

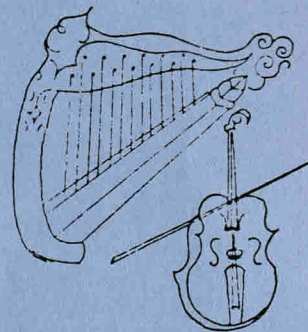


Irish Studies Workshop

Soar Valley College
Gleneagles Avenue
Leicester LE4 7GY
Co-ordinator:
MR. N. DANAHER, B.A., M.Ed.

Bank of Ireland 

Irish Cultural Society of Garden City Area



Dear Friend

THE GREAT FAMINE WRITING CONTEST, 1845 - 1995

We have good news to report: in New York City, we have the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, a fraternal order, sponsoring our writing contest, which is international this year. In England, the contest is being sponsored by the Bank of Ireland. Will a winner of the 1995 contest be from your school, College or Irish Studies group?

We have a dual purpose in sponsoring such a contest: to encourage excellence in writing and to promote awareness of Ireland's cultural heritage. This year's project, we believe, will stimulate your students to want to do the creative thinking required for a literary interpretation of a work of art. We hope that you and your staff will see the rich possibilities for creative writing in our project and that you will urge wide participation in the contest.

Our contest this year takes its image from the Great Famine. 1995 is the 150th Anniversary of the start of the Irish potato famine, so the famine provides the setting for the stories your contestants will write. We ask your writers to study the enclosed illustration and let the painting evoke a story. We also provide a group of quotes from contemporary sources which we hope will help the writers.

Your teachers may find the scene to be useful in an exercise on close observation preliminary to inferring character, setting and plot. The project lends itself to class work or independent work. We envision a group cooperating on the discovery of details of the scene through close observation and the framing of questions that the scene calls forth: Why are they here? Who are these people? The questions can go on and on, of course. The individual writers will then exercise their imaginations to write the stories which incorporate the details and answer the important questions.

We look forward to reading the stories from your students. Please circulate our data sheet among the members of your Department. No doubt many of your students would like to have a stimulating, creative assignment where every entrants efforts will be recognized. They can aspire, too, to international recognition, as this competition is jointly organized by the Irish Cultural Society (New York, USA) and by the Irish Studies Workshop (Leicester, England).

Sincerely

John Walsh
Contest Chairman (New York)

Nesson Danaher (Co-ordinator)
Irish Studies Workshop (Leicester)

'THE GREAT FAMINE' WRITING CONTEST : 1845 - 1995

PROJECT: A story based upon the characters and setting in an illustration drawn during the Irish potato famine. (see separate illustration).

The contest entrant will write a story based upon a famine scene depicted in an illustration. The illustration was completed in 1848, near the end of the Great Famine, the potato famine in Ireland that reduced the Irish population by 50 per cent through emigration and starvation. We do not cite the title of the illustration because we want to emphasize that there is no "correct" story that emerges from a study of the picture. Ideally every story will be different. The time of the story should be 1845-1848. We suggest that the story be a "slice of life," an incident rather than a story of history. We suggest the writers make no reference to the picture in their stories, rather they conceive of the drawing as an illustration for their stories. We also provide quotation from contemporary sources which the writer may use for dialogue or local colour.

USEFUL SOURCES: A social history of Ireland during the Famine and models of good short, short stories may help the writer. 75 Short Masterpieces edited by Roger Goodman and 44 Irish Short Stories are useful sources for models, as are the works of good short story writers like Frank O'Connor and Liam O'Flaherty. The Silent People, a novel of the famine written by Walter Macken, The Great Hunger by Cecil Woodham-Smith and Paddy's Lament by Thomas Gallagher will help with the historical setting.

Other useful sources include the historical document facsimile packs published by the Public Record Office (Belfast), by the National Library of Ireland (Dublin), and (due out soon) by the British Association for Irish Studies.

