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Some of the evicted with no place to go and little to eat, tried to shelter their families by living in holes dug in the Irish bog. Others constructed scalpeen inside abandoned, roofless houses.

William Bennett, who made a six-week visit to Ireland in 1847, writes:

Many of the cabins were holes in the bog, covered with a layer of turves, and not distinguishable as human habitations from the surrounding moor, until close down upon them. The bare sod was about the best material of which any of them were constructed. Doorways, not doors, were usually provided at both sides of the bettermost - back and front - to take advantage of the way of the wind. Windows and chimneys, I think, had no existence. (William Bennett, *Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland*, 1847, page 25.)

What did Bennett find inside such a cabin? Children so pathetic it made Bennett's hand tremble as he wrote his account.

My hand trembles while I write. The scenes of human misery and degradation we witnessed still haunt my imagination, with the vividness and power of some horrid and tyrannous delusion, rather than the features of a sober reality. We entered a cabin.

Stretched in one dark corner, scarcely visible, from the smoke and rags that covered them, were three children huddled together, lying there because they were too weak to rise, pale and ghastly, their little limbs-on removing a portion of the filthy covering - perfectly emaciated, eyes sunk, voice gone, and evidently in the last stage of actual starvation. Crouched over the turf embers was another form, wild and all but naked, scarcely human in appearance. It stirred not, nor noticed us. (Bennett, page 26.)

Who cared for these suffering children?

On some straw, soddened upon the ground, moaning piteously, was a shriveled old woman, imploring us to give her something, - baring her limbs partly, to show how the skin hung loose from the bones, as soon as she attracted our attention. Above her, on something like a ledge, was a young woman, with sunken cheeks, - a mother I have no doubt, - who scarcely raised her eyes in answer to our enquiries, but pressed her hand upon her forehead, with a look of unutterable anguish and despair. (Bennett, page 27.)

Unfortunately, Bennett's first-hand account doesn't describe an isolated event.

Other primary sources depict many families enduring the same kind of horror. Whole villages of healthy peasants were turned into evicted, starving, rag-clad people for whom death became a relief.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/LIVING-IN-BOG-HOVELS-Wind-that-Shakes-the-Barley>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/LIVING-IN-BOG-HOVELS-Wind-that-Shakes-the-Barley>

Media Stream



GOVERNMENT SALE OF SUGAR CORN, AT CORK.—(FROM A SKETCH BY MR. BARRETT.)

Potato Famine - Feeding Desperate People

Image, and quoted passage, from "Indian Corn in Cork," an article from the April 4, 1846 edition of *The Illustrated London News*. Online via Vassar College.

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SKETCH IN A HOGUE, AT FAHSET'S QUAY, KERRY.—THE WIDOW COSSOR AND HER DYING CHILD.

Potato Famine - Lack of Food and Shelter

Image and caption from "Conditions of Ireland: Illustrations of the New Poor-Law," an article from the January 19, 1850 issue of *The Illustrated London News*. Online via County Clare Library.

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WIFE OF THOMAS FERRIS, NEAR A BOG IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Potato Famine - What is a Scalp?

Image, and quoted passage, from "Conditions of Ireland: Illustrations of the New Poor-Law," a lengthy [article](#) from the December 29, 1849 issue of *The Illustrated London News*.

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SCALPEEN.

Potato Famine - What is a Scalpeen?

Image, and quoted passage, from "Conditions of Ireland: Illustrations of the New Poor-Law," an article from the December 15, 1849 issue of *The Illustrated London News*.

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