

Why did the Irish leave Ireland for America?



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Emigrants_..

Supporting Questions

1. What is the American Dream?
2. What caused the Irish to leave Ireland in the mid-1800s?
3. What did Irish families experience in Ireland and America?

Why did the Irish leave Ireland for America?

Inquiry Standard	N.C. Essential Standard AH1.H.8: Analyze the relationship between progress, crisis, and the “American Dream” within the United States.
Staging the Compelling Question	Discuss immigration to the U.S., focusing on the reasons why immigrants leave their homes and come here.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What is the American Dream?	What caused the Irish to leave Ireland in the mid-1800s?	What did Irish families experience in Ireland and America?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Create your own definition of the American Dream.	Write a paragraph summarizing the factors that caused the Irish to leave Ireland.	Pretend that you are an Irish immigrant in America, and write a letter home describing your experiences.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: Excerpt from James Truslow Adams’ <i>The Epic of America</i> (1931) Source B: Excerpt from Thomas Wolfe’s <i>You Can’t Go Home Again</i> (1940) Source C: “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus (1883)	Source A: “Bridget O’Donnell and her two children” Illustration (1849) Source B: Excerpts from “The Poor Laws, Potato Disease and Free Trade” - <i>The Dublin University Magazine</i> (1849) Source C: “Scenes of Misery” from <i>The Cork Examiner Newspaper</i> (1847)	Source A: Letter from Michael and Mary Rush, in Ireland, to their parents in Quebec (1846) Source B: Letter from James Christie, in Wisconsin, to his wife waiting in New York City (1847) Source C: Letter from Peter Connolly, in Arkansas, to his family in Ireland (1848)

Summative Performance Task	<p>ARGUMENT Construct an argument in the form of an essay that addresses the compelling question <i>Why did the Irish leave Ireland for America?</i> using specific claims and relevant evidence from the featured sources while acknowledging competing views.</p>
	<p>EXTENSION Create a timeline for a hypothetical Irish immigrant. On the timeline, highlight the troubles he or she faced in Ireland, the journey to the New World, and experiences in the United States.</p>
Taking Informed Action	<p>UNDERSTAND Examine cases of illegal immigration to the U.S.</p> <p>ASSESS Determine the reasons immigrants choose to illegally come to the U.S. as well as the accompanying benefits and costs.</p> <p>ACTION Write a letter to your congressman, explaining why he or she should or should not support illegal immigration.</p>

Inquiry Description

In this inquiry, students will examine one particular group, the Irish, during a period when they experienced mass migration. Immigration is an important topic for students of U.S. history, both historically and currently. The U.S. is often said to have been built on immigration, with the term “melting pot” commonly used to refer to the nation. Immigration, both legal and illegal, continues to be a contentious topic at both the political and personal level. To understand why people decide to leave their home for a new and foreign country, it is necessary to analyze the conditions in their home country. To understand why people, both the 19th century Irish as well as countless other immigrants, choose the United States as their destination for immigration, it is important to study the concept of the American Dream.

Structure

In addressing the compelling question, *Why did the Irish leave Ireland for America?*, students will work through a series of supporting questions, performance tasks, and sources in order to construct an argument with evidence and counter-evidence from a variety of sources.

Staging the Compelling Question

Compelling
Question

Why did the Irish leave Ireland for America?

Staging the compelling question

The compelling question can be broken into two parts, “Why did the Irish leave Ireland?” and “Why did the Irish choose America?” both of which are equally important. Begin a class discussion with your students, asking them what they know about current immigration trends, including who is coming to the U.S., why they came here, and what they are doing here. As the teacher, try to instruct as little as possible; this is an opportunity for students to display the basic information they have and to pass that information on to fellow students who may be unfamiliar with the topic. When you do speak to your students, do so to address any misconceptions they may have. You are trying to have them develop the baseline needed to understand the topic of instruction, not influence their political views. After students who wish to speak have shared, direct them to think back to previous immigrants in the nation’s history: Pilgrims, Germans, Chinese, etc. After a small discussion about the history of immigration to the U.S., share with them some general information about Irish immigrants and the Great Famine, which will lead into the supporting questions and formative tasks.

