary). The term has lived on in contemporary politics to describe those who show little understanding of the problems of rural Ireland and whose outlook is conditioned by their metropolitan surroundings.

Questions for discussion:

What was the purpose of the Statutes of Kilkenny?

What would be lost to the English rulers if the Irish and English (Normans) continued to intermarry?

What do you think the term "Beyond the Pale" meant to an Englishman living in 14th century Dublin?

**Fig. 2.** Page 32 of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996), 32.

UNIT I - Laws that Isolated and Impoverished the Irish

ADDITIONAL UNIT GOALS:

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES	TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES	INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL/RESOURCES
<p>1.</p> <p>The student will understand that the mass starvation in Ireland resulted from historical and political forces as well as the potato blight itself.</p>	<p>A.</p> <p>Students will Examine the laws designed to separate, subjugate and impoverish the native Irish.</p> <p>Activity 1. Students will read excerpted material from <u>A Pocket History of Ireland</u> (p.26-27), <u>The Great Hunger</u>, (p.27-28) "Penal Laws" from <u>The Story of the Irish Race</u>. Students will answer questions following readings and discuss issues.</p> <p>Activity 2. Students will read excerpted material from <u>A Pocket History of Ireland</u> (p.40-41), the <u>Encyclopedia Americana - International Edition</u> on the economic theory of Laissez Faire and the writings of Thomas Robert Malthus. Students will answer questions following readings and discuss issues.</p> <p>Activity 3. Students will read "The Destruction of Irish Trade", summarized and excerpted material from <u>The Story of the Irish Race</u>. Students will answer questions following the reading and discuss the issues raised.</p>	<p>MacManus, Seumas, <u>The Story of the Irish Race</u>, The Irish Publishing Co., New York, 1922</p> <p>O hEithir, Breandan, <u>A Pocket History of Ireland</u>, The O'Brien Press, Dublin, Ireland, 1989</p> <p>Woodham-Smith, Cecil, <u>The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849</u> Penguin Books, London, England, 1991.</p> <p><u>Encyclopedia Americana</u>, Grolier Incorporated, 1992.</p>

31.

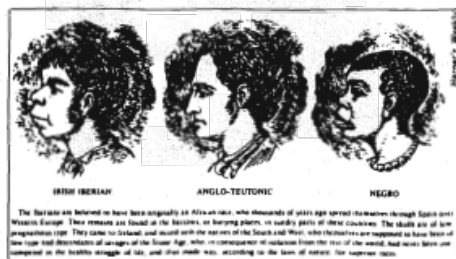
**Fig. 3.** Page 31 of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996), 31.



British soldiers hanging a piper for playing rebel songs.

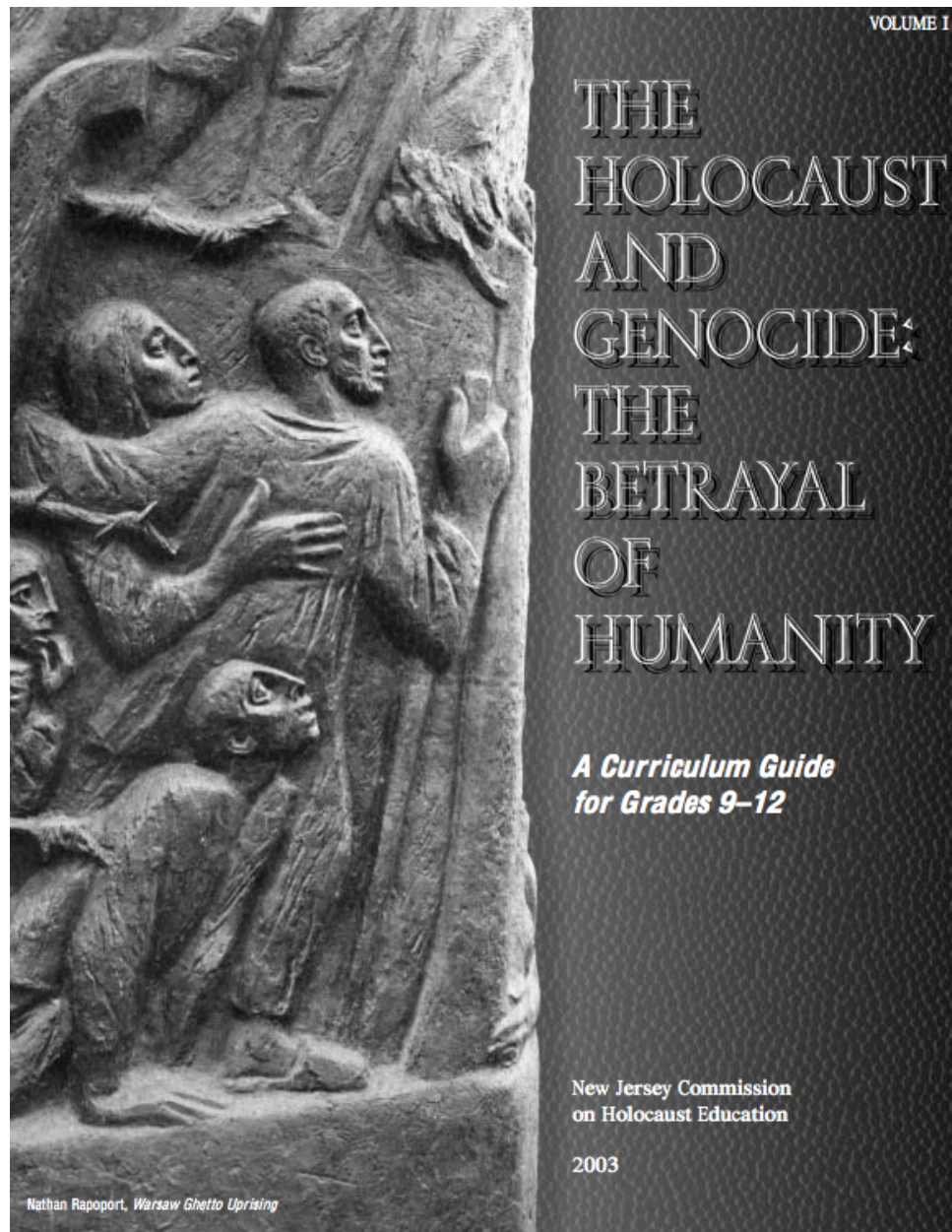


British punishments in Ireland: L., a travelling gallows. R., "Pitch capping" Placing a "cap" of tar on the head of a victim and setting fire to it.



"Scientific" racism as portrayed in Harper's Weekly, an American magazine.

**Fig. 4.** Page 48 of the New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1996), 48.



**Fig. 5.** Cover of the Holocaust Education Curriculum Guide for the State of New Jersey. *The Betrayal of Humanity. A Curriculum Guide for Grades 9-12* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 2003), Cover.

## Unit III: READING #13

## Learning Activity IIA

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR  
TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST

Ira Zornberg, A.D.C.

## A Sketch of the Jewish Historical Experience

The Jews are an ancient people whose thoughts have been deeply imprinted upon western civilization. Judaism, the first monotheistic faith with its idea of a single God interested in the moral behavior of man, was outlined in the Bible and in the declarations of the prophets.

From about 1000 B.C. until 70 A.D. (with intervals), Jews lived in Israel under full or partial autonomy. The "Great Revolt" against the Romans (67-70 A.D.) ended with the destruction of the Temple. Another revolt in 132-135 A.D. resulted in the Roman expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem. The Romans changed the name of the land from Judea to Palestine. Christianity, originally a sect within Judaism, originated in the hills of Judea, and its message was spread by Matthew and Mark, both Jews, in the synagogues of the Roman Empire.

Although by the 3rd Century the majority of Jews lived in the Diaspora (lands outside of Palestine) — it is estimated that 1/8th of the population in the far-flung Roman Empire was Jewish — many still lived in Palestine. It was there, and in Babylon, that Jewish scholars over a period of hundreds of years created the Talmud — a vast collection of laws and literature which guided Jewish life and served as a "portable homeland" for Jews wherever they lived.

After the Arab conquest of Spain in the 8th century large numbers of Jews migrated there. During the Golden Age of Islam Jews were poets, scholars and generals under Moslem princes. The reconciling of faith and reason in the writings of the Jewish scholar, philosopher (and physician) Moses Maimonides was carefully studied by Christian scholars in the later Middle Ages. Many Jews acted as middlemen in trade between Moslems and Christians. Others were welcomed to settle by Frankish kings and translated works preserved by the Arabs (originally Greek and Roman works) into Latin. They were weavers and vintners, millers and minters. Wherever and whenever they were permitted, Jews not only worked for the betterment of their own lives but were also contributing members of the larger communities. Among those who have deeply affected the world in which we live are:

- a. Jesus of Nazareth, whom Jews see as a teacher who preached important ethical concepts and whom Christians see as man and Son of God.
- b. Baruch Spinoza, 16th century Holland, who is the father of modern Biblical criticism and theology.
- c. Karl Marx, 19th century Germany (whose parents converted to Christianity and raised him as a Christian) believed in the ultimate perfection of society under Communism.

Source: Zornberg, Ira. "Lesson 2. Can any People Become the Victim of Genocide? Classroom Strategies for Teaching About the Holocaust: 10 Lessons for Classroom Use." New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1983.

New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education

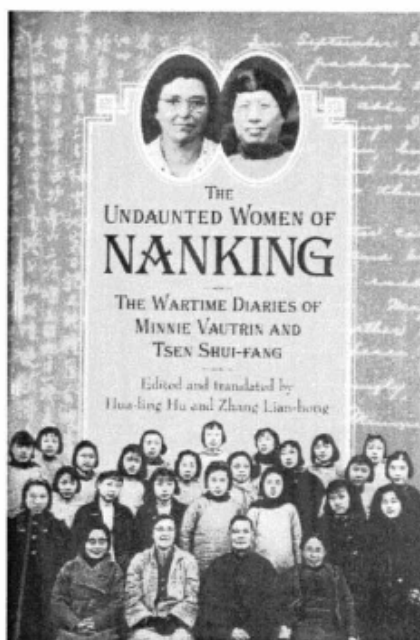
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**Fig. 6.** Page 290 of the Holocaust Education Curriculum Guide for the State of New Jersey. *The Betrayal of Humanity. A Curriculum Guide for Grades 9–12* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 2003), 290.



