

7.7. Who was responsible for suffering?

INTERDISCIPLINARY MIDDLE GRADES (4-8) PACKAGE

AIM 7.7: Who was responsible for suffering during the Great Irish Famine?

ASSESSMENT:

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of multiple perspectives on historical events.
- Students will demonstrate their ability to use local events to explain broader historical developments.
- Students will demonstrate their ability to evaluate historical events based on the use of evidence.

DO NOW ACTIVITY: Examine the list of roles for the trial.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY: Discuss trials in the United States and the role of the jury. If necessary, use television programs as examples.

TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY: Explain that there will be a murder trial. Patrick Hasty, a tenant, is on trial for the assassination of Major Mahon, a landlord, during the Great Irish Famine. If you were Hasty's lawyer, what would be your defense strategy? Why?

ACTIVITY: Divide the students into 7 groups giving each group a role to prepare. Ask the groups to select one person to act in the trial. Each group helps their representative prepare for the trial. Discuss the role and how they will behave. The judge should open the trial by stating that Patrick Hasty is on trial for the assassination of Major Mahon. The prosecutor opens by calling the three witnesses Patrick Hasty, John Ross Mahon and Father McDermott. The prosecutor and defense lawyer are allowed five minutes each to question the witnesses. Assign a bailiff to keep time. Each lawyer can give a closing argument (maximum 5 minutes). The judge must then call on the jury to deliver their verdict. All students without an assignment during the trial will participate as members of the jury.

Students are assigned the following roles for the trial:

- 1. Judge** - your role is to chair the proceedings and facilitate the jury decision.
- 2. Prosecutor** - it is your duty to try and convict the accused of the crime using witnesses and the information gleaned from the preceding role-play.
- 3. Defense Lawyer** - your role is to defend the accused against the charges using witnesses and information from the role-play.
- 4. The Accused** - you are Patrick Hasty (of the tenant class), accused of the murder of Major Denis Mahon.
- 5. The land agent** - you are John Ross Mahon and you are called as a witness in the trial. You know Patrick Hasty because he had been involved in a failed assassination attempt on your life earlier in the year. For this reason you believe he is guilty of Mahon's murder.
- 6. The local priest** - you are Father McDermott the parish priest in Strokestown. You are called as a character witness for Patrick Hasty. You know him to be a good and honest man. Certain accusations, however, have been made against you. Both you and Major Mahon were members of the Relief Committee and there had always been a lot of tension between you. You even condemned Major Mahon off the altar on the Sunday before he was killed saying he was worse than Cromwell yet he lived. In many ways this could be seen as an incitement to commit the crime.
- 7. The Jury** - you have been selected as members of the jury. Your role is to listen to all the evidence presented. At the end of the trial you will vote on whether the accused is innocent or guilty. Appoint one person to present the verdict.

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The rest of the students are members of the general public attending the hearing. They may choose their own role (publican, shopkeeper) and decide whether or not they support the accused.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS: Should Patrick Hasty be found guilty of murder? Explain. If guilty, what should be his penalty? Explain? Based on evidence presented in this trial and class discussion, who was responsible for suffering during the Great Irish Famine?

HOMEWORK: Henry and Grace Pakenham-Mahon have inherited £50,000 and the landed estate from Major Mahon of Strokestown. Due to the Famine the estate is £15,000 in debt and has a very poor tenantry. Both Henry and Grace live in England. Due to the political dangers in Roscommon caused by the murder of Major Mahon, neither is willing to return to Strokestown for at least five years. As their lawyer, you are asked to write a statement recommending how they should spend their money.

<p>REFLECTION: Teachers found the mock trial format very effective because each student had to reach a decision and jury discussions helped students formulate opinions and support them with evidence, while listening to and considering ideas raised by other students.</p>