Supporting Question 1

Supporting Question	What is the American Dream?
Formative Performance Task	Create your own definition of the American Dream.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source A: Excerpt from James Truslow Adams' <i>The Epic of America</i> (1931)• Source B: Excerpt from Thomas Wolfe's <i>You Can't Go Home Again</i> (1940)• Source C: "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus (1883)

This supporting question introduces students to the concept of the American Dream. One possible definition for the American Dream is the belief that America is a land of opportunity, where people can achieve all they desire through hard work and merit alone. Being aware of this concept is crucial to understanding why so many immigrants chose and continue to choose the U.S. as their destination.

Formative Performance Task

This formative performance task asks students to create their own definition of the American Dream. This definition is likely to be short, probably no more than a couple of sentences. The idea is for students to create a definition of the American Dream that works for them, demonstrating their understanding of the concept. As the sources used are primarily from literary authors, this requires the students to synthesize what they learn from the sources to create a definition for themselves. This, in turn, will strengthen their ability to accomplish the summative task.

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A

Excerpt from James Truslow Adams' *The Epic of America* (1931)

Excerpt

This excerpt is taken from James Truslow Adams' book, *The Epic of America*, he is credited with coining the term "American Dream" in this very excerpt.

"The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."

Source:

Open Library - https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6763688M/The_epic_..

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source B

Excerpt from Thomas Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940)

Excerpt

This excerpt, taken from the book *You Can't Go Home Again* written by the American author Thomas Wolfe, provides an emotionally stirring definition of the American Dream.

“So, then, to every man his chance — to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity — to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him — this, seeker, is the promise of America.”

Source:

The University of Adelaide Library - <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/wolfe/thomas/you-..>

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source C

"The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus (1883)

Excerpt

Emma Lazarus' sonnet "The New Colossus" describes a personification of the United States providing shelter for the poor and downtrodden. It was so well received that it was inscribed on the Statue of Liberty when it was constructed.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Source:

Poetry Foundation - <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/p..>

Supporting Question 2

Supporting Question	What caused the Irish to leave Ireland in the mid-1800s?
Formative Performance Task	Write a paragraph summarizing the factors that caused the Irish to leave Ireland.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: “Bridget O’Donnell and her two children” Illustration (1849)● Source B: Excerpts from “The Poor Laws, Potato Disease and Free Trade” - The Dublin University Magazine (1849)● Source C: “Scenes of Misery” from The Cork Examiner Newspaper (1847)

This supporting question directs students to investigate the featured sources, having them look for reasons that the Irish left Ireland. By analyzing excerpts from magazine and newspaper articles, as well as an illustration from the mid-1800s, students will be able to gain an understanding of the hardships present in Ireland and sufficiently answer the supporting question.

Formative Performance Task

Students will examine an illustration from 1849 (Source A), portraying a starving mother clad in rags while her two children suffer alongside her, giving students a visceral look at the conditions of the Irish poor. They will also read excerpts from an 1849 magazine article (Source B) and an 1847 newspaper article (Source C), which are accounts of the Great Famine in Ireland. They will then consolidate relevant information from each of these sources to write a paragraph addressing the major factors that caused the Irish to leave Ireland in the mid-1800s.

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source A

“Bridget O’Donnell and her two children” Illustration (1849)



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AIrish_po..

By Illustrated London News, December 22, 1849 (Image, Caption) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source B

Excerpts from "The Poor Laws, Potato Disease and Free Trade" - The Dublin University Magazine (1849)

Excerpt

This source includes a series of modified excerpts from an article written for a university magazine in Dublin, Ireland. These excerpts provide information about the causes of the Great Famine beyond the potato blight.

There can be no question that from the beginning of the year 1848 the state of this country has assumed a very terrible condition. A renewed and long-term failure of the potato crop has added greatly to the sufferings of the poor, and increased the complexities which have involved all other classes of society. The burden of poor rates has become impossible for a people who have been the most affected by the loss of their crops; and the potential for increased pressure during the coming year from the continued and increasing despair and poverty in the country has paralyzed the energies of even the most cheerful and most determined.

