

7.1 Our Trip to Ireland

INTRODUCTION:

Material in this package can be used in self-contained classrooms, interdisciplinary team-based programs, or departmentalized social studies classes, grades 4-8. It offers a menu, rather than a prescription. Teachers should organize lessons and projects based on the time constraints and performance of their students. For example, teachers may choose to present material in a “read aloud” format where teachers read difficult passages to classes or selected students can receive reading passages in advance so they can practice and read or perform them in class. These activities address New York State Language Arts Learning Standards for listening skills. The complexity of the readings and activities are modeled on the well known elementary/middle school history magazines *Cobblestone* and *Calliope*. Students in Cecelia Goodman’s 5th grade class at P. 197 in Brooklyn, Rachel Gaglione’s middle school classes at IS 119 in Queens, Jennie Chacko’s middle school classes at IS 292 in Brooklyn, and Lynda Costello and Stephanie Hunte’s middle school classes in Uniondale, New York, helped field test the package. In review sessions, students were most interested in changes in Ireland during the last 200 years, the causes of famine and whether they are still a threat today, and how people managed to survive under horrible circumstances. Jewella Lynch, a teacher in the Roosevelt school district, Jennifer Debler, a teacher in the Baldwin school district, and James Hughes, an assistant teacher in the Uniondale school district also reviewed the material in their classes.

TOPIC VII: The Amazing Potato and the History of Ireland

TITLE: Ireland is a Modern Country

INTERDISCIPLINARY MIDDLE GRADES (4-8) PACKAGE

AIM 7.1: What is life like in Ireland today?

NYSLS: Social Studies 2: World History. Geography.

PI:

- Students will examine a chart with information about life in Ireland and the United States and use the information to compare and contrast the two countries.
- Students will gather information from maps of Ireland, Europe, the North Atlantic and a weather map and demonstrate their ability to use find information on maps.
- Students will read and discuss a travel guide to contemporary Ireland, draw conclusions about life in Ireland today and compare and contrast Ireland today with Ireland in the past.

ASSESSMENT:

- Students will demonstrate their ability to use find information on maps.
- Students will demonstrate their ability to read a story, draw conclusions and make comparison.

DO NOW ACTIVITY: Locate Ireland on a world map.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY: A nickname for Ireland is the Emerald Isle. What does this nickname tell us about Ireland?

TