

English Language Arts Assessment
Task 2 Form B

Directions:

In this part of the test you are going to read an article called "Newport Evictions" and a poem called "An Old Woman of the Roads." First you will answer and write about what you have read. You may look back at the article and the poem as often as look like. Then you will be asked to write an essay.

Now turn the page and begin.

The American traveller and humanitarian Asenath Nicholson worked among the poor in Ireland during the famine. She described evictions near the town of Newport, County Mayo in 1847. An eviction was a legal process whereby a landlord could legally recover his property from a tenant who occupied (but did not own) that property. During the famine there were many evictions because people did not have money to pay their rents.

A "driver" was usually a man employed by the landlord to take possession of the cattle or sheep of a tenant who had not been able to pay his rent. In this case Nicholson calls the person who evicted the tenant and other family members the "driver." The usual practice was to destroy the little house or at least to burn or tear down its thatched roof. Annals of the Famine in Ireland. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1998. pp. 115-116.

Newport Evictions

But this fearless "driver" throws, or causes to be thrown down, cabin after cabin, and sometimes whole villages, of which it is said the landlord was entirely ignorant; but the pitiless storm heeded not that, and the poor starved exiles pleading that the cabin might be left a little longer. Their pot and even the cloak, which is the peasant woman's all by day and by night, has often been torn from her emaciated limbs and sold at auction.

Perhaps in no instance does the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy come before the mind so vividly as when going over the places made desolate by the Famine; to see the tumbled cabins, with the poor hapless inmates who had for years sat around their turf fire, and ate their potatoes together, now lingering and oft'times wailing in despair, their ragged barefoot little ones clinging about them, one on the back of the weeping mother, and the father looking in silent despair, while a part of them are scraping among the rubbish to gather some little relic of mutual attachment (for the poor, dear reader, have their tender remembrances); then, in a flock, take their solitary, their pathless way to seek some rock or ditch to camp supperless for the night, without covering for the head or the feet, with not the remnant of a blanket to spread over them in the ditch, where they must crawl.

Are these solitary cases? Happy would it be were it so, but village upon village and company after company have I seen; and one magistrate who was travelling informed me that at nightfall the preceding day that he found a company that had gathered a few sticks and fastened them into the ditch, and spread over what miserable rags they could collect (for the rain was fast pouring); and under these more than 200 men, women and children were to crawl for the night. He alighted from his car and counted more than two hundred. They had all that day been driven out, and not one pound of any kind of food was in the whole encampment.

Complete the chart with words or phrases that describe the actions of the poor who were evicted from their little homes near Newport, Co. Mayo. Identify information from the article that supports your answer.

ACTIONS

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What happened to those evicted during the famine? What did they do? How did Mrs. Nicholson feel about the Newport people she described? Explain your answer using details from this article.

Read Padraic Colum's poem "An Old Woman of the Roads."

Is the speaker of "An Old Woman of the Roads" a woman who had been evicted? What things mean home to her? Describe the mood of the poem using details from the poem to support your answer.

Choose a line or lines from the poem. Discuss the meaning of your selection and explain how it applies to "Newport Evictions."
Use ideas from BOTH the poem and the article in your answer.

In your answer, be sure to include:

- * the line or lines you have selected from the poem.
- * an explanation of how your selection applies to "Newport Evictions."

Check your writing for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.