## *Unit Five*

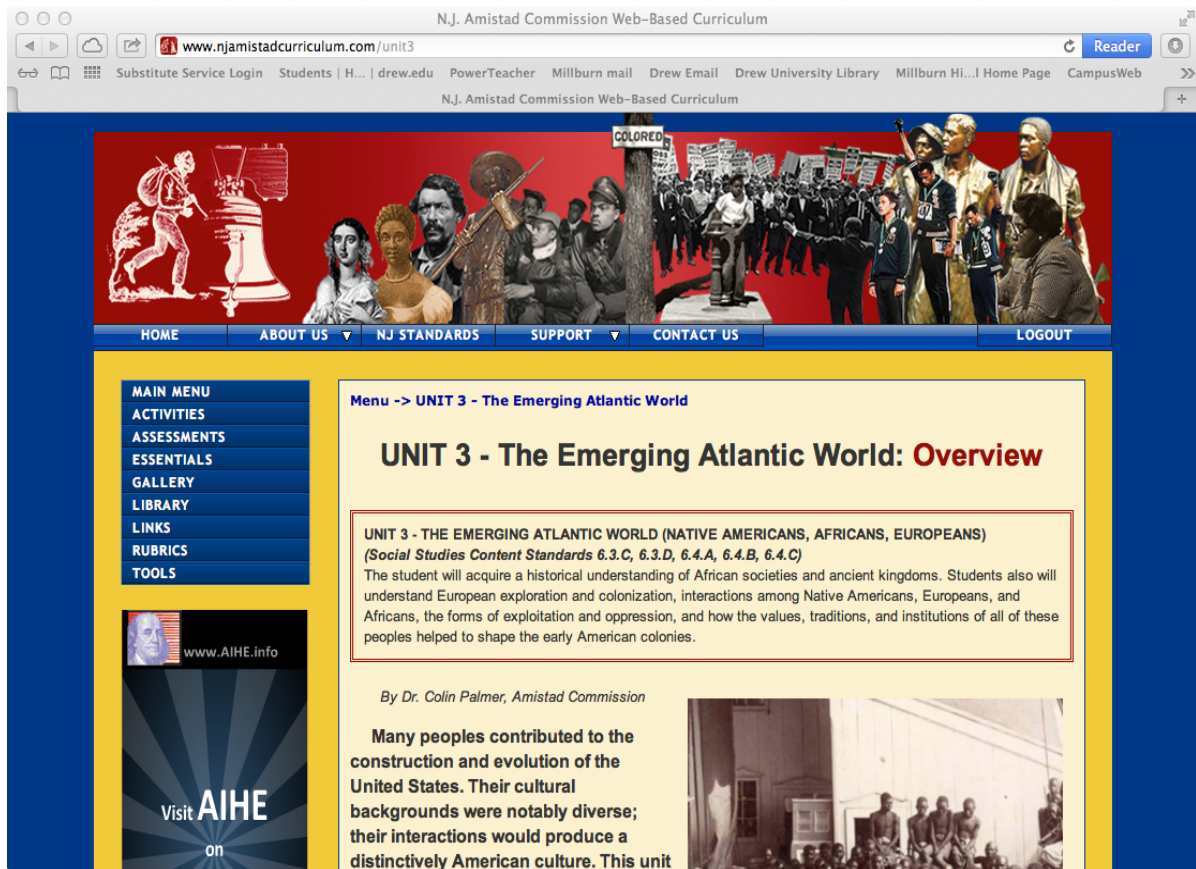
### *Rescuers and Upstanders*



The Undaunted Women: Minnie Vautrin and Tsen Shui-fang

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**Fig. 7.** One of the lessons from the Curriculum examining the Rape of Nanking. New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, comp., *The Nanking Massacre and Other Japanese Military Atrocities, The Asia-Pacific War* (Trenton, NJ: State of New Jersey, 2010), 113.



**Fig. 8.** Image from the *Amistad* on-line textbook. New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, comp., *The Amistad Curriculum* (Trenton, NJ: State of New Jersey, 2012), [Page #], accessed September 19, 2012, <http://www.njamistadcurriculum.com>.

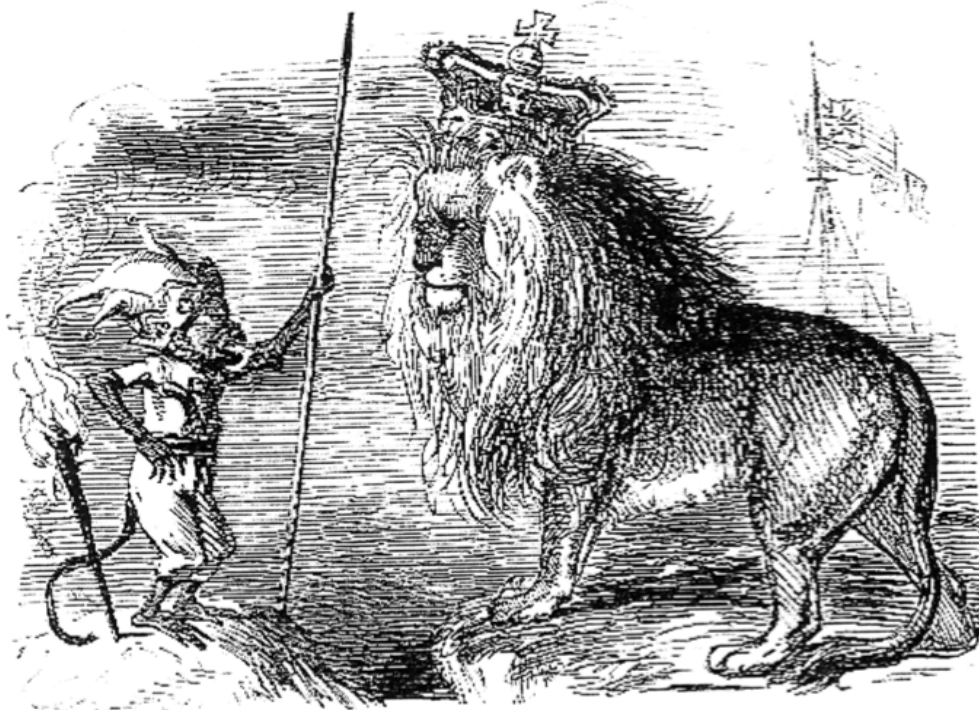


**"The Day We Celebrate"** by American cartoonist Thomas Nast shows the Irish on St. Patrick's Day as violent, drunken apes.

**Fig. 9.** Image from page 48 of the revised New Jersey Irish Famine Curriculum. New Jersey Department of Education Holocaust Education Commission, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum Second Edition*, by New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission, curriculum no. 2 (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education, 1999), 48.

## Section I: English Racism

Document 1) 1. Punch Magazine



THE BRITISH LION AND THE IRISH MONKEY.

Monkey (Mr. Mitchell). "One of us MUST be 'Put Down.'"

This Cartoon, appearing April 8, 1848, was drawn by **John Leech**. The caption under the title reads:

Monkey (Mr Mitchell). "One of us MUST be 'Put Down.'"

Mr. Mitchell is John Mitchell, editor of the militant newspaper "The United Irishman."

**Fig. 10.** Page 371 of the New York Irish Famine Curriculum. New York State Department of Education, *The Great Irish Famine Curriculum* (Albany, NY: New York State Department of Education, 2001), 371.

## Appendix 2

### CORRESPONDENCE AND SURVEY

Greetings,

I am a social studies high school teacher at Millburn High School in New Jersey and I'm completing my doctoral work at Drew University by examining the effectiveness and the utilization of the New Jersey and New York State Great Irish Famine Curricula. I would like to survey your teachers through the use of a *Googledoc* survey. I would like to (with your approval) to survey teachers of social studies, English and fine arts to determine if they utilize the NYSGIFC within their teaching of the Famine (if they teach about the Famine at all).

The survey is short and is not intended to reflect on the teaching style or ability of your staff. It is designed to ascertain if the NJSGIFC/NYSGIFC is being utilized in the public schools. This is an anonymous survey, and while results will be shared, no specific teachers will be identified.

If you have questions regarding the nature of the survey, it can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/nysgifcsurvey>

If this is acceptable, I would like to send the following email to your teachers of the humanities:

Hello -

I am a Millburn (NJ) High School Social Studies teacher and am completing my studies toward a doctoral dissertation at Drew University. I am working on a comparison of the New Jersey and New York versions of the Great Irish Famine Curricula and in the process of this comparison, I am analyzing how teachers of the humanities (Social Studies, Language Arts and Fine Arts) teach the Irish Famine in their classes. If you have a few moments today (or in the near future), could you complete a brief survey of about 15 questions? The survey will assess if you teach the Famine in your classes, how you utilize the document and how you utilize the NYS Great Irish Famine Curriculum.

The purpose of this study is not to evaluate your particular teaching methods or style, but rather to determine how effectively the NYSGIFC is being utilized in the public schools. The survey results will be shared with others but the survey itself is anonymous. **This exercise is completely optional.**

The survey should not take long (no more than a few minutes) and can be found at the following link:

<http://tinyurl.com/nysgifcsurvey>

Thank you for your time and effort - it is greatly appreciated.

Christopher Feeley

Thank you for your time,

Chris Feeley

### **Irish Famine Curriculum Survey**

Greetings.

As part of my studies at Drew University, I am surveying teachers of social studies, English and the humanities to determine:

How much time teachers of social studies, English and the humanities devote to the teaching of the Irish Famine

In what context is the Irish Famine taught (in regards to classes and content areas),

How aware are NJ teachers of the New Jersey Great Irish Famine Curriculum (NJGIFC),

How effectively is the NJ Great Famine Curriculum being utilized in the typical classroom.

Fifteen questions appear below. Not every question need be answered, but some questions are required.

This survey is not an evaluation of your particular teaching style or your teaching ability. Your name is not required and will not be requested. Results of this survey will be examined and shared with others as part of a doctoral study.

Thank you for your input.

Christopher Feeley

**\* Required**

**#1: School District \***

In which school district do you teach?

**#2: School Level \***

Within your district, which grade levels do you teach?

6th grade

7th grade  
 8th grade  
 Freshmen  
 Sophomores  
 Juniors  
 Seniors

**#3: Years Experience \***

How many years have you been teaching?

1 - 5 years  
 6 - 10 years  
 11 - 15 years  
 16 - 20 years  
 20 years or more

**#4: Content Areas \***

What subjects have you taught or currently teach? Note that the subject areas include all levels of academic achievement and ability.

