

Grade level: 7-9

Famine curriculum

Lesson aim: To read and respond to "An Old Woman of the Road" with a answering poem.

Historical background: evictions

1. Write down the name of an object in your house that gives you pleasure when you look at it and that you associate with home. Now, write down a sound that you associate with home.
2. Read Padraic Colum's "An Old Woman of the Roads." Who is the speaker? What happened to her? What sights and sounds does she associate with home? The poem appeals to the senses: sight, sound, touch. Identify a line for each of those senses.
3. What is the mood of the poem? Is it weariness, misery, longing, hope, despair, optimism? Explain using evidence from the poem.
4. What do you notice about words like "crying wind" and "lonesome hush"? Do those phrases sound like what they mean?
5. The old woman says she is praying. Could this poem be her prayer? Why? Why not?

HW: Write a poem about the object and sound you have named. What is it about them that give you a sense of home. Try to follow Colum's rhyme scheme and meter.

Lesson aim: To create a dramatic monologue based on "The ejection."

New York State Standard:

Background: evictions charts

1. Colum's father was the Master of the Longford Workhouse. He would have heard stories of old people who had been evicted from their little houses during the famine or later in the nineteenth century. Look at the engraving "The ejection" which documents an eviction in 1848. Pick a character and write a dramatic monologue describing what is happening from your character's point of view. A dramatic monologue is a poem where an imaginary character addresses an imaginary audience.

HW: Erskine Nichols's painting "Eviction." Lady Butler

Create your own illustration of homelessness. It can be historical or contemporary homelessness. Use any media: drawing, painting, photography, collage.