

0. Irish Potato Famine - The Great Hunger - Story Preface

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This sign, along a road in Belfast (Northern Ireland), reminds viewers of the Irish Potato Famine, which the Irish people refer to as *An Gorta Mór* ("The Great Hunger"). Image, by Miossec, online via Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

*What, in the name of Heaven,
is to become of us? What are
we to do? The country is gone!*

The Times
May 23, 1849

The country wasn't gone but many people were. They had either died or fled when the effects of the "[Great Potato Famine](#)" dragged on for five years.

The wounds still run deep. The Irish people say there wasn't a famine in Ireland ... there was [The Great Hunger](#). Famines result when all crops fail. Only the potato crop had "the blight."

During the blight, other crops were still produced in abundance on the Emerald Isle. It's just that much of the food (too expensive for [penniless people](#) to buy) was shipped elsewhere.

The Irish-grown food was shipped elsewhere because British laws, imposed on Ireland, required it. Those requirements led to a famine of catastrophic proportions.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Irish-Potato-Famine-The-Great-Hunger>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Irish-Potato-Famine-The-Great-Hunger>

Questions 2 Ponder

If Only One Crop Fails, How Can There Be a Famine?

In the mid-19th century, when potatoes in Ireland had the "potato blight," a massive famine followed, forever changing Irish history.

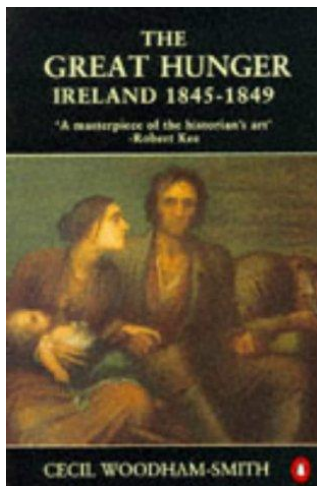
It was only the potato crop which had failed, however. During the time of the "potato famine" - between 1845-1849 - other crops were thriving. How could it be that people were starving when other crops had not failed?

Even after the potato crop no-longer had "the blight," Irish peasants were starving and dying (if they were not leaving their homes because of evictions or emmigration). What caused this ongoing stress and disruption in their lives?

If [people in a country are starving](#), is it likely - or not likely - that others living in that same country would turn away from the desperate needs of their countrymen? Explain your answer.

Would you have a different answer if the events were taking place in the 21st century (as opposed to the 19th century)? Why, or why not?

Media Stream



The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849 - by Cecil Woodham-Smith

Image online, courtesy the [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/The-Great-Hunger-Ireland-1845-1849-by-Cecil-Woodham-Smith>



Penniless People and Food Riots in Dungarvan

Image and article, referenced above, online courtesy Steve Taylor via the Vassar College website.

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