World History  
 United States History I  
 United States History II  
 European History  
 Other Social Studies elective  
 American Literature  
 English Literature  
 World Literature  
 Other Language Arts Related Electives Fine Arts Courses

**#5: The Famine in your classroom \***

Do you teach about the Irish Famine in your classes?

Yes  
 No

**If you answered yes to Question #5, please continue with the survey. If you answered no, please skip to question #10.**

**#6: Time on the Famine**

About how much time do you spend within your classes teaching about the Irish Famine?

Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.  
 About 1/2 a class period or block.  
 About one class period or block.  
 More than one class period or block - including homework and projects

**#7: Context of the Famine**

In which context (or class) do you teach the Irish Famine? Note that the subject areas include all levels of academic achievement and ability.

World History  
 United States History I  
 United States History II  
 European History  
 Other Social Studies elective  
 American Literature  
 English Literature  
 World Literature  
 Other Language Arts Related Electives  
 Fine Arts Courses

**#8: Time Allotment**

In your professional opinion, do you feel you spend enough time, too little time, or too much time in examining the Famine?

Too little time.  
 The right amount of time.  
 Too much time.  
 Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.

**#9: Heritage**

Are you of Irish ancestry or are you involved in a relationship with someone of Irish ancestry?

Yes  
 No

**#10: Genocide \***

Based on what you know of other world genocides, and based on what you know of the Irish Famine, do you consider the Irish Famine to be an example of genocide?

Yes  
 No

**#11: Awareness of the Curriculum**

Were you aware that an official New Jersey State Curriculum on the Great Irish Famine of 1845 - 1852 existed?

Yes  
 No

**If you answered yes to question #11, please continue with the survey. If you answered no, please click on the "submit" button below. Thank you for your time.**

**#12: Professional Evaluation - Ranking**

Using a 5 point scale (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how impressed are you with the official NJ State Irish Famine Curriculum?

- 1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum.
- 2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.
- 3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.
- 4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.
- 5: I am impressed with the State Famine Curriculum.
- N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.

**#13: Professional Evaluation**

Could you elaborate further on your views of the NJGIFC?

**#14: Utilization of the Curriculum**

Do you use the information and lessons generated in the NJ State Irish Famine Curriculum in your classes?

Yes

No

**#15: Utilization of the Curriculum #2**

If you answered yes to the last question, then please explain how you use the Curriculum. If you answered no to question #14, thank you for your time and click the submit button to end this survey.

**Thank You!**

Your support has been appreciated!

# Appendix 3

## SURVEY RESULTS

**Table 1. New Jersey Teachers Responding to the Survey; identified by District and Content Area.**

<i>School District</i>	Teachers	<i>Specific Subject Areas</i>			
		Social Studies	Language Arts	Fine Arts	Multiple Subjects
Becton	2	2			
Berkley Heights	22	9	13		
Bernards	2	2			
West Caldwell	3	3			
Cherry Hill	2	2			
Cinnaminson	4		4		
Dumont	2	1			1
Freehold Regional	13	7	5	1	
Glen Ridge	4	1	3		
Gloucester	7	5	1	1	
Greater Egg Harbor	1			1	
Haddonfeld	3	1	1		1
High Point	3	2			1
Regional					
Holmdel	5	3	1		1
Hopewell Valley	9	4	3	2	
Indian Hills	1	1			
Jersey City	5	1	3		1
Livingston	17	12	4	1	
Madison	6	1	5		
Millburn	26	12	10	2	2
Montgomery	1	1			
New Providence	3	1	1		1
North Hunterdon	1			1	
North Plainfield	3	2	1		
Plainfield	8	7	1		
Plumstead	2	2			
Point Pleasant Boro	5	5			
Ramapo Hills	5	1	4		
Ridgewood	16	11	5		
Roselle	1	1			
Roxbury	2	2			
Scotch-Plains	6	2	4		
South Brunswick	7	6			1
South Hunterdon	1		1		

Sparta	5		5		
Vernon	18	10	3	2	3
Verona	5	3	2		
Washington Twn.	8	8			
West Milford	1	1			
West Orange	11	5	6		
Westfield	7	7			
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>

**Table 2. New York Teachers participating in the Survey; identified by District and Content Area.**

<i>School District</i>	Teachers	<i>Specific Subject Areas</i>			
		Social Studies	Language Arts	Fine Arts	Multiple Subjects
Arlington	8	4	2	2	
Baldwinsville	3	2	1		
Belfast	1	1			
Byron-Bergen	2	1	1		
Cato-Meridian	1		1		
Catskill	1	1			
Cazenovia	6	3	1	1	1
Chazy	1		1		
Cheektowaga-Sloan	1	1			
Clifton-Fine	2	2			
Commack	8		7		1
Depew	1	1			
East Syracuse-Minoa	3	1	1	1	
Edwards-Knox	1	1			
Elmsford	1	1			
Fairport	3	3			
Fillmore	1	1			
Geneseo	1	1			
Gloversville	2	1	1		
Gowanda	2		1		1
Groton	1	1			
Hamburg	5	1	3		1
Harrisville	2	1	1		
Hastings	1	1			
Hauppauge	2	2			
Honeoye	1		1		
Ithaca	1	1			
Jericho	1		1		
Kinderhook	1	1			
Lansing	1	1			
Liberty	1	1			
Livonia	1	1			
Mahopac	2	2			
Malverne	1	1			
Massena	2	1		1	
Middle Country	1	1			
Millbrook	1	1			
Moravia	1			1	
Newark	4	2	1		1

North Collins	1	1			
North Rockland	3	3			
Norwich	3	2		1	
Pine Plains	1	1			
Pioneer	1	1			
Pittsford	2	2			
Plainedge	4	3		1	
Port Washington	3		3		
Potsdam	3	2	1		
Queensbury	4	4			
Ravena-Coeymans-	3	1	2		
Selkirk					
Rhinebeck	1		1		
Schalmont	1	1			
South Jefferson	1				1
Wallkill	1	1			
Waterford-Halfmoon	2	1	1		
West Canada Valley	3	1	1	1	
Wilson	2	1	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>

**Table 3. New Jersey School Districts identified by District Factor Group.<sup>1</sup>**

<i>District Factor Grouping Designation</i>	<i>Number of teachers from New Jersey districts within that DFG who responded to the New Jersey Survey.</i>
A	0
B	13
CD	6
DE	17
FG	30
GH	31
I	128
J	28 <sup>2</sup>

**Table 4. Subject Area Comparison between New Jersey and New York.**

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Social Studies	144	70	214
Language Arts	86	34	120
Fine Arts	11	9	20
Multi-Disciplinary	12	6	18
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>372</b>

**Table 5. Respondents' Experience.**

<i>Years Experience</i>	<i>NJ Respondents</i>	<i>NY Respondents</i>	<i>Totals</i>
One to five years:	32	16	48
Six to ten years:	74	29	103
Eleven to fifteen years:	58	29	87
Sixteen to twenty years:	30	22	52
More than twenty years	59	23	81

<sup>1</sup> NJ Department of Education District Factor, last modified 2010, accessed July 12, 2012, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/sf/dfg.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> Twenty six of the J respondents were teachers from the district in which I teach high school social studies, Millburn Township.

**Table 6. Teachers' responses to Question #5-Do you teach the Irish Famine in your classroom-identified by teacher content and by state.**

<i>State</i>		<i>Content Areas</i>				<b>Totals</b>
		Language Arts	Social Studies	Multiple Subjects	Fine Arts	
<i>New Jersey</i>	Teachers Surveyed	86	144	12	11	<b>253</b>
	Teachers responding "yes"	19	91	4	1	<b>115</b>
<i>New York</i>	Teachers Surveyed	34	70	6	9	<b>119</b>
	Teachers responding "yes"	8	54	3	1	<b>66</b>

**Table 7. The Famine taught within specific context\*, identified by state.**

<i>Subject Context</i>	<i>State</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
World History	35	32	<b>67</b>
United States History I	46	18	<b>64</b>
United States History II	22	22	<b>44</b>
European History	19	16	<b>35</b>
English Literature	16	5	<b>21</b>
Other Social Studies Electives	13	2	<b>15</b>
World Literature	5	0	<b>5</b>
American Literature	5	3	<b>8</b>
Other Language Arts Electives	2	2	<b>4</b>
Fine Arts Classes	1	1	<b>2</b>

**\*Teachers often taught more than one subject, and also often indicated that they taught the Famine in multiple classes within a discipline.**

**Table 8. Time dedicated to teaching the Famine, identified by state.**

<i>Time Dedicated to the Famine</i>	<i>State</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Less than ½ a class period or block:	41	25	<b>66</b>
About ½ a class period or block:	24	12	<b>36</b>
About one class period or block:	28	22	<b>50</b>
About one class period – More than one class period – including homework and projects	2		<b>2</b>
More than one class period or block – including homework and projects	16	7	<b>23</b>

**Table 9. Social studies teachers' time dedicated to teaching the Famine, identified by state.**

<i>Time Dedicated to the Famine</i>	<i>State</i>		
	<i>NJ*</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Less than ½ a class period or block:	34	22	<b>56</b>
About ½ a class period or block:	19	10	<b>29</b>
About one class period or block:	22	16	<b>38</b>
About one class period – More than one class period – including homework and projects	1		<b>1</b>
More than one class period or block – including homework and projects	12	6	<b>18</b>

**\*Three New Jersey social studies teachers failed to provide responses to this question.**

**Table 10. Teacher reflection on class time dedicated to the Famine, identified by state.**

<i>Teacher Reflection</i>	<i>State</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Too little time:	37	20	<b>57</b>
The right amount of time:	68	43	<b>111</b>
Too much time:	0	0	<b>0</b>
Unsure – I have never really reflected on this question	10	2	<b>12</b>

Some teachers answered that they did not teach the Famine and then answered the question on how much time they felt they spent on teaching the Famine in class. While they should not have answered the second question if they answered no to the first question, I have included their responses here.

**Table 11. Teachers who responded to teaching the Famine, identified by an Irish identity and by state.**

<i>State</i>		<i>Content Areas</i>				<b>Totals</b>
		Language Arts	Social Studies	Multiple Subjects	Fine Arts	
<i>New Jersey</i>	Teachers Who Taught the Famine	19	91	4	1	115
	Teachers who taught Famine with Irish Identity	14*	52	3	1	70
	Teachers Who Taught the Famine	8	54	3	1	66
<i>New York</i>	Teachers who taught Famine with Irish Identity	7	37	2*	1	47

\* One teacher in this group did not provide identity information.

