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Teacher Resource Guide

**The Irish:
The Great Hunger
and
Irish Immigration
to America**

Commissioned by the Connecticut State Department of Education

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Introduction

The Connecticut General Assembly enacted legislation in 1997, Public Act 97-45 and Public Act 97-61, which required the State Board of Education to assist and encourage local and regional boards of education to provide curriculum materials that assist local school districts in the development of instructional programs that include “. . . The Historical Events Surrounding the Great Famine in Ireland” and “African-American History. . . Puerto Rican History. . . Native American History. . .” This resource guide is one in a series of four which was developed in response to this legislation.

This resource guide provides a chronology of events leading to and following the Great Famine in Ireland, and includes suggested instructional activities related to the social studies curriculum standards in *The Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards*, and a variety of teacher resources.

This teacher resource guide is intended to be used by teachers at all grade levels to integrate into their curriculums the story of the Great Hunger and all of the consequences of that event. In addition to learning about a tragic period in the lives of millions of Irish, the Great Hunger is a haunting example of the desire of one group to dominate or eliminate another for economic and political gain. Unfortunately, this pattern of oppression and dehumanization of an entire race or culture has occurred throughout recorded history.

It is important that all Connecticut students learn these lessons from our past in order that they can help to shape a more positive future for all people.

THIS IS WHO WE ARE

**John L. Lahey, President
Quinnipiac University**

Today, 40 million Americans, or roughly 15 percent of the population, claim Irish ancestry. By comparison, African Americans comprise approximately 11 percent, Hispanics 8 percent and Italians 5 percent. In the Northeast, the numbers are even more dramatic. Twelve million residents of the Northeast (24 percent) and 615,000 residents of Connecticut (19 percent) claim Irish ancestry.

The Great Famine, or the Great Hunger as it is more commonly referred to today, was one of the worst tragedies in human history and yet very little is known about it. In the United States, most people — if they know anything about the Great Hunger — believe it was an isolated, relatively insignificant failure of the Irish potato crop, resulting in some deaths and a wave of Irish immigration to this country. In fact, it was a far more complex event of enormous historical significance both for Ireland and the United States.

From 1845 to 1850, approximately 1.5 million Irish men, women and children either starved to death or died from complications caused by the Great Hunger, and over 2 million more left Ireland from 1845 to 1855 to avoid death, disease and destitution. As a result, the population of Ireland was cut in half, from 8 million to 4 million, and by the end of the 19th century, the population was reduced to approximately 2 million. This dramatic drop in Ireland's population makes the Great Hunger not only the worst chapter in that country's history, but also the single worst catastrophe in 19th century Europe. It also accounts for why the Great Hunger caused the Irish to become such a large and influential segment of American society.

When one considers the impact Irish immigration had on the United States, the Great Hunger also must be viewed as a major event for American History. The Irish who came to the United States certainly played a major role in the development of our country. For example, they were substantially involved in the early labor union movement in the United States, and the history of 20th century urban American politics is inextricably linked to the development of Irish American politics. The Catholic Church was relatively small and uninfluential until Irish immigrants, during and following the Great Hunger, swelled its ranks and helped it develop into one of the largest and most influential religious institutions in this country. Irish immigrants of the post-Great Hunger period also were instrumental in building our country's infrastructure and the Catholic parochial school system, which stands today as a model for education.

In Connecticut, the effects of Irish immigration parallel those seen throughout the country. Irish workers were largely responsible for the state's expanding railroads, canals and manufacturing enterprises. Many of Connecticut's leading political figures and city mayors were Irish Americans. As a

result of the post-Great Hunger emigration from Ireland, the number of Catholic parish churches rose dramatically in Connecticut's industrial cities, including New Haven, Hartford, Meriden, Stamford and Waterbury. The Catholic parochial school system took hold along with it.

The Great Hunger, which caused the Irish to immigrate to America, has important lessons for us today. Materials in this resource guide will assist teachers in providing our young people with a better understanding of the magnitude and significance of this catastrophe and its effects on America and Connecticut. With this understanding will come a more complete picture of why the Irish came to America, who they are and what they brought with them, as well as a greater appreciation for their past and present contributions to our nation and the state of Connecticut.