The bizarre evils of the present system of poor laws in Ireland, and their great incompetence for such a country, has naturally tended to check all exertion to prevent an increase of the rates, as the most active and well-disposed landlord finds that all the employment he can give his poor is of little use without a great deal of cooperation among his neighbors, which it is, for various reasons, not practical to reach, while the ill effects of a system by which such large numbers are fed upon public charity have, it is too plain, only increased their indolence and unwillingness to earn their bread by manly labor. This system, continued in one way or the other since the Labor-rate Act passed, while it is fast swallowing up all private property, has at the same time produced a great many evils, in causing the majority of the people to be tired, uninterested and dead to every feeling of independence, a case uniquely evil to the Irish poor. Ireland's outlook is most dark, the very opposite to those which an organized state should display.

...

It is now become very clear to all who do not willfully shut their eyes that the events of the potato disease was made the scapegoat for an entire change of the commercial system from one of protection to free trade. Instead of adopting measures of extraordinary quality, required for an extraordinary emergency, Ireland and its disaster has only served the objectives of those who had long considered the end of protection of the local industry.

...

Almost all the cures given by the government to meet an unusual state of things caused by a sudden crisis were founded on ideas that only work for the ordinary state of society, and therefore were useless. There was a great loss of life from starvation and disease; and although the relief was far from being effective, the expense placed upon a very poor country was greatly increased by the refusal of the government to interfere with the course of private trade, and therefore it was necessary to buy food from private merchants who, in defiance to the concepts of free trade, were the real monopolists during the year of starvation and death. The Labor-rate Act, which had also caused us to carry heavy burdens, was also supported on the theories of Adam Smith (an economist), and those theories prevent any other idea from entering the minds of our leaders.

**Note: These excerpts have been modified from the original text in order to improve readability.

Source:

The Dublin University Magazine - <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/sadlier/irish/Po..>

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source C

"Scenes of Misery" from The Cork Examiner Newspaper (1847)

Excerpt

This excerpt is taken from a newspaper article reporting a series of deaths and disasters in several Irish village communities; it allows for a more personal look at the suffering of the Irish as opposed to the previous source's political take.

Melancholy indeed are the latest accounts from all parts of this extensive county. From Bantry, Skibbereen, Crookhaven, Castletown, and Tracton, in Cork and in Dingle, in Kerry, the reports present the same gloomy features. The intelligence from these scenes of misery are summed up by the Cork Examiner as follows: the details from Bantry were forwarded yesterday:

"SKIBBEREEN. In the parish of Kilmore 14 died on Sunday; 3 of these were buried in coffins, 11 were buried without other covering than the rages they wore when alive. And on gentleman, a good and charitable man, speaking of this case, says 'The distress is so appalling, that we must throw away all feelings of delicacy;' and another says, 'I would rather give 1s. to a starving man than 4s.6d. for a coffin.'

"140 died in the Skibbereen Workhouse in one way; 3 have died in one day! And Mr. M'Carthy Downing states that 'they came into the house merely and solely for the purpose of getting a coffin.'

"The Rev. Mr. Clancy visits a farm, and there, in one house, 'he administered the last rites of religion to six persons.' On a subsequent occasion, he 'prepared for death a father and daughter lying in the same bed.'

"The Rev. Mr. Caulfield sees '13 members of one family lying down in fever.'

"The Rev. Mr. Fitzpatrick retires to rest at 3 o'clock in the morning, and rises after a couple hours' heavy sleep. It is the same with his co-adjudicators.

"Dr. Donovan solemnly assures a public meeting that the people are 'dropping in dozens about them.'

"Mr. Marmion says that work on the public road is even more destructive than fever; for the unfed wretches have not energy enough to keep their blood in circulation, and they drop down from the united effects of cold and hunger -- never to rise again.

"Mr. M'Carthy Downing proclaims a fact damning the character of the Skibbereen landlords. For two months past the secretary of the Relief Committee has been importuning the landlords of the district; and with what result, think you, reader? Out of four parishes, comprising the relief district, but nine subscriptions have been received, after two months' begging. Mr. Downing excepts these landlords who reside in the town, whose contributions have been generous -- even excessive.