**Table 12: The Famine in non-Social Studies Classes, Irish Identity & Genocide Classification**

	<i>State</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Total non-Social Studies Teachers Surveyed:	109	49	<b>158</b>
Non-Social Studies Teachers who taught the Famine:	24	12	<b>36</b>
Non-Social Studies Teachers who Indicated an Irish Identity:	19*	10*	<b>29</b>
Non-Social Studies Teachers who taught the Famine, possessed an Irish identity and classified the Famine as genocide:	12	6	<b>16</b>

**\*One teacher in each group failed to provide identity information**

**Table 13: The Famine in Social Studies Classes, Irish Identity & Genocide Classification**

	<i>State</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Total Social Studies Teachers Surveyed:	144	70	<b>214</b>
Social Studies Teachers who taught the Famine:	91	54	<b>145</b>
Social Studies Teachers who Indicated an Irish Identity:	52	37	<b>89</b>
Social Studies Teachers who taught the Famine, possessed an Irish identity and classified the Famine as genocide:	25	21	<b>46</b>

**Table 14. Teachers' evaluation of the "Famine-as-genocide", identified by content area and state.**

<i>Classification of the Famine As Genocide</i>	<i>State</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Yes			
Social Studies	73	37	<b>110</b>
Language Arts	40	12	<b>52</b>
Fine Arts	5	5	<b>10</b>
Multi-Disciplinary	10	4	<b>14</b>
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>186</b>
No:			
Social Studies	72	33	<b>105</b>
Language Arts	46	22	<b>68</b>
Fine Arts	6	4	<b>10</b>
Multi-Disciplinary	2	2	<b>4</b>
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>187</b>

**Table 15: Teachers teaching the Famine and perception of the Famine as genocide, identified by subject matter.**

<i>Teachers who taught the Famine &amp; classified the Famine as Genocide:</i>	<i>State</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Social Studies	51	30	81
Language Arts	10	3	13
Fine Arts	1	1	2
Multi-Disciplinary	3	2	5
<b>Totals:</b>			<b>101</b>
<i>Teachers who taught the Famine &amp; did not classify the Famine as Genocide:</i>			
Social Studies	40	24	64
Language Arts	9	5	14
Fine Arts	0	0	0
Multi-Disciplinary	1	1	2
<b>Totals:</b>			<b>80</b>

**Table 16: Teachers not teaching the Famine and perception of the Famine as genocide, identified by subject matter.**

	<i>State</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
<i>Teachers who did not teach the Famine &amp; classified the Famine as Genocide:</i>			
Social Studies	21	7	28
Language Arts	30	9	39
Fine Arts	4	4	8
Multi-Disciplinary	7	2	9
<b>Totals:</b>			<b>84</b>
<i>Teachers who did not teach the Famine &amp; did not classify the Famine as Genocide:</i>			
Social Studies	32	9	41
Language Arts	37	17	54
Fine Arts	6	4	10
Multi-Disciplinary	1	1	2
<b>Totals:</b>			<b>107</b>

**Table 17. Amount of time dedicated to the Famine in classes by teachers that classified the Famine as genocide, identified by state.\***

<i>Time dedicated to the Famine in Class</i>	<i>States</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Less than ½ a class period or block:	18	11	<b>29</b>
About ½ a class period or block:	12	6	<b>18</b>
About one class period or block:	19	15	<b>34</b>
About one class period or block – including homework and projects	2		<b>2</b>
More than one class period or block – including homework and projects	12	6	<b>18</b>

\*Two teachers responded they taught the famine but did not indicate how much time they taught the Famine in their classrooms.

**Table 18. Amount of time dedicated to the Famine in classes by teachers that did not classify the Famine as genocide, identified by state.\***

<i>Time dedicated to the Famine in Class</i>	<i>States</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Less than ½ a class period or block:	23	6	<b>29</b>
About ½ a class period or block:	12	6	<b>18</b>
About one class period or block:	9	8	<b>17</b>
More than one class period or block – including homework and projects	4	2	<b>6</b>

\*Two teachers responded they taught the famine but did not indicate how much time they taught the Famine in their classrooms.

**Table 19. Teachers that did not teach the Famine, their classification of the Famine as genocide, identified by state.**

<i>Genocide classification</i>	<i>States</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Teachers that felt the Famine was genocide, but did not teach the Famine	62	22	<b>84</b>
Teachers that felt the Famine was not Famine and did not teach the Famine	76	31	<b>107</b>

**Table 20. Teacher awareness of official state Famine curriculum, identified by content area and by state.**

<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>States</i>		
		<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
Yes	Language Arts	6	3	<b>9</b>
	Social Studies	37	37	<b>74</b>
	Fine Arts	1	3	<b>4</b>
	Multi-Disciplinary	3	2	<b>5</b>
	<b>Totals:</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>92</b>
No	Language Arts	86	31	<b>117</b>
	Social Studies	107	33	<b>140</b>
	Fine Arts	10	7	<b>17</b>
	Multi-Disciplinary	7	3	<b>10</b>
	<b>Totals:</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>280</b>

**Table 21. Teacher Evaluation of official state Famine Curriculum, identified by state.**

<i>Professional Evaluation</i>	<i>States</i>		
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	<b>Totals</b>
I am unimpressed with the state curriculum.	2	5	<b>7</b>
The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.	4	5	<b>9</b>
The document is adequate, but could be improved.	10	8	<b>18</b>
The document could have some improvements, but is a well-made document.	8	5	<b>13</b>
I am impressed with the state curriculum.	3	2	<b>5</b>
I am aware that the document exists, but I have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	20	20	<b>40</b>

**Table 22. Teacher Utilization of official state Famine Curriculum, identified by state.**

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>States</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Language Arts	0	2	<b>2</b>
Social Studies	12	12	<b>24</b>
Fine Arts	1	0	<b>1</b>
Multiple Subjects	1	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>

**Table 23: The Famine in World History Classes, European History Classes & Genocide Classification. Includes teachers classified as multi-disciplinary, who would examine the Famine in a World History or European History context.**

	<i>State</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Total World History & European Teachers Surveyed:	103	54	<b>157</b>
Total World & European History Teachers who indicated they taught the Famine:	66	41	<b>107</b>
Total Teachers who indicated that they taught the Famine World/European History Context:	44	35	<b>80</b>
Total teachers who indicated they taught the Famine, taught the Famine within a World/European History Context and classified the Famine as genocide:	25	22	<b>47</b>

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World/European History teachers who indicated they did not teach the Famine.	37	13	<b>50</b>
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**Table 24: The Famine in US I History Classes & Genocide Classification. Includes teachers classified as multi-disciplinary that would examine the Famine in a United States History I context.**

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	<i>State</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Total United States History Teachers Surveyed:	116	57	<b>173</b>
Total United States History Teachers who indicated they taught the Famine:	77	42	<b>119</b>
Total US who indicated that they taught the Famine US History Context:	65	40	<b>105</b>
Total teachers who indicated they taught the Famine, taught the Famine within a US I History Context and classified the Famine as genocide:	37	22	<b>59</b>
US I History teachers who indicated they did not teach the famine	39	15	<b>44</b>

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**Table 25: The Famine in Social Studies Classes, Irish Identity, and time dedicated to the Famine, identified by state.\***

	<i>State</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Total social studies teachers surveyed:	144	70	<b>214</b>
Social studies teachers who taught the famine:	91	54	<b>145</b>
Social studies teachers who indicated an Irish identity:	52	37	<b>89</b>
Social studies teachers who taught the Famine for less than one half of a class period or block	18	14	<b>46</b>
About ½ a class period or block:	13	6	<b>19</b>
About one class period or block:	12	14	<b>24</b>
More than one class period or block – including homework and projects	8	3	<b>11</b>

**\*One NJ teacher did not indicate how much time he dedicated to the Famine in his class.**

**Table 26: The Famine in Social Studies Classes, non-Irish Identity, and time dedicated to the Famine, identified by state.\***

	<i>State</i>		<b>Totals</b>
	<i>NJ</i>	<i>NY</i>	
Total social studies teachers surveyed:	144	70	<b>214</b>
Social studies teachers who taught the famine:	91	54	<b>145</b>
Social studies teachers who indicated no Irish identity:	37	17	<b>54</b>
Social studies teachers who taught the Famine for less than one half of a class period or block	16	8	<b>24</b>
About ½ a class period or block:	5	4	<b>9</b>
About one class period or block:	10	2	<b>12</b>
More than one class period or block – including homework and projects	5	3	<b>5</b>

**\*One NJ teacher did not indicate how much time he dedicated to the Famine in his class.**

## Appendix 4

### SURVEY RESPONSES

In order to improve readability, columns 13 and 15 (the open-ended responses) will appear at the end of the New York responses for those teachers who responded to those questions. Content area courses are abbreviated (listed below), and grade levels are indicated by school year.

WH – World History  
US I – United States History I  
US II – United States History II  
EH – European History  
OSS – Other Social Studies Electives  
AL – American Literature  
WL – World Literature  
EL – English Literature  
OLA – Other Language Arts Electives  
FA – Fine Arts Courses

Table 1. New Jersey Teacher Responses to the Survey.