SECTION ONE

Ireland's First 2,000 Years

Introduction

How did Ireland's Great Hunger become the biggest social catastrophe of 19th century Europe? "This is a question that can be answered only by first understanding the historical and political relationship between two countries and its people: England and Ireland. It is a 'relationship rooted in conflict and colonization, racism and religion, going back 800 years'" (New Jersey, 1996). Without this insight, it would be impossible to fully grasp the underlying causes leading up to the Great Hunger.

The first three sections of this document provide vital historical context for viewing the social and economic causes of the Great Hunger.

Celtic Colonization

Pictographs and Stone-Age tools suggest that Ireland's first settlers — between 10,000 and 8000 B.C. — may have originated in Northern Continental Europe. From these origins and continuing migrations during the Stone Age and Bronze Age (2500-66 B.C.), a rich native culture, similar to the native cultures in the Americas, evolved.

At the beginning of the Iron Age (600 B.C.), successive waves of Celtic tribes settled in Ireland, profoundly influencing language, culture, social and political structures, and the economy for several millennia. Celtic tribes speaking various Gaelic dialects are believed to have originated in the Middle East and Eastern Continental Europe.

The Celtic migrants brought to Ireland a well-ordered social structure, designed to defend itself and impose order on the simpler social structures they encountered. Unlike the highly centralized Roman Empire, the Celts were tribal peoples, with each tribe organized to provide for the protection and sustenance of its members and tied together by an intricate and complex system of families and clans. A king whose power was derived from the allegiance of druids, bards and warriors controlled each tribe. These druids, bards and warriors, in turn, demanded the allegiance of those under their protection. This system of tribal loyalty assured tight-knit, controlled societies, highly resistant to cultural and political erosion.

The Celtic tribal lands eventually became the provinces and regions of Ireland, and many of the tribal kings evolved into the provincial kings. At various times, these tribal kings acknowledged a King of Ireland. Such kings had little

power, but they provided a mechanism for the tribal kings to come together to build alliances and thwart outside threats. There was no centralized authority in Ireland, and allegiances between the tribal kings were constantly shifting to maintain a balance of power and resist outside threats.

St. Patrick and Christianity

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Roman-occupied Britain around 385 A.D. At the age of 16, during a raid on his village, Patrick was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Ireland. Turning to religion during his captivity, he escaped back to England after six years, determined to convert the Irish to Christianity. From there, he went to Gaul in France, where he studied for the priesthood, was ordained and spent 15 years in the Church of Auxerre. After the death of Palladius — the first bishop appointed to Ireland — Patrick was chosen to replace him and he went to Ireland to begin his mission.

Patrick's remarkable success in converting the Irish peasants to Christianity came from his "inculturation" approach — fully merging Christian beliefs and practices with the prevailing Celtic culture. But his task with the aristocracy was more difficult, since much of their power, influence and status was associated with the prevalent religion, Druidism. Nevertheless, Patrick was able to make important converts among the leading Gaelic families.

Patrick conducted his mission from Armagh (which is now part of Northern Ireland) and over a period of 30 years converted most of the population to Christianity, developed native clergy, appointed bishops, established dioceses, held church councils and fostered the growth of Celto-Christian monasticism.

Although Patrick personally was an indifferent scholar, he made enormous contributions to Irish scholarship. Prior to Patrick, the Irish elite were well educated, but their scholarship was entirely oral; indeed, Gaelic educators were hostile to the written word on the theory that it impaired memory and concentration. Patrick, through the monastery schools, introduced the written word — albeit in Latin — thereby permitting an island that had no written literature to eventually become the land of poets and scholars. By the time of his death in 461, the Irish elite were a literate and learned people who doubtless recorded their history in writing, but much of this legacy was destroyed by the Viking Raids of the ninth and 10th centuries.

The Dark Ages

During the Dark Ages (976-1000), as the Roman Empire fell and barbarians were looting artifacts and burning books, the Irish monks were instrumental in preserving the Greek-Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures by copying all of the

Western literature they could obtain. These monks are also credited with helping to re-educate Europe and beyond through their monastic missions after the Dark Ages. (See *How the Irish Saved Civilization...*, by Thomas Cahill.)

