

TOPIC: Results of the Great Irish Famine

AIM: Why did the Irish sing ballads about heroes and villains?

Do Now Activity: Read "The Wild Colonial Boy." In a three to four sentence long paragraph, describe what is happening in this song.

Motivation Activity: Review student paragraphs about "The Wild Colonial Boy."

- 1- Why is Jack Dugan called "the wild colonial boy"?
- 2- What happens to him in this song?
- 3- Why do you think people sang this song about an outlaw?
- 4- Who does Jack remind you of? Why?
- 5- Does the narrator judge the characters or leave it to the audience? Why do you think they do that?
- 6- A ballad is a narrative poem which usually tells of heroic deeds, murders, feud or love stories. Why do you think people told these kind of stories using songs?
- 7- What other groups that we have studied sang ballads? What did these people share in common with the Irish?
- 8- Some people compare ballads to today's supermarket tabloids. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Follow-up Activity: Read "The Emigrant Female."

- 1- What does the narrator tell us about Mary?
- 2- How does Mary survive the robbery?
- 3- What lesson do we learn from this ballad?
- 4- If you could rewrite it, what would you change? Why?
- 5- Popular ballads were meant to be heard, not read. If you are composing a ballad for people who will hear it and not read it, what should you keep in mind? How will listeners remember your ballad?

Follow-up Activity: Read "John Mitchel."

- 1- A broadside was the printed version of a ballad. It often told a newsworthy story of the day. Why do you think the Irish sang this song about John Mitchel?
- 2- Broadside were often decorated with woodcut illustrations. What kind of pictures would you use to illustrate this ballad?
- 3- Do you think John Mitchel was considered a hero or a villain by the Irish? What about by the British? Explain your answer.

Summary: In your opinion, why did the Irish sing ballads about their heroes and villains? Why did they sing about emigration?

Application: Write your own broadside ballad of at least four stanza on an immigration theme and illustrate it. Your ballad can be about a real or fictional historical character or about the adventures of a member of your family while coming to the United States or settling in this country.

Activity Sheet - Traditional Irish Emigration Ballads

A) The Wild Colonial Boy

There was a wild colonial boy, Jack Dugan was his name.
He was born and raised in Ireland, In a place called Castlemaine.
He was his father's only son, his mother's pride and joy
And dearly did his parents love The Wild Colonial Boy.

At the age of sixteen he left his native home,
And to Australia's sunny shore he was inclined to roam.
He robbed the rich, he helped the poor, he shot James McAvoy
A terror to Australia was The Wild Colonial Boy.

One morning on the prairie as Jack rode along,
A-listening to the mocking bird a-singing a cheerful song.
Out stepped a band of troopers, Kelly, David and Fitzroy
They all set out to capture him, The Wild Colonial Boy.

"Surrender now, Jack Dugan, for you see we're three to one,
Surrender in the Queen's high name for you're a plundering son."
Jack drew two pistols from his belt and proudly waved them high
"I'll fight, but not surrender," said The Wild Colonial Boy.

He fired a shot at Kelly which brought him to the ground,
And turning 'round to Davis he received a fatal wound.
A bullet pierced his proud young heart from the pistol of Fitzroy
And that was how they captured him, The Wild Colonial Boy.

B) An Emigrant Female

I pray attend and ear now lend to what I'll here relate.
It's of a valiant female's adventure I will state.
Her brave, undaunted courage it will you much delight.
Against a daring robber at the closing hour of night.

This fair maid was a servant to a family, we hear
Who lived in the town of Cavan, but as it does appear
She being inclined to emigrate, her wages did demand
To seek a situation in America's free land.

She traveled without any fear till it was falling night,
When passing through a lonely wood, she trembled with affright.
Toward her came approaching, a suspicious-looking man
With his face all covered over and a pistol in his hand.

The robber then stepped up to her and bid her for to stand
Saying, "Both your goods and money this moment we demand,
So deliver them up instantly and make no more delay
Or with this loaded pistol I will take your life away."

She begged him then with pity saying, "Sir, please don't harm me,
For I'm a helpless servant girl that's going o'er the sea.
I have neither goods nor money the truth I will declare,
But you can have these shillings in hopes my life you'll spare.

She immediately surrendered, but mark now what befell
For in taking up her bundle, the robber's pistol fell.
The moment that he let it fall, she seized it from the ground
And with bold undaunted courage to him she turned around.

She fired the pistol at his heart, his breast was blood and gore,
Just at the brave girl's feet he fell, the robber was no more.
Then seeing that she had conquered she made no more delay
But hastened from the dismal spot where the bleeding robber lay.

She related then her story unto a farmer's son
And he brought her to his father's house when her tale was done.
He said, "My valiant Mary, it's for your bravery,
You'll be my bride and we'll both sail to sweet Amerikay."

Then the couple got married and sailed from Dublin quay
Aboard a ship that headed west for Amerikay.
Young Mary by her courage got riches in great store,
Her tale will hearten Irish girls until our time's no more.

C) John Mitchel

I am a true born Irishman, John Mitchel is my name,
To free my own brave countrymen from Newtown I came.
I struggled hard both night and day to free my native land,
For which I was transported as you may understand.

When first I joined my countrymen, it was in '42,
And then what followed after I will quickly tell to you.
I raised the standard of Repeal, and gloried in the deed,
And vowed to heaven I'd never rest till Erin it was freed.

While here in prison close confined, to await the trial day,
My loving wife she came to me and these brave words did say:
"O' John, my dear, keep up your heart, and daunted do not be,
For it's better to die for Erin's right than live in slavery."

When I received my sentence, it was on a foreign ground,
Where hundreds of my comrades were assembled all around:
My liberty was offered me if I would forsake their cause,
But I'd rather die ten thousand deaths than forsake my Irish boys!

Farewell, my true-born Irishmen, farewell, my country small,
But leaving my dear babes behind, it grieves me worse than all;
There's one request I ask of you, when your liberty you gain,
Remember Mitchel far away, a convict bound in chains.