#1: School District	#2: School Level	#3: Years Experience	#4: Content Area	#5: The Famine in your classroom	#6: Time on the Famine	#7: Context	#8: Time	#9: Heritage	#10: Genocide	#11: Awareness of the Curriculum	#12: Professional Evaluation	#14: Utilization
Millburn	9, 10, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.	No
Millburn High School	9, 10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, OSS , FA	No					Yes	No		
Millburn	9, 10, 11, 12	1 - 5 years	AL, WL	No					Yes	No		
Millburn	11, 12	20 years or more	AL, EL	No					No	No		
Millburn	10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I, US II	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	No	No	No	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	
Millburn	11, 12	20 years or more	US I, US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II	Too little time.	Yes	No	No		



Millburn	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	WH, EH	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH, EH	The right amount of time.	No	No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Millburn	9, 10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS, AL	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH, US I, US II	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Millburn, NJ	9, 11	20 years or more	EL	No					No	No		
Millburn High School	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, OSS	No					No	No		
Madison	9, 11	16 - 20 years	EL	No					Yes	No		
Madison	6	1 - 5 years	AL	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	AL	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Madison	8	11 - 15 years	WH	No					No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Madison	8	1 - 5 years	EL	No					No	No		

FRHSD	10, 12	11 - 15 years	AL, WL	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	AL, EL	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Freehold Regional High School District	10, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	No	No		
Livingston School District	10, 11, 12	1 - 5 years	WH, US I, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I, OSS	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	Yes	No	No		
FRHSD	11	16 - 20 years	US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No		
Livingston	10, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	US I, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Livingston	11, 12	11 - 15 years	US II, OSS	No					Yes	No		
Ridgewood Public Schools	9	6 - 10 years	WH	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	WH	Too little time.	Yes	No	No		

Ridgewood	10	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	Yes	No	No		
Ridgewood	9	6 - 10 years	WH, US I	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH, US I	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	Yes	No	No		
Ridgewood High School	11, 12	1 - 5 years	EL	No					No	No		
caldwell-west caldwell	10	11 - 15 years	US I, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No		
Ridgewood	10, 11	11 - 15 years	US I, US II	No					Yes	No		
Ridgewood	11	1 - 5 years	US II	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
livingston	9, 10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	FA	No					No	No		

Livingston	9, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL	No						No	No	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Livingston	9, 11	16 - 20 years	WH, US II	No						Yes	No		
Livingston	12	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	OSS	Too little time.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	5: I am impressed with the State Famine Curriculum.	Yes
Ridgewood High School	11, 12	6 - 10 years	US II, OSS	No					Yes	Yes	Yes	2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.	No
Ridgewood	9	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL	No				No	No	No	No		

Madison	7	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, OLA	No	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.		Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	Yes	No	No	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Ridgewood	9, 10	6 - 10 years	AL, EL	No					No	No		
Livingston	9, 10	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II	No					No	No		No
Ridgewood	7	1 - 5 years	OSS	No					Yes	No		
Freehold Regional	9, 11	20 years or more	WL, OLA	No					No	No		
Livingston	11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	No					No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Bernards Township	7	11 - 15 years	WH	No					No	No		
CALDWELL-WEST CALDWELL	9, 12	20 years or more	WH, OSS	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	OSS	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes		Yes

Livingston High School	10, 11	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, EH	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Livingston	9, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II	No					No	No		
Millburn	11	20 years or more	EL	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Ridgewood	9, 12	6 - 10 years	EL, WL	No					Yes	No		
Bernards	7	6 - 10 years	OSS	No					No	No		
Ridgewood	11, 12	20 years or more	US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Ridgewood	9	11 - 15 years	AL	No					Yes	No		
Millburn High School	9, 10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH	No					No	No		
Millburn	9, 10	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, EH, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH	Too little time.	No	No	No		

Livingston, NJ	10, 11	20 years or more	US I, US II, EH	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I, EH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	
Ridgewood	10, 12	20 years or more	WH, US I, US II, EH	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
millburn	10	1 - 5 years	AL	No					No	No		
Madison	10, 11, 12	20 years or more	AL, EL, OLA	No					No	No		
Caldwell West Caldwell	10, 11, 12	20 years or more	US I, EH, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I, EH	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No		
Livingston	9, 10	1 - 5 years	WH, US I, OSS	No					No	No		
Gloucester Twp.	8	6 - 10 years	US I	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		No
gloucester township	8	11 - 15 years	US I	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum.	No

Ridgewood	9	6 - 10 years	WH	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	No
Freehold Regional High School District	9, 12	20 years or more	EL, WL	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WL	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Gloucester Township	6	11 - 15 years	WH, EH	No					Yes	No		
Gloucester Township	6, 7, 8	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, OSS	No				Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
gloucester township, nj	8	20 years or more	OLA	No					Yes	No		
FRHSD	10, 11	11 - 15 years	US I, US II	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No		



Berkeley Heights	9	6 - 10 years	EL	No						No		
Berkeley Heights	6	16 - 20 years	WH	No						No		
Berkeley Heights	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, OSS	No						No		
Governor Livingston High School	11	1 - 5 years	AL	No						No		
Berkeley Heights	9, 10	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Berkeley Heights	6	11 - 15 years	AL	No					No	No		
FRHSD	9, 10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, OSS	Yes	About one class period or block.	OSS	Too little time.	No	Yes	No		
Berkeley Heights	10, 11, 12	1 - 5 years	US I, US II, OSS	No					Yes	No		
Berkeley Heights	8	6 - 10 years	AL	No					No	No		
Berkeley Heights	10, 11, 12	20 years or more	AL, EL, WL	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	EL, WL	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	No
berkeley heights	12	20 years or more	AL, EL	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	EL	The right amount of time.	No	No	No		
Berkeley Heights	9, 10	1 - 5 years	AL, EL	No					Yes	No		
Gloucester Twp. Public Schools	6, 7, 8	16 - 20 years	FA	No					No	No		

Freehold Regional HS District	9, 10, 11	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, EH, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	Yes	No	No	
Millburn	10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.
Berkeley Heights	6	11 - 15 years	EL	No					Yes	No	
Freehold Regional High School District	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I, US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No	
Livingston	9, 11	20 years or more	AL, WL	No					Yes	No	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.
Ridgewood Schools	8	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	No					Yes	No	

Livingston	9, 10, 12	11 - 15 years	AL, EL, WL, OLA	No				Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Millburn	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	FA	No						No	No		No
West Orange	11, 12	6 - 10 years	US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II		The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
West Orange High School	11	1 - 5 years	US II	No						Yes	No		
West Orange High School	10, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH, US I		The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Livingston	9, 10	11 - 15 years	WH, US I	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH, US I		The right amount of time.	No	No	No		

West Orange	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	AL, EL, WL, OLA	No						Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
West Orange	11	6 - 10 years	AL	No						Yes	No		
West Orange	9, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US II	No						Yes	No		
West Orange	6	11 - 15 years	EL, OLA	No						No	No		
FRHSD	10, 12	6 - 10 years	AL, EL	No						Yes	No		
West Orange	7	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL	No						Yes	No		
Millburn	12	20 years or more	AL	No						No	No		
Livingston grhs	6	6 - 10 years	AL	No						No	No		
	9	1 - 5 years	WH, US I	No						No	No		
West Orange PUblic Schools	10	11 - 15 years	US I, US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	Yes		Yes	No		
Glen Ridge	9, 12	16 - 20 years	AL, WL, OLA	No						Yes	No		
Glen Ridge High School	7, 8	1 - 5 years	AL	No						Yes	No		
Verona	9, 11	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL	No						No	No		
Verona	12	16 - 20 years	EL	No						No	No		

Verona	11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH	The right amount of time., Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	No	No	No	
Verona	9, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, US II, EH	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH, US I, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No	
Verona, Essex County, NJ	7, 8	20 years or more	WH, US I, US II, EH	Yes	About one class period or block.	EH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No	
Becton Regional HS	10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	US I, OSS	No					No	No	
Becton Regional High School	9, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, OSS	No					Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Dumont Board of Ed	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	EL, FA	No					Yes	No	
Dumont Public Schools	9, 10, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No	



South Hunterdon	9, 11	20 years or more	EL, WL, OLA	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	EL	Too little time.	Yes	No	No		
Greater Egg Harbor Regional High School District	10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	FA	No					Yes	No		
West Oragne	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	AL, EL, WL, OLA	No					Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Cinnaminson	11, 12	16 - 20 years	EL, WL	Yes	About one class period or block.	WL	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Cinnaminson	11	11 - 15 years	AL, EL, WL, OLA	No					No	No		
Cinnaminson	11, 12	1 - 5 years	AL, EL, WL	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	EL, WL	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Cherry Hill	9, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, OSS	No					No	No		

Cinnaminson	9, 10, 11	20 years or more	AL, EL	No						No			
Washington Township	10, 11	11 - 15 years	US I, US II	No						No			
Washington Township	10, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II	No						No			
Washington Township	9	6 - 10 years	WH, US I	No						No			
Washington Township School District, Sewell, NJ	11, 12	20 years or more	US II, EH, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class of a period or block.	EH	Too little time.	No	Yes	No			
Washington Township	9	20 years or more	WH	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class of a period or block.	WH	Too little time.	Yes	No	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	No	
Washington Township HS (Gloucester County)	10	11 - 15 years	US I, US II	Yes	About one class of a period or block.	US I	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No			
Washington Township	9	16 - 20 years	WH	No					No	No		No	
Washington Township SD	10	6 - 10 years	US I	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class of a period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	No	No			
Washington Township Public Schools	9	6 - 10 years	WH	No					Yes	No			
Holmdel	10	11 - 15 years	AL, EL, WL, OLA	No					Yes	No			

Holmdel	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	AL, EL, WL, OLA, FA	No					Yes	No		
Holmdel	9, 11, 12	20 years or more	WH, US II, EH, OSS	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH, EH, OSS	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	Yes
Holmdel	10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	US I, US II, OSS	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No	5: I am impressed with the State Famine Curriculum.	No
South Brunswick High School	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, US II	No					No	No		
South Brunswick	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II	Too little time.	Yes	No	No		
South Brunswick NHV	11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, OSS	No					No	No		
South Brunswick	11, 12	6 - 10 years	FA	No					No	No		No
South Brunswick	11	20 years or more	WH, US I, US II, OSS, OLA	No					Yes	No		
Haddonfield	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	EL, OLA, FA	No					Yes	No		

Haddonfield	9, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, EH	Yes		WH, EH	The right amount of time.	No	No	Yes	5: I am impressed with the State Famine Curriculum.	Yes
South Brunswick	9, 10	11 - 15 years	US I, US II	No					No	No		
Haddonfield	9, 11	6 - 10 years	EL, WL	No					No	No		
Plumsted	9, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Pt Pleasant Borough	10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, US II	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
South Brunswick	10, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	US II, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II, OSS	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Point Pleasant Boro	10	1 - 5 years	WH, US I	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH, US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	Yes
Plumsted Township	11	6 - 10 years	US I, US II	No					No	No		
Point Pleasant	11, 12	1 - 5 years	US II	No					Yes	No		

point Pleasant Boro	9	1 - 5 years	WH	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	WH	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
South Brunswick	11	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II, EH	Too little time.	No	Yes	No		
Cherry Hill	11	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	No
Point Pleasant Borough	9	20 years or more	WH	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
North Plainfield	9, 10	1 - 5 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	No					Yes	No		
NPHS	9, 10, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US II	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	Yes	No	No		
North Plainfield	8, 9, 10, 11	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL	No				Yes	Yes	No		