"Although it may seem to some out of place, still here we shall mention a fact that has this moment come to our knowledge. Lord Midleton's agent (Mr. Foley) assembled his Lordship's tenants a day or two ago, and allowed them on behalf of his Lordship, from 25 to 75 per cent in their rents! the poorer tenants paying but one-fourth of the whole rent; and so on, up to the comfortable farmers, who have large holdings, and who have been allowed one-fourth for their losses.

"And not only has his Lordship done so much, but he will do more -- immediately recommence the quay at Cove, which will afford large employment to tradesmen and labourers, and at a rate of wages that will allow them to live.

"As a commentary on certain facts stated by Mr. Downing of a noble proprietor of this country, who holds land in Skibbereen -- Lord Banden -- we may mention that last year -- when the distress was only partial, and there were no coffinless dead -- Lord Midleton subscribed to all the committees on his estates.

"We heartily cry, God bless Lord Midleton!

"DINGLE-- The Rev. Mr. Gayer of Dingle in a letter says, 'The people there are dying by inches; that he

wonders they are so patient as to lie down and die without breaking open the Government stores, and that two-thirds of the population will perish if food be not cheapened there.

"The name of the reverend writer is familiar to our readers in connection with a recent press prosecution. His 'wonder' at the patience of the stricken wretches speaks volumes for their condition.

"CROOKHAVEN -- A correspondent writing to us from this locality says, 'There have been 16 deaths from starvation in this locality in the last seven days, all leaving widows and orphans.

"TRACTON -- The affecting letter of the Rev. Mr. Corkran will be read with deep interest. It informs us that 16 deaths from starvation have occurred in ten days. This within a dozen miles of the southern capital of Ireland!

"Stretched on a bed of straw lies a dying husband and father; and grouped around that couch are a wretched wife and children, who devour wild weeds themselves, that they might leave the only remaining morsel of food to the dying man!

"Is this tide of horror to roll on unchecked? Will the Imperial rulers of this slavish province wait until one-half of the 'Irish savages' be swept away? For to this it will soon come."

Source:

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/SADLIER_OLD/IRIS..

Supporting Question 3

Supporting Question	What did Irish families experience in Ireland and America?
Formative Performance Task	Pretend that you are an Irish immigrant in America, and write a letter home describing your experiences.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: Letter from Michael and Mary Rush, in Ireland, to their parents in Quebec (1846)● Source B: Letter from James Christie, in Wisconsin, to his wife waiting in New York City (1847)● Source C: Letter from Peter Connolly, in Arkansas, to his family in Ireland (1848)

This supporting question directs students to investigate the sources in order to determine the experiences of Irish immigrants and their families in both Ireland and America. Through the use of the featured sources, which are all personal letters to and from Irish immigrants, students will gain a personal look at the experiences, trials, and motivations of those who immigrated.

Formative Performance Task

This formative task gives students the opportunity to create historical fiction. They must place themselves in the shoes of an Irish immigrant in the mid-1800s and author a letter. This task prompts students to adapt what they have read in the actual letters and craft their own with similar themes. By gaining personal insight into the challenges facing these immigrants, students will be better prepared to address the summative task.

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source A

Letter from Michael and Mary Rush, in Ireland, to their parents in Quebec (1846)

Excerpt

This letter features an adult pair of children writing to their parents who have recently emigrated to Quebec. They write about how dire the situation is in Ireland and beg their father to send for them.