The Vikings

Near the end of the eighth century, Vikings invaded Ireland. For the first 40 years, they were interested only in rape, pillage and plunder, but that changed in 831, when Thorgest arrived with the intent to subjugate Ulster, Connacht and Meath. By 841, Vikings had established small but well fortified coastal settlements in Louth and a site near what is now Dublin. Viking expansionism continued aggressively through 873, particularly in the Southeast coastal areas, rich with seaports.

Although, Ireland was not alone in its inability to fend off the Vikings, other countries succeeded in mounting better defenses — principally by using the feudal system of centralized governments to raise unified armies. Gaelic society resisted centralized government and unified armies and so the Vikings won their battles by attacking one or two vulnerable Gaelic chieftains at a time. However, an Irish leader, Brian Boru, brother of King Mahoun of Munster, emerged and united his kingdom's royal clans to liberate Ireland from Viking tyranny. Brian succeeded in gaining the allegiance of one of the oldest and most powerful Celtic tribes, the Northern Ui Neill (O'Neil), and in 1002, proclaimed himself "Emperor of the Irish." In 1014, during the Battle of Clontarf, a group of Vikings slipped into Brian's tent and killed him while he was praying. Despite this, Brian's army won the battle and the Vikings were driven from Ireland.

During their period of influence, the Vikings introduced the Irish to the notion of trading towns and coinage. The people benefited from the new naval technologies and artistic approaches that came with new trading markets. However, the Vikings' political and military power declined by the second millennium and those who settled Ireland's commercial centers eventually merged with the Celtic Irish population.

The Normans

The Norman invasion of England was an expression of the increased population and growing wealth of the emerging European feudal states at the end of the Dark Ages. Principalities in present-day Germany expanded into Eastern Europe, and Normandy expanded south into Italy and west into England. Following the Battle of Hastings in 1066, in which the Normans defeated the English, the Norman kings of England sought further opportunities for colonization and trade. The English first sent Norman soldiers and administrators into Scotland to bring order to the tribal conflicts there. The English wanted to impose a similar order on Ireland, thereby gaining control of the country's extensive trading network.

However, Ireland's lack of a strong central government, the constant friction among the provincial Irish chieftains, and the resistance of the native population to outside control, convinced the English it was not necessary to militarily and politically dominate Ireland. The goal of the English was to settle the country's most productive areas and to introduce feudal institutions and land management practices that would provide products for English trade. Ireland became England's first colony.

The English sent Norman vassal lords and military forces to secure the Eastern region of Ireland and introduce new land management practices. They imported English peasants to settle the Norman-controlled plantations. Within this region, Irish landholders, the church and political leaders had their status and lands taken away, and attempts were made to integrate them with the Norman English. The large fertile region of East-Central was the most heavily settled by the Norman administrators and English workers. Surrounded by a wooden palisade and including the commercial port city of Dublin, the region became known as the "Pale." Theoretically, all of Ireland was under English authority and the English King was accepted as overlord and tax beneficiary, but the English could not and did not make a concerted effort to subdue the Celtic culture in areas beyond the Pale. Today, the expression "Beyond the Pale," means very much what it meant during the Norman presence in Ireland; condemnation of conduct that is judged to be outside the accepted norms of the dominant society within the Pale.

Statutes Of Kilkenny

During their control of Ireland's commercial development, the Normans profoundly changed Irish culture — English became the accepted language of the educated and landed classes within the Pale, and the Irish language and customs were outlawed everywhere through the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366. In an excerpt from *A Pocket History of Ireland*, author and historian Breandán Ó hEithir comments on the statutes' impact:

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. Its purpose was to preserve the racial purity and cultural separateness of the colonizers, 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 practiced by the native Irish. They favored 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 centers 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.

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 (Ó hEithir, 1997).

From Ó hEithir, Breandán. *A Pocket History of Ireland*.
Dublin, Ireland, 1997. Reprinted with permission
from The O'Brien Press, Ltd.

The broad assimilation of the Normans into Gaelic society caused the Normans to become more Irish than the Irish, much to the consternation of the crown.

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Ó hEithir, Breandán. *A Pocket History of Ireland*. Dublin, Ireland: The O'Brien Press, Ltd., 1997.