Hopewell Valley Central High School	9, 12	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL, OLA	No					Yes	No		
hopewell valley rsd	9, 10	6 - 10 years	EL	No					Yes	No		
Hopewell Valley	10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	US I, OSS	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	OSS	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No		
Hopewell Valley	10, 12	6 - 10 years	EL, WL, OLA	No					No	No		
Hopewell Valley	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	FA	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	FA Courses	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.	Yes
Hopewell Valley	11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	No					Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	No
Hopewell Valley	11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, US II, EH	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	WH, US II, EH	Too little time.	No	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	Yes
Hopewell Valley	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	FA	No					Yes	No		

Montgomery twsp	10	20 years or more	US I	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved. 4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	No
Hopewell Valley Regional School District	9, 10	11 - 15 years	WH, US I	No					Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	No
Sparta	12	20 years or more	WL	No					No	No		
Sparta	10, 11	20 years or more	AL, EL	No					No	No		
Sparta	9, 11	11 - 15 years	EL	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	EL	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	Yes	No	No		
Vernon Twp School District	7	6 - 10 years	WH, US II, FA	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	WH, US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	No

Vernon Township	11, 12	20 years or more	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	WH, EH, OSS	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.	Yes
Vernon Township High School	10, 11	11 - 15 years	US I, US II	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II	The right amount of time.	No	No	No		No
Sparta Township	11, 12	20 years or more	EL	No					No			
New Providence	9, 12	16 - 20 years	AL, EL, WL, OLA, FA	No					Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
new providence	11	16 - 20 years	EL	Yes	About one class period or block.	EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No

Sparta High School	10, 12	16 - 20 years	EL, WL	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Holmdel	10, 11, 12	1 - 5 years	US I, OSS	No				No	No	No		
new providence	9	20 years or more	WH	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	WL	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
High Point regional H.S.	11	16 - 20 years	US II, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	WH, US II, OSS	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
High Point Regional High School	12	16 - 20 years	US I, US II, AL, EL, WL, OLA, FA	Yes	About one class period or block., More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	EL, OLA	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	Yes

Vernon Township School District	11, 12	11 - 15 years	AL, EL, WL	No						Yes	No		
Vernon Township	9, 11, 12	20 years or more	WH, US II, OSS	Yes	About one class period or block.	WH, US II	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No			
Vernon Twp.	10, 11, 12	20 years or more	US I, OSS	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	No			
Vernon Township School District	9, 10	1 - 5 years	WH, US I	No					No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	Yes	
Vernon	10, 11, 12	20 years or more	US I, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	US I			Yes	No			
Vernon Township	11, 12	6 - 10 years	US II, OSS	Yes	More than one class period or block including homework and projects	US II, OSS	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	5: I am impressed with the State Famine Curriculum.	Yes	
Roselle NJ	11, 12	1 - 5 years	US II, OSS	No					No	No			
Vernon Township	8	16 - 20 years	WH, EL, OLA	No					Yes	No			

Vernon	7	1 - 5 years	WH	No	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US II	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	No	Yes	No		
Vernon Township	9, 11	1 - 5 years	WH, US II	Yes					Yes	No		
Vernon Township	10	6 - 10 years	EL, OLA	No					Yes	No		
Vernon	7, 8	11 - 15 years	WH	No					No	Yes	1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum.	No
vernon	6	20 years or more	US I, US II, EL, OLA	No					No	No		
vernon	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	FA	No					No	No		
Scotch Plains Fanwood	11	6 - 10 years	OLA	Yes	About one class period or block.	EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Scotch Plains Fanwood	11	11 - 15 years	EL	No					Yes	No		
Scotch Plains Fanwood	11	1 - 5 years	AL, EL	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	EL	The right amount of time.	No	No	No		
vernon township	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	FA	No					Yes	No		
Vernon	10	11 - 15 years	AL	No					No	No		
Scotch Plains Fanwood	9	6 - 10 years	EL	Yes		WH, US I, AL, EL, WL	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No	1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum.	No

Scotch plains	10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US II, EH, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No	
High Point Regional High School	10, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	WH, US I, EH, OSS	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	
Scotch Plains-Fanwood	11, 12	11 - 15 years	OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	OSS	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Westfield Public Schools	10, 11	20 years or more	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	Yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Westfield High School	11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, US II, OSS	No					Yes	No	

Westfield	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	WH, US I, EH	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	US I, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	No
Westfield HS	10	11 - 15 years	US I, OSS	No					No	No		
Jersey City Public Schools	10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	EH, EL	Yes	About one class period or block.	EH	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question.	No	No	No		
jersey city	9	6 - 10 years	AL, EL	Yes	About one class period or block.	EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Jersey City Public Schools	11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	WH	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	Yes
Westfield	9, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, OSS	No					No	No		
McNair Academic High School	9, 10	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL, OLA	No					Yes	No		
Westfield	9, 10, 11, 12	1 - 5 years	WH, US I, US II	No					No	No		

Roxbury High School	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, OSS	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	WH	Too little time.	Yes	No	No	
Plainfield	11	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	WH, US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No	No
Jersey City	10, 11, 12	1 - 5 years	AL, WL	No					No		
Plainfield	10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, EH	Yes	About one class period or block., More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No	
Plainfield, NJ	11, 12	20 years or more	AL, EL	Yes	About 1/2 a class period or block.	AL, EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.

Plainfield	10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I, US II	The right amount of time.	No	No	No		
PHS	9	20 years or more	WH, US I	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	No	Yes	No		
PHS	9	20 years or more	WH, US I	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	No	Yes	No		
PHS	9	20 years or more	WH, US I	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	No	Yes	No		
PHS	9	20 years or more	WH, US I	Yes	About one class period or block.	US I	Too little time.	No	Yes	No		
Roxbury	9, 11, 12	20 years or more	WH, OSS	Yes	More than one class period or block - including homework and projects	WH	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but is overall a well-made curriculum.	Yes

Table 2. New York Teacher Responses to the Survey.

#1: School District	#2: School Level	#3: Years Experience	#4: Content Area	#5: The Famine in your classroom	#6: Time on the Famine	#7: Context	#8: Time	#9: Heritage	#10: Genocide	#11: Awareness of the Curriculum	#12: Professional Evaluation	#14: Utilization
south jefferson	9, 10, 11, 12	20 years or more	WH, EH, OSS, WL, FA	no	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but overall is a well-made curriculum	No
Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk CSD	9, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	AL, EL, WL	no					No	No		
Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk, Ravena, NY	11, 12	16 - 20 years	AL, EL, OLA	no					Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but overall is a well-made curriculum	Yes
Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk CSD	8	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	no					Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious	







Rhinebeck Central School District	10, 12	1 - 5 years	EL, OLA	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	EL	Too little time.	Yes	No	No		
cheektowaga-sloan	11	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, US I	The right amount of time.	No	No	Yes	2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.	No
Pine Plains	10, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, OSS	yes	About one class period or a block.	WH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Catskill	8	16 - 20 years	US I, US II	yes	About one class period or a block.	US I, US II	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	No
Kinderhook (Ichabod Crane)	11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
west canada valley central	11	20 years or more	US I, US II	yes	About one class period or a block.	US I, US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
West Canada Valley	7	6 - 10 years	FA	no					No	No		
millbrook	8	16 - 20 years	US I, US II	no					Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that	Yes



SD													Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	
Harrisville Central School	10, 12	16 - 20 years	EL	no		block.					No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
ARLINGTON	10, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, EH	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.		WH, US II, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Arlington	9, 10, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	FA	no						No	No	No		
Geneseo Central	8	20 years or more	US II	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.		US II	Unsure - I have never really reflected on this question	Yes	Yes	No	No		

Arlington school District, NY	10, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	US I, US II, EH	yes	About 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US I, EH	The right amount of time.	No	No	Yes	2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities.	Yes
HAMBU RG	10	6 - 10 years	WH	yes	About one class period or a block.	WH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Fairport	11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I, US II, OSS	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Fairport Central SD	11	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	no		WH	Too little time.	No	No	No		Yes
Pittsford	10, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, EH	yes	About 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, US I, EH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Fairport	12	11 - 15 years	WH, US II, OSS	no					No	Yes	1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum	Yes
Arlington	9, 12	11 - 15 years	WH, OSS	no					Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never	No



Wilson	9	6 - 10 years	EL	no	or a block.		time.		No	No		
Plainedge, NY	9	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, OSS	no				Yes	No	Yes	1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum	No
PUFSD	11	1 - 5 years	US I, US II, OSS	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US II	The right amount of time.	No	No	No		
Jericho	9, 10, 11	1 - 5 years	AL, WL	no					No	No		
Hamburg Central School District	8	16 - 20 years	US I, US II, EH, AL, EL	yes	About one class period or a block.	US I, US II, EH, AL, EL	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Cazenovia	8, 9, 10	1 - 5 years	WH, US II	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, US II	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	Yes
Cazenovia	9, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	AL, EL	no					No	No		
Cazenovia NY	9, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	no					Yes	No		
Honeoye	12	6 - 10 years	EL	yes	More than one class period or block - including homework projects.	EL	The right amount of time.	No	No	No		
Cazenovia	10, 11, 12	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	yes	About 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, US I, US II, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Gloversville ESD	10, 11, 12	11 - 15 years	AL, EL, WL, OLA	no					No	No		

Cazenovia	8, 12	16 - 20 years	US I, US II, OLA	yes	About one class period or a block.	US I, US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but overall is a well-made curriculum	No
Cazenovia	9, 10, 11, 12	6 - 10 years	FA	no					No	No		
Nresd	7, 8, 9	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	no					No	No		
North Rockland CSD	11, 12	20 years or more	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, US I	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum	No
Mahopac	9, 10	1 - 5 years	WH, US I, US II, EH	yes	About one class period or a block.	WH, US I, US II, EH	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
North Rockland	11, 12	20 years or more	WH, US I, US II, OSS	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US II	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	2: The document is in serious need of revision, but has some valuable qualities. 1: I am unimpressed with the State Famine Curriculum	Yes
Clifton-Fine	9, 10, 12	1 - 5 years	WH	yes	More than one class period or block - including homework projects.	WH, US I, EH	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes		No
Edwards-Knox	9, 11	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, US I, US II	Too little time.	No	Yes	No		

Potsdam Central	7	6 - 10 years	EL	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Potsdam Central	8	1 - 5 years	US II	yes	About 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Clifton-Fine Central	7, 8, 11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, EH	yes	About 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, US I, US II	Too little time.	Yes	Yes	No		
Pittsford Central School District	10, 11	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II	yes	More than one class period or block - including homework projects.	WH, US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some improvements, but overall is a well-made curriculum	Yes
Schalmonant CSD	9	16 - 20 years	WH	no					Yes	No		
Middle Country	10	11 - 15 years	WH, EH, OSS	yes	About one class period or a block.	WH	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be improved.	No
Hauptaugen	8	6 - 10 years	US II	yes	About one class period or a block.	US II	Too little time.	Yes	No	No	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	Yes
Waterford	11, 12	6 - 10 years	US I,	yes	Less than	US I, US	The right	Yes	No	Yes	3: The	No

district	number of schools	years of experience	US II, OSS	yes/no	1/2 of a class period or a block	II	amount of time				document is adequate, but could be improved.	
Commack	7	11 - 15 years	EL	no					No	No		
Commack High School	11, 12	11 - 15 years	AL, EL, WL	no					Yes	No		
Waterford-Halfmoon Union Free School District	9	11 - 15 years	AL, EL, WL	no					No	No		
Commack	11	11 - 15 years	EL	no					No	No		
Commack	7	11 - 15 years	EL	no				Yes	Yes	No		
Commack	6	11 - 15 years	EL	yes	About one class period or a block.	WH, AL	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	No		
Mahopac	11	20 years or more	US I, US II	yes	About one class period or a block.	US I, US II	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Commack	8	6 - 10 years	US I, US II, AL, EL	no	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.				Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never	Yes



Queensbury High School	11, 12	6 - 10 years	WH, US I, US II, OSS	no	or a block.					No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Newark CSD	11	16 - 20 years	US I, US II	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US II	Too little time.	Yes	No	No	No		
Newark Central School District	9, 10	16 - 20 years	EL	yes	About one class period or a block.	EL	The right amount of time.	Yes	Yes	No	No		No
Newark NY	9	20 years or more	US I, US II, AL, EL, WL	no					No	No	No		
Newark	10	16 - 20 years	WH	yes	More than one class period or block - including homework projects.	WH	The right amount of time.	No	No	No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Queensbury	11, 12	11 - 15 years	US I, US II, OSS	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US I	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	3: The document is adequate, but could be	Yes

Lansing HS, Lansing, NY	10	16 - 20 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	WH, EH	The right amount of time.	Yes	No	Yes	improved.	Yes
Queensbury, NY	7	20 years or more	US I	yes	About 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	No	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Groton	7, 8	20 years or more	US I, US II	yes	Less than 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US I, US II	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes	N/A: I am aware that the Famine Curriculum exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	No
Walkill Central Schools	11	11 - 15 years	WH, US I, US II, EH, OSS	yes	About 1/2 of a class period or a block.	US I	The right amount of time.	No	Yes	Yes	4: The document could have some	Yes



**Table #3: New Jersey Teachers who Provided Open-Ended Responses to Question #13 and Question #15.**

#1: School District	#13: Professional Evaluation	#15: Utilization of the Curriculum #2
west milford township	Although I answered NO above, I want to give a "disclaimer." My town has heavy Irish population, so it's a good connection. I use the famine to address governance, economics (ideas of laissez faire, etc), human dignity, social responsibility, etc. We DO discuss the idea of genocide. While I have not used the STATE materials, I think the material I DO use a Trial format, accessible by searching: Hunger on Trial: An Activity on the Irish Potato Famine and Its Meaning for Today. Teaching Activity PDF. By Bill Bigelow	And I do ACTIVELY use the state's Holocaust material, so if the Famine materials are the same caliber, I will CERTAINLY be checking them out.
Vernon Township	As an educator that is personally connected to the subject matter I feel that the NJGIFC creates a useful platform to: 1. Contextualize the Irish Famine 2. Convey the most essential elements of the Famine	In my OSS elective the NJGIFC is useful to the degree that it helps some of my students engage in a Unit on Case Studies of Genocide. Their projects become part of a Tolerance Fair held toward the end of May and is somewhat of a capstone of their year's work.
Ramapo Indian Hills Regional HS District	Content standards plus testing plus time restrictions means not enough time to cover it all -- must condense.	Selected documents
Hopewell Valley	I am aware of the curriculum, but have not viewed it recently.	

Becton Regional High School	I am aware that the famine exists, but have never actually consulted the document in any serious manner.	
Livingston	I am surprised we don't spend more time on Famine poetry/writing. The only time I have taught this material has been in connection with St. Patrick's day, in past years. I have used the song "The Fields of Athenry" and it does reference the famine (stealing the corn so our children will see the morn). The famine is not taught in the English classroom as a part of the curriculum at the high school.	
Scotch Plains Fanwood	I am unimpressed with the curriculum because I did not know about it.	I have seen the wasted remnants of the once proud Red Man on his reservation ground in North America, I have visited the Negro Quarter of the degraded and enslaved African, but never have I seen misery so intense or physical degradation so complete as in the dwellers of the bog-holes of Ireland.
gloucester township	I believe that we do not spend enough time in middle school teaching American history and immigration to our country.	
High Point Regional High School	I DO NOT call what happened in Ireland a "famine", it was a "HUNGER". There was plenty of food in the country other than the potato. It was a crime carried out by the British Government on a people they had slaughtered for centuries	
Hopewell Valley Regional School District	I do not currently teach about the Famine but I have taught about it in the recent past for the Holocaust and Genocide Studies elective course--which I do not currently teach. I	

	used the NJGIFC for the Famine unit (this unit includes a look at the Irish, Ukainian and Chinese Famines). I thought it provided some good information that could be improved upon.	
Haddonfield	I found the curriculum to be full of rich primary and secondary sources.	I use the primary sources as an introduction to document based questions and ask the students to write a formal 5 paragraph essay about whether they think the Famine was a genocide.
West Oragne	I have no opinion on it as I have never read it, however I agree completely that it should be taught in all schools.	
Plainfield, NJ	I know that their is a curriculum; however, I do not know what it is. I believe that it is part of the OSS curriculum.	
Livingston	I never had an opportunity to relate the famine to my teaching. It warrants investigation to determine if there is an interdisciplinary connection that can be utilized.	
Scotch Plains-Fanwood	I really don't know that much about it. I know it exists, but we spend so little time on it as it is really only used as an example and connection to a more recent Irish conflict in my course. My course focuses on Ireland during the 1960s through the present day (the Troubles, IRA/Northern Ireland, etc.)	

High Point regional H.S.	<p>I teach a lesson on Irish History every St. Patrick's Day, and I also reference Ireland on occasion because I have traveled there and am the grandchild of Irish immigrants.</p> <p>I believe the Famine was a historic abuse. It was a horrible disregard for humanity. I tend to feel it falls short of the term genocide. Was it a willful annihilation of a group or the blatant disregard for their lives? I lean towards the latter.</p>	
Montgomery twsp	<p>In my capacity as a teacher of US History 1607-1900, I spend a lot of time teaching about the Irish contribution to American history in the 18th and 19th century and their lasting legacy. From how the British treatment of the Irish strongly influenced Ben Franklin's views on British subjugation to the Irish political dominance of the major American cities of the late 19th century. And of course their contribution to building the railroads and canals of the 19thc. As far as the Famine goes, I point it out as the reason for the mass immigration from Ireland which provided the labor necessary to drive the Industrial Revolution. And by escaping the famine they did not escape the prejudices upon their arrival in America.</p> <p>Our WH class does more with the actual causes and effects of the Famine but I don't teach that class.</p>	
CALDWELL- WEST CALDWELL	<p>Not having had a formal course at the college level makes answering the questions about the quality of the document difficult. However, I value it as helpful in analyzing ethnic conflict and genocide.</p>	<p>The Curriculum is used as a resource for students researching genocide and ethnic conflict throughout history.</p>

point Pleasant Boro	Not Needed there are local, county and national standards too	
Vernon Twp School District	Other topics in history are more pressing than the Irish Famine. In a global context it should play a role in the effects of natural disasters/genocide but this event does not require massive amounts of time.	
Holmdel	<p>Some of the curriculum could use a facelift-- I wind up cutting and pasting so much-- which is very time consuming. I find the materials to be very useful, however.</p> <p>The political cartoon are a little hard to see--but, they work!</p> <p>Additionally, I use documentary 'The Irish in America, Vol 1 (of 3)- about half way into the first tape --when I have the time-- and it depends on the elective I'm teaching at the time. This focuses on the famine and it's impact in Ireland, the response of the British government, and deaths. It's very moving and is narrated by the prosecutor from Law and Order!</p>	<p>I've used the pieces dealing with how the Irish were viewed by the British prior to the Famine- comparing them to the "Negros"-- as part of my lesson on Social Darwinism. The political cartoons are great--as I said, a little tough to see, but they speak a thousand words.</p> <p>I use the sections dealing with the famine itself, reactions of the people, stories, etc.</p>