Michael and Mary Rush, Ardnaglass, County Sligo, Ireland, to Thomas Barrett, Quebec, Canada, September 6, 1846

Dear Father and Mother,

Pen cannot dictate the poverty of this country at present. The potato crop is quite done away all over Ireland and we are told prevailing all over Europe. There is nothing expected here, only an immediate famine. The labouring class getting only two stone of Indian meal for each days labour, and only three days given out of each week to prolong the little money sent out by Government to keep the people from going out to the fields; to prevent slaughtering the cattle, which they are threatening very hard they will do before they starve. I think you will have all this account by public print before this letter comes to hand. Now, my dear parents, pity our hard case, and do not leave us on the number of the starving poor, and if it be your wish to keep us until we earn at any labour you wish to put us to we will feel happy in doing so. When we had not the good fortune of going there the different times ye sent us money; but alas, we had not that good fortune. Now, my dear father and mother, if you knew what danger we and our fellow countrymen are suffering, if you were ever so much distressed, you would take us out of this poverty Isle. We can only say, the scourge of God fell down in Ireland, in taking away the potatoes, they being the only support of the people. Not like countries that has a supply of wheat and other grain. So, dear father and mother, if you don't endeavour to take us out of it, it will be the first news you will hear by some friend of me and my little family to be lost by hunger, and there are thousands dread they will share the same fate. Do not think there is one word of untruth in this; you will see it in every letter and of course in the public prints. Those that have oats, they have some chance, for they say they will die before they part any of it to pay rent. So the landlord is in a bad way too. Sicily Boyers and family are well: Michael Barrett is confined to his bed by rheumatism. The last market, oatmeal went from 1£ to 1£ 1s per cwt. As for potatoes there was none at market. Butter 5£ per cwt., pork 2£ 8s per cwt., and everything in provision way expected to get higher. The Lord is merciful, he fed the 5000 men with five loaves and two small fishes. Hugh Hart's mother is dead; he is in good health. So I conclude with my blessings to you both and remain your affectionate son and daughter.

Michael and Mary Rush

For God's sake take us out of poverty, and don't let us die with the hunger.

Source:

Letters to and from Irish Immigrants to America, 1830s-1880s -

<http://risdyeswecan.blogspot.com/2010/02/letters-t..>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source B

Letter from James Christie, in Wisconsin, to his wife waiting in New York City (1847)

Excerpt

This letter is from a husband in Wisconsin writing to his wife and family waiting for him in New York. He is establishing a homestead, and although money is becoming tight, he maintains a hopeful outlook.

James Christie, Clyman, Wisconsin, to his wife, Elizabeth Reid Christie, New York City, February 3, 1847

My very Dear Elizabeth,

I feel the utmost gratitude to God that you and the children are well. We will begin to put up our house in 10 days. We've drawn every log for it 3 1/2 miles as our land contains no suitable trees. I build it in the most fertile part of the land, so that we may have a good garden at the door. I've been cutting down plum trees and wild vines but I've spared some so as you may see them. Providence seems to separate us that our Love may be purified. I have always told you, my Dear Elizabeth, that it was for the sake of our children that I would take upon me the toils of a settler's life, and how much easier will it be for me to die, knowing that they will be independent. We will each of us have 40 acres of good land, and my 40 will still be there when I am gone; not as when you die in Ireland, leaving your children a legacy of debt and the same eternal round of slavery which has been your own lot. We left with \$310 and all that's left is 50. Out of that a cow and sow and pigs are to buy, and a plough, shingles and lumber for our house. We are hard up for cash -- but I enclose one dollar for you. You would have more if it were to spare. And have, My Dear Elizabeth, my blessing. God be about you and the Children, for you are my heart and they are the light of mine eyes.

Your husband until death,

James Christie

Source:

Letters to and from Irish Immigrants to America, 1830s-1880s -

<http://risdyeswecan.blogspot.com/2010/02/letters-t..>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source C

Letter from Peter Connolly, in Arkansas, to his family in Ireland (1848)

Excerpt

This letter is written by an adult son to his parents and brothers in Ireland. Although he has had recent financial setbacks, he still remarks on how cheap and plentiful America is and tells his parents to convince everyone who can to come to America.

Peter Connolly in Fort Smith, Arkansas to his father Thomas Connolly in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, May 11, 1848

My Dear Parents and Brothers,

...I got such a shock by the news contained in your letters that it weighs heavy on my mind 'till this minute.

It would not be so much so if I had been able to send help to my suffering friends and to a moral certainty it would have been on the road before now only for a loss I sustained about the middle of April last, which was \$100 worth of wood which I had on the bank of the Arkansas river to sell to the steam boats but unfortunately the river overflowed its banks in April and took from me the labor of six months at least.

