



0. BRITAIN CREATES AN IRISH MARTYR - Story Preface

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This engraving, from the late 19th century, depicts an artistic impression of the arrest of Wolfe Tone. By these actions, and the subsequent court martial (and death) of Wolfe Tone, the British created an Irish martyr. Engraving by an unknown artist.

During his trial, Wolfe Tone spoke more for Ireland than for himself. Hereafter are memorable quotes which his son included in Tone's book:

*...From my earliest youth, I have regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain, as the curse of the Irish nation; and felt convinced, that, whilst it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy...*

*That Ireland was not able, of herself, to throw off the yoke, I knew. I therefore sought for aid, wherever it was to be found...I remained faithful to what I thought the cause of my country, and sought in the French Republic an ally, to rescue three million of my countrymen...*

The court stopped Tone to tell him his comments were not relevant to the charge against him.

Tone asked for permission to address "the mode of punishment." He wanted to be shot—in respect for the French uniform he wore—not hanged as a traitor. Tone's bitter son describes the response from Cornwallis:

*...Lord Cornwallis refused the last demand of my father, and he was sentenced to die the death of a traitor, in 48 hours, on the 12th day of November. This cruelty he had foreseen: for England, from the days of Lewellyn of Wales, and Wallace of Scotland, to those of Tone and Napoleon, has never shown mercy or generosity to a fallen enemy.*

Fearing he would hang as a traitor on the 12th of November, Wolfe Tone slit his own throat with a penknife the evening before. The knife missed his carotid artery, but Tone was mortally wounded. He could not be moved.

Before he attempted suicide, he wrote his final letters—to the French government and to his wife. He lingered, in agony, for one week. He refused to see anyone. Legend has it that moments before his death, a surgeon told him not to move at all, lest he die. Thanking the surgeon for those words, Tone moved his head. He died (the link depicts his death mask) immediately.

With Tone's death, Cornwallis had created a martyr. Although Britain crushed the 1798 uprising, dissolved the Irish Parliament and made Ireland part of Great Britain only three years later, Tone became the "father of Irish Republicanism." He was buried in County Kildare, but his grave (scroll to the end of this link) remained unmarked for years.

Five decades later, Ireland endured a crisis of massive proportions. To this day, scholars argue that "The Great Hunger," which followed the potato-crop failure, could have been avoided. Instead, the country of eight million lost about one million people to death and another million (or more) to a mass exodus.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BRITAIN-CREATES-AN-IRISH-MARTYR-Wind-that-Shakes-the-Barley>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BRITAIN-CREATES-AN-IRISH-MARTYR-Wind-that-Shakes-the-Barley>

## Media Stream



### Wolfe Tone's Death Mask

Image online, courtesy the [BBC](#) website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Wolfe-Tone-s-Death-Mask>