SECTION ONE INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

EARLY ELEMENTARY

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (3)

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

- Describe and explain some of the reasons people move and relate these reasons to some historic movements of large groups of people. Ask students why they think the Celts, Vikings and Normans came to Ireland.
- Hold a discussion on how people develop traditions that transmit their beliefs and ideals; then ask students how the pre-Celtic Irish were impacted by the beliefs and traditions of the Celtic, Viking and Norman people. How did St. Patrick influence the beliefs and traditions of the Celtic Irish?

UPPER ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (3) and Civics and Government (7)

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Political Systems: Students will explain that political systems emanate from the need of humans for order, leading to compromise and the establishment of authority.

- Have students work in two-person teams and give each team a piece of paper with a line drawn across its length. Ask each team to organize ancient Irish events by date, and place them appropriately above the time line; then organize well-known world and U.S. events by date, and place them below the time line so that these events conform by date to the events above the time line.

- Hold a discussion with students, during which they note any “surprises” they have discovered in this process, and also explore the nature and evolution of ancient Irish during this period. Discuss the issue of why we tend to think of groups other than our own as being isolated and static. What is the effect of this tendency on our openness to unknown people and how we treat them?
- Review with students the meaning of *The Pale* during Norman occupation of Ireland. Explore with students why the Norman-English believed it was important to maintain cultural norms that distinguished them from the native Celtic-Irish, even though they shared the Catholic religion.

HIGH SCHOOL

CSDE Social Studies Standards: History (3) and Civics and Government (7)

Historical Themes: Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Political Systems: Students will explain that political systems emanate from the need of humans for order, leading to compromise and the establishment of authority.

- Assign students to groups and ask each group to research and compare characteristics of Norman and Celtic social and political organizations, and artistic and technical sophistication. Each group should develop its findings and present them to the class.
- Ask students to speculate on the impact of the Celtic, Viking and Norman influence in the evolution of Irish society. What would be the strengths? What would be the weaknesses? How did St. Patrick and Christianity impact Irish society and culture?
- Review with students the efforts of the English to suppress the native Irish Gaelic culture with an emphasis on language through the Statutes of Kilkenny. Lead a class discussion on why language is significant to cultural identity, and why language suppression is frequently used to gain dominance of a cultural group. Do students believe it is possible to have a unified nation if the people speak different languages?

- Ask groups of students to prepare a case study of a contemporary effort to implement government policy to preserve or suppress a culture, with emphasis on language (French Quebec, Spanish, Native Americans, etc.).

SECTION TWO

Ireland: 1500-1799

Introduction

The 16th and 17th centuries were a time of English military and political conquest — as well as economic and land conquest — of Ireland. The Norman English controlled two-thirds of Ireland and the sole remaining bastion of Gaelic society was the province of Ulster. Successive English monarchies and governments enacted laws designed to reduce the Irish people to “nakedness and beggary” and, by 1603, England effectively ruled all of Ireland. In the 18th century, England and Irish Anglo-Protestants worked to systematically eliminate Irish Catholic influences in social, economic, cultural and political life.

During this period the Irish were reduced to such poverty that millions became dependent on potatoes for food, and religion and racism were used to justify the conquest and taking of land. When the potato blight struck in 1845, the “Irish stood at the brink of a bottomless pit.”

The Monarchy

The five monarchs of England’s Tudor Dynasty (1486-1603) — particularly Henry VIII (r. 1509-47) and his daughter Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) — had a deleterious impact on Ireland and its people. In addition to imposing Poyning’s Law, giving the English Privy Council a veto over legislation proposed in Irish parliaments, the monarchs ousted the Catholic Church, replacing it with a Protestant one; extinguished the “Kildare Supremacy,” established that the King of England automatically became King of Ireland and, through an “Anglicization” program, imposed England’s language, culture and religion. With the defeat of the Ulster Gaelic chieftains at Kinsale, the old Gaelic order was eliminated, paving the way for plantations and eventual forced “union” with England (Desmond, 1999).

From Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond’s Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web: <http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html>
Used with permission.

Plantations

The Battle of Kinsale in 1601 did establish England as conqueror of Ireland, but what followed next — the 16th and 17th centuries Plantations — were perhaps the most important political and socioeconomic development in Irish history since the arrival of the Celts. Two plantations, under Queens Mary and Elizabeth, in Leinster and Munster, preceded that in Ulster. They divided Ireland into two apartheid-like camps, sowing seeds of discord that remain to this day.