My most sanguine hopes of making a little money and assisting my distressed parents and brothers being thus cruelly frustrated I got on a steam boat as soon as I could with my family and left the place where I experienced so much mortification.

I saved as much of the wood as paid for my passage up the river to Fort Smith and I am now living in an Irishman's house. He has no family and is well off as to living. He makes us welcome to make it our home 'till we make a home for ourselves which I hope in God will be in the latter end of next fall.

I can get 3 shillings a day British currency for my labor, without diet and everything I need to live on is so cheap that it costs but very little to support a man and his family here.

Indian corn 1 shilling per bushel; bacon two and a half pence per pound; flour one penny per pound; Irish potatoes one shilling per bushel; a good cow and her calf for 20 shillings to eight shillings; I might say pigs for nothing. Recollect that this is the price in this town – a town very little less than Carrickmacross in size...

I address myself to my friends. I would say to them come here one and all and don't hesitate one moment about coming, but how mortifying is the idea that my friends must be debarred from the privileges of such a country as this merely for the want of funds.

50 shillings a head being the fare to New Orleans. Is it, or can it be possible, that the times are so bad that this sum cannot be realized by any person that wanted to come to America? But I believe that there are a great many people in Ireland so trifling as not to come here even if they could.

Source:

Irish Central, "Inspiring emigrant letters home to Ireland from America in the Famine era" - <http://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/inspirin..>

Summative Performance Task

Compelling Question	Why did the Irish leave Ireland for America?
Argument	Construct an argument in the form of an essay that addresses the compelling question <i>Why did the Irish leave Ireland for America?</i> using specific claims and relevant evidence from the featured sources while acknowledging competing views.
Extension	Create a timeline for a hypothetical Irish immigrant. On the timeline, highlight the troubles he or she faced in Ireland, the journey to the New World, and experiences in the United States.

Argument

Students will write an essay in response to the compelling question. In their essays, students should address the reasons for leaving Ireland. You should expect to see references to the potato blight and starvation, as well as government mismanagement and harmful laws. The concept of the American Dream should be addressed, either by students including their own definition of the concept or the inclusion of excerpts from featured sources. This should be used to explain why the Irish chose America. Examples from the letters should be used throughout to demonstrate some of the personal motivations and troubles of Irish immigrants. As the summative task is not asking for students to agree or disagree as you would find with a normal argumentative essay, you should not expect to find large variance in student answers. This is not a “yes” or “no” essay. Instead, you should examine your students’ summative essays for comprehension and clarity. A strong essay will address the various reasons for both leaving Ireland and coming to America, without simply parroting information from the sources.

Extension

The extension activity offers students an opportunity to create a timeline for a hypothetical Irish immigrant. The focal points for this assignment are similar to the essay: hardships in Ireland prompting departure, travel to America, and American experiences. It allows students who are uncomfortable with argumentative writing to engage in a more creative activity that still tests for the same knowledge acquisition.

Taking Informed Action

Understand	Examine cases of illegal immigration to the U.S.
Assess	Determine the reasons immigrants choose to illegally come to the U.S. as well as the accompanying benefits and costs.
Action	Write a letter to your congressman, explaining why he or she should or should not support illegal immigration.

The goal of this taking informed action task is to enable students to take the information and opinion they have gained from a historical case and apply it to a contemporary issue. In this case, students will take what they learned about the experience and trials of Irish immigrants to the U.S. during the Great Famine and apply it to the current issue of illegal immigration in the U.S. With many politicians basing campaigns around the immigration issue, talks of a fence or a wall, and other concerns, this issue is of great importance. Students will analyze some of the reasons people have chosen to illegally immigrate to the U.S., as well as the costs and benefits they bring. By comparing modern cases to historic ones, students will form a personal and informed opinion on the topic of immigration. With this opinion in mind, students will draft a formal letter and petition their congressman on the subject. Not only does this continue to promote proper letter etiquette, it also introduces students to political activism, one of the foundational tenets of the American political system, yet one that is underutilized.