Westfield	<p>The curriculum is a good guide. Unfortunately I believe that we need to develop in our instruction of History Teachers (American or European) the techniques of how to integrate topics such as the Irish Famine. For example-in the context of American History-the Irish immigration directly related to the "famine" is the 1840's. What needs to be done is to have the students become aware of why people immigrate to America (general question) then have them identify why the Irish came, and then ask them to examine the issue so as to have a better understanding of why the Irish came and perhaps identify contemporary examples. In the context of EH it becomes necessary to examine the ongoing controversy politically/culturally between Ireland and England in the 19th century within the context of the Sinn Fein movement. Perhaps having them read through literature of the time both fictional and non-fictional</p>	
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<p>Ridgewood High School</p>	<p>The document is quite old and could definitely use a face-lift, if not a complete revision. I looked at it as part of some work that I have done with Facing History in terms of reconsidering my approach to the teaching of the Holocaust. I do suspect that under ordinary definitions of the word, the famine represents a genocide. It was deliberately deepened and directed at the Irish population. Yet this remains a difficult and politically divisive issue. Many scholars are sympathetic to the British perspective. That would need airing as well. It would be a shame to over-simplify the issue, particularly because students need to understand that genocides are often not the 'easy calls' of the Holocaust or the massacre in Rwanda. If the Irish Famine is taught, it needs full contextualization and room for vigorous and rigorous evaluation of the political circumstances and actions of the British government during the 19th century. This simply cannot be done in the context of a course dedicated to 20th century American history.</p>	
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Hopewell Valley	<p>The effects of the famine on the role and perception of the FA is almost non existent. Although some literary references and social commentary derived from political and editorial cartooning are available, the arts are poorly represented. Perhaps a consideration of contemporary monuments (in Phila on the Del. River) could be mentioned and explored. Questions about nationalism, ethnic association and heritage could be pursued. The bishopric and ministry to the Irish by Saint John Neumann should be mentioned.</p>	<p>I adapt the information to form the basis in establishing an understanding of the global mentality esp. European and British at the time of the famine. I intend this to be a major component to be included in an activity centered on a visual approach to counter prejudice and bias. We discuss negative terms assoc. w/racism and include "white negroes." Most students are ignorant about this connotation and its association with (Irish) Europeans. It is a very effective starting point. We discuss racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and age related biases.</p> <p>We discuss the Holocaust Memorial in Paris, Washington DC, etc. I then give the assignment to design a contemporary memorial/monument. We then design memorials that must include literary references and visual imagery that are based on the imagery of the exodus of Irish, the Irish famine and immigration to the American shore.</p>
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**Table #3: New York Teachers who Provided Open-Ended Responses to Question #13 and Question #15.**

#1: School District	#13: Professional Evaluation	#15: Utilization of the Curriculum #2
Potsdam	Although a part of the curriculum, this topic was rarely (if ever) addressed on the NYS Social Studies Assessment before it was eliminated. At my level the content is so broad that spending much time on this lone topic is nearly impossible. A brief mention of it is made in my unit on immigration.	Each of my units is based upon the Essential Questions provided by the NYS Curriculum Guide.
East Syracuse Minoa	Everything is equally important but there are so many areas of interest and concern that none are given their due. Too many new things happening to focus on what needs correcting.	
Hastings	I am sure it is fine but I prefer to come up with my own materials.	
North Rockland	I believe that the state curriculum allows too little time to delve into any unit (i.e. wars, famines, etc)	To check that I am aligned with the state parameters.
Ithaca, New York	I have taught the Hunger in my sophomore classes even before the curriculum was required, having used Cecil Woodham Smith's chapter about Lord Bingham in her Reason Why. It is a very effective reading and I was surprised that it was not referred to more in the state curriculum.	I have used the material on the Skibbereen workhouse, the quotations on the causes of the famine, several of the cartoons, some of the statistics (including the exports from Ireland during the Hunger).

	<p>I became much more familiar with the state curriculum when I initiated a Food and History elective. I read about the curriculum, ordered a copy, and read it after I read Woodham-Smith's Great Hunger. Each school library has a copy, and it probably appears on line at this point, but I do not believe that most teachers are aware of the curriculum. Without a good historical basis, the curriculum is a bit difficult to negotiate, but it does offer excellent primary sources. There are a wealth of sources. I spend several weeks examining the</p> <p>Hunger in my elective course.</p>	
Gloversville Enlarged SD	<p>I teach AP US History. My time spent on the Famine is limited by the constraints of preparing students for the AP exams, and the never-ending race to cram info about 500 years of history into 144 class days.</p>	
Fairport	<p>I think that the inclusion of a special unit on the famine is a bit over the top - if there was a special unit on every awful event in history, we would teach world history for a decade. It is unreasonable.</p>	
Newark	<p>It has been a while since I last consulted it. I think I probably cover most of the elements of it, but don't know for sure. We do present it as a "possible" Genocide and use that as a discussion to compare to other Genocides in the Global History curriculum.</p>	
Baldwinsville	<p>It has good resources and suggestions but time constraints require adaptations.</p>	

chazy	It is data driven rather than learning driven. It often does not meet the needs of students for life beyond the classroom.	We don't really have a choice to use or not use it.
Lansing HS, Lansing, NY	My issues is not with NY State Famine Curriculum, but with the breadth and lack of depth of the NYS Global History and Geography curriculum. The course and its unfortunate assessment results in "fly by" teaching in which serious issues such as the Irish Famine, can only be dealt with on a superficial basis in light of all the other material that is supposed to be "taught." For the record, no historical events should be taught, rather they should be explored. While I may only discuss the Irish Famine in small portion of a class period, some students are intrigued enough to do independent projects that they then share with their classmates.	I use it keep me up all night afraid of the trivialization and multiplechoicification of Social Studies education that is occurring all across our country. I expect full credit for the statement above!
Waterford Halfmoon UFSD	Needs to be revamped.	
Plainedge, NY	Not comprehensive	
Cazenovia	NYS demands too much content in the time allotted. If I had more time, I would spend my time teaching about topics such as this.	I use it everyday - Everything I teach is based on the curriculum. The Global students have a major test that they need to pass - based solely on NYSED curriculum.
Depew	Seems like NYS picks and chooses what is important and doesnt allow teachers to tailor the curriculum to the student population.	

North Rockland CSD	State Curriculum, while it does not say so only allows the teacher to focus on Regents exam questions and very little else. Over the years the Regents exams have developed into a JOKE!!!!	
north collins	The curriculum is well developed, I have a hard copy from 2001 in my classroom ,it consists of 1076 pages of curriculum guide. This copy would be more than enough for any course.	I have a deep regard of our state history. this lesson must be taught to the newest generations. I go into detail about the "blight " and the environmental causality connected to the peruvian potato.As well as massive migration into North America, I am somewhat weak as to British culpability, however this is hugely appropriate in 10th grade wolrd history. I know this is well taought in NCHS 10th grade.
Fairport	The Irish Famine is presented to students as an agricultural disaster based on the perils of a single crop economy. Additionally, it is taught as a primary reason for the mass migration of Irish citizens to the United States during the 19th Century. No mention of genocide is associated with this historical catastrophe in the New York State Social Studies Curriculum.	The NYS curriculum is our guideline for constructing our locally formatted Social Studies Curriculum Maps. Every school district in NYS must utilize the state curriculum standards and content guidelines as they create their own curriculum maps, used in individual teacher classrooms. Because of the NYS Regents Examinations in US History and Global History, we are bound by these guidelines and would not be able to prepare our students for their state assessments if we deviated from this content.
Pittsford Central School District	The NYS Curriculum document is a bit overwhelming because it is so large. The magnitude of this document might put people off. Although I enjoyed looking through the entire document, maybe it would be more accessible if it was divided into Elementary & Secondary. I am very interested in Ireland due to my background (ancestry & b/c I studied/traveled there), but most other teachers I know have never looked at this document. They may teach about the Famine, but they	I never totally implement any lesson I find word-for-word/step-by-step, but rather use the ideas to generate my own lesson based on the needs of my class/timing/topic, etc. I have used several of the primary source documents in one of the lessons regarding Genocide. This is an unfortunate reoccurring theme in Global History....I introduce/review the 1948 UN definition (they have already studied about Rwanda, Sudan & Cambodia during their 1st year of Global) and then we look for examples of

	don't make use of the great resources found in the curriculum.	<p>whether or not the Irish Famine could be considered a genocide. Students examine multiple perspectives and form their own opinions based on the definition. We then discuss their opinions as a class (I give them a statement about the Famine &amp; they have to move to the side of the room that fits their opinion: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). 98% of my students have never studied about this topic before, so they are very intrigued. I also use this as a way to talk about the development of the modern Republic of Ireland and some of the tensions that still exist in the North (I show them pictures from when I was in Belfast-- one of the murals reads "The Great Potato Famine: Ireland's Holocaust"-- it's a great lesson on perspective/point of view). We go back to the question of genocide as the year progresses when we study the Armenian genocide, Ukranian Famine, Holocaust &amp; Bosnia. Unfortunately, there are too many examples throughout history!!!! I have also used some of the maps to show the size of Ireland in comparison to NYS.</p>
Byron Bergen	<p>The problem with NYS Global History and Geography is that there is so much material to cover and not enough time. I am unable to spend more than a few days on any topic due to the necessity of moving forward. The Irish Potato famine is another casualty of High Stakes testing by New York State.</p>	
Wallkill Central Schools	<p>The current curriculum is has not been consistent since I started teaching, We can not spend adequate time on things like the Irish Famine, because we are tied to the test and results.</p>	<p>I explain how the famine affected the immigration into the US.</p>

Norwich City School District	<p>To be honest the first time I looked over this curriculum I thought it was a joke. It seems a large amount of time was used to create curriculum on the Great Irish Famine. If it is looked at as a basis for writing curriculum it makes sense, however the topic is strange for such a large unit. The unit itself has enough information to fill at minimum a full year of classes. To include the visual arts was an odd choice in my opinion also, as the topic does not easily lend itself to the NYS Visual Arts Standards.</p>	
elmsford	<p>Too detailed. teaching AP Euro does not allow me the time to delve into a long unit. TEh "book" has great resources, but I see it like many other ethnic units of study. Being of Irish heritage I understand the importance, but I fit it into the greater study.</p>	
Liberty, NY	<p>Unfortunately, due to time constraints the Global History an Geography curriculum in NY State high schools follows the mantra: "An inch deep and a mile wide".</p> <p>We touch on all topics, then move on to the next one.</p> <p>The Irish Famine/Great Hunger is usually not connected to genocide (the way the Armenians/Holocaust/Yugoslavia/Rwanda are.)</p>	
south jefferson	<p>W/all the demands put upon us based upon the NY state world history &amp; geography curriculum, the Irish famine barely fits in. I mention it in relation to immigration, touch upon it in AP European History and expand it a bit in</p> <p>AP World History. But to elaborate in any detail for the 10th grade world history, it is unrealistic to focus much</p>	

	time based upon the few questions it has fostered in the last 2+ decades of NY state regents.	
millbrook	We do not have enough time in our year to do justice to the topics we have to teach that relate more directly to US history.	
Moravia	With regard to question #10. I don't know is the answer. I don't know anything about it. Sad to admit. Good luck with your research.	
Arlington school District, NY		My lessons are based on the New York State Standards and what the state requires me to teach. That said, I often create my lessons with the standards and then create the actual activities and individual lessons with the intent of having my students learn the material. This upcoming school year we are required to align all of our lessons to the New York State curriculum and focus on the standards via different lesson models.
Hauppauge		I do not use full lessons but use information, questions, and ideas and implement them into my lessons.

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