Under the Ulster Plantation (1609), the Cromwellian Plantation (1652) and the Williamite Plantation (1693), 81 percent of the productive land in Ireland was confiscated from the native Irish and transferred to new (invariably Protestant) immigrants from Scotland and England. Plantations, ... impacted Ireland in two major ways. First, they introduced into Ireland a new community that differed radically from the natives not only in religion, but also in culture, ethnicity and national identity. Second, in Ireland's overwhelmingly agrarian economy, where land equaled wealth and power (and vice-versa), the Plantations caused a massive transfer of wealth and power to non-native landlords, whose backbreaking rents then thrust most of the natives into crushing poverty and degradation. The Plantations are believed to be responsible for the class warfare and religious/cultural clashes that have plagued Ireland since 1610 (Desmond, 1999).

From Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond's Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web: <http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html>
Used with permission.

Cromwell's Purge

Until Oliver Cromwell overthrew the English Monarchy in 1649, England was more intent on capturing Ireland's production and trade than dominating its institutions. Cromwell, however, was determined to end forever the capacity of the Irish to resist total domination by Protestant England. His armies massacred the native population and confiscated their lands, forcing tens of thousands to immigrate as indentured servants and slaves to North America and the West Indies.

The Cromwellian Plantation or "scorched earth policy" was the largest and most acrimonious of the confiscations, reducing Catholic ownership of land. Land was taken largely from "Old English" Catholics and transferred to Cromwell's soldiers and

investors in the war effort. Those who refused to leave their land were executed for treason, incarcerated or reduced to working as tenant farmers, serfs or laborers on English landholdings. All practice of their Catholic religion; all participation in the civic, economic and cultural life of Ireland was forbidden.

By the mid-1660s, the Cromwellian and Ulster Plantations had created a huge landlord class, including the oft-vilified absentee landlords, whose rental income often permitted them to lead lives of leisure often in England, while exorbitant rents thrust the native Irish into abject poverty, with the majority of the population living at subsistence level.

With the restoration of the English Monarchy in King James II in 1660, Ireland experienced a brief respite from active English oppression. Under King James II, Ireland's landowners regained some control over their affairs, and the Catholic Church regained some of its authority over the spiritual and cultural life of the Irish people. But the respite was brief.

James II was overthrown by England's Protestant forces and his son-in-law, the Dutch Protestant, William, Duke of Orange, ascended the throne. In 1691, William achieved total surrender of Irish resistance against the English monarchy at Limerick (Desmond, 1999).

From Desmond, Jerry. *Desmond's Concise History of Ireland*, 1999. Available from World Wide Web: <http://members.tripod.com/~jerrydesmond/index-2.html>
Used with permission.

England's Iron Fist: The Penal Laws

"If the avarice and neglect of the expanding English Empire destroyed the capacity of the native Irish to sustain themselves at the most basic level, the English penal laws of 1695 crushed any hope of their participating in Ireland's economic, civil and cultural institutions" (Bloy, 1994).

With the ascendancy of William III to the English throne, the English and Protestant Irish parliaments drafted the penal laws, assuring the "Protestant Ascendancy" in Ireland total control of the civic, economic and cultural life of Ireland. The laws included repressive laws such as:

- Catholics could not purchase or inherit land or lease it for more than 30 years.

- Catholic profits from leased land could not exceed the annual rent by more than one-third.
- Catholic landowners were required to divide their land among all their heirs, but if one heir converted to the Anglican Church, he would inherit all lands.
- Catholic orphans were required to be raised by Protestants, who would “manage” their estates.
- Catholic nobles could not display their Coats of Arms, or carry swords or guns.
- Catholics could not own a gun or a horse valued at more than five pounds.
- Catholics could not educate their children at Catholic schools at home or abroad.
- Catholics could not vote, send representatives to the Irish Parliament, hold office, serve in the militia, enter the professions or live in towns without paying special fees.
- Catholic bishops and priests were banished, and Catholics were not allowed to publicly practice their religion.
- Catholics could not marry Protestants.
- Catholics were forbidden to participate in English commerce or trade.

Sir Edmond Burke described these oppressive laws as “... well-fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.” In *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849*, author Cecil Woodham-Smith wrote:

The material damage suffered from the Penal Laws was enormous; ruin was widespread, old Gaelic families disappeared and old estates were broken up; but the most disastrous effects were moral. The Penal Laws brought lawlessness, dissimulation and revenge in their train, and the Irish character, above all the character of the peasantry, did become, in Burke’s words, degraded and debased. The upper classes were able to leave the country and many middle-class merchants contrived, with guile, to survive, but the poor Catholic peasant bore the full hardship. His religion, made him an outlaw; in the Irish House of Commons he was described as ‘the common enemy,’ and whatever was inflicted on him he must bear, for where could he look for redress? To his landlord, who was almost invariably an alien conqueror? To the law? Not when every person connected with the law, from the jailer to the judge, was a Protestant, who regarded him as ‘the common enemy’ (Woodham-Smith, 1992).

From Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992. Used with permission.

Political strife and the harsh penal laws precipitated a growing pattern of exodus of Presbyterians, or "Dissenters from the Anglican Church," and then Irish Catholics to North America. Between 1700 and 1776, approximately 200,000 Irish Presbyterians immigrated to the United States and Canada. In one decade — between 1827 and 1837 — it is estimated that another 200,000 predominantly Irish Catholics immigrated to these countries, as well as to England, the West Indies and other British colonies. After the American Revolutionary War, George Washington paid tribute to the Irish in the Army and Navy, declaring that the war could not have been won without the Irish.

Catholic Relief Act

In 1793, France declared war against Britain. The ideas of the 18th century American and French revolutions — liberty, equality, fraternity and democracy — plus the French religious link, were favored by the Irish. The Irish could see that religious inequality had been abolished in France and that a democratic government had been set up in France and America. Irish Roman Catholics wanted equality; Irish Protestants wanted parliamentary reform. Both groups wanted economic reform.

Although a number of moderate Irish politicians wanted Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform, many thought Ireland should support England during the crisis. However, there were others whose views were more extreme. Among these were Theobald Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who formed the United Irishmen in 1792, which aimed at:

- breaking the connection with England;
- asserting the independence of Ireland; and
- uniting Irishmen of all races and creeds.

Striving to unite Dissenters and Catholics against Anglican rule, the organization grew rapidly and, in 1793, succeeded in persuading the Irish Parliament to pass the Catholic Relief Act, which gave property-owning Catholics the right to vote, but not hold office.

From Bloy, Marjorie. *Britain and Ireland 1789-1801*, 1994.

Available from World Wide Web:

<http://landow.stg.brown.edu/victorian/history/ireland1.html>

In May 1798, an Irish uprising occurred with the avowed aim of Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform. It was quickly repressed. Many peasants joined because they wanted tithes to the Anglican Church abolished, while many of the educated wanted independence. Fearing that Ireland might succeed in becoming an independent nation, and then used as a base by England's enemies, the British Parliament decided that Ireland could no longer be allowed to have an independent parliament (Bloy, 1994).

From Bloy, Marjorie. *Britain and Ireland 1789-1801*, 1994.
Available from World Wide Web:
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The Act Of Union

In 1799, British Prime Minister William Pitt sponsored legislation calling for the "union" of Ireland and England into a "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland" with a single Parliament in Westminster. To garner Anglo-Irish Protestant support, Pitt promised to grant Ireland 100 of the 658 seats in Parliament.

When the 'Act of Union' was first put to a vote, it failed by five. A year later — after Pitt's deputy had bribed some members with peerages and lifetime seats in the British House of Lords — the measure passed the all-Protestant Irish Parliament, and was quickly ratified by the English Parliament. Signed by George III in August of 1800, it became effective on January 1, 1801 (Desmond, 1999).

According to the 'Act of Union':

- Ireland was to be joined to Great Britain into a single kingdom, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
- The Dublin parliament was abolished. Ireland was to be represented at Westminster by 100 MPs, four Lords Spiritual and 28 Lords Temporal (all Anglicans).
- The Anglican Church was to be recognized as the official Church of Ireland.
- There was to be free trade between Ireland and Britain.
- Ireland was to keep a separate Exchequer and was to be responsible for two-seventeenths of the general expense of the United Kingdom.
- Ireland was to keep its own Courts of Justice and civil service.
- No Catholics were to be allowed to hold public office.
- There was to be no Catholic Emancipation.

After only 18 years as a semi-autonomous country, Ireland, by the vote of its own Protestant Parliament, joined with England.