Books which help with the background include Famine by Liam O'Flaherty; Black Harvest by Anne Cheetham and The Potato Famine and the Irish Emigrants by P F Speed are particularly suitable for younger readers.

CRITERIA: The judge will focus on the narrative qualities of the story: character, setting, plot. The best entries will touch the reader emotionally by evoking the feelings implicit in the illustration. They will also have an Irish element in the names of characters and the specificity of details of setting and action.

ELIGIBILITY:

AGE GROUP	LENGTH (Number of words)	PRIZES - 3 IN ALL CATEGORIES	
11-14 years	750-1,000 words	1st	£25
15-16 years	1,000 - 1,500 words	2nd	£15
Adult students	2,000 - 2,500 words	3rd	£10

DEADLINE: entries must be submitted by 30 August 1995

ENTRY FORMAT (don't forget to include Entry Form)

- Either handwritten (neatly) or typed double spaces, word processed also acceptable
- Cover sheets should contain:
writer's name, address, phone, school name and telephone number.
sponsoring teacher's name (or Ad Ed Tutor)
(No ring binders: just thin card cover and tags) or light plastic pocket.

Every entrant will receive a commemorative certificate (provided that they send a large (A4) stamped self addressed envelope with their entry.

IRISH STUDIES WORKSHOP



Soar Valley College
Gleneagles Avenue
Leicester LE4 7GY

Co-ordinator:
MR. N. DANAHER, B.A., M.Ed.

SEND ENTRIES TO:

Irish Studies Famine Competition
c/o Irish Studies Workshop
Soar Valley College
Gleneagles Avenue
Leicester LE4 7GY

PANEL OF JUDGES: There will be 2 judges, drawn from the Irish Studies Centre at University of North London, and from the Irish Studies Workshop (Leicester).

RESULTS will be judged by a panel; names of which are to be published later. The winners will be notified in October and names will be published in The Irish Post.

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1 Contestants must send in the Entry Form with their competition entry by 30 August 1995.
- 2 Entries cannot be returned; please photocopy before sending if you wish to retain a record.
- 3 No correspondence will be entered into; the judges' decisions are final.



THE GREAT FAMINE: CONTEMPORARY VOICES

"Better times will come and we will get church rites for the bones."

"The winter of 1848-9 dwells in my memory as one long night of sorrow."

"Next season, please God, we shall have potatoes as plentiful as ever."

"Time is gaining on us. We are driven into a corner for assistance."

"[People] had not only been turned out of their houses but had even - the unfortunate wretches - been mercilessly driven from the ditches to which they had betaken themselves for shelter and where they were attempting to get up a covering of some kind by means of sticks and mud."

"Oh, sir, my children are starving and the nettles grow so nicely here. I pick them at night unnoticed."

"We had a field of potatoes that year in the back lane, and in one night they were struck with the blight and both tops and roots were blackened."

"It would be impossible to exaggerate the awful destitution that exist in the town of Clones and neighborhood... The number of deaths in the Clones workhouse, during the last week, has been twenty-five, at the lowest."

"The very small farmers, I am sorry to say, are now compelled to commence consuming the small stack of corn they had intended for seed for this year's crop, and in most instances, their stack-yards will be completely empty in the month hence."

"It is now a thing of daily occurrence to see haggard, sallow and emaciated beings, stricken down by fever or debility from actual want, stretched prostrate upon the footways of our streets and villages."

"I have frequently heard of the horrors of Skibbereen quoted, but they can hardly have exceeded these."

Reply slip - Please TEAR OFF AND RETURN with entry, by 30 August 1995

WRITING CONTEST : THE GREAT FAMINE - ENTRY FORM

Please affix to the front of your entry. Write neatly, or in capitals.

First Name Second Name

Address

. Tel. No.

Age School, College or Course attended (address)

.

Teacher or Tutor's Name

College Tel. No. (if applicable)

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Mark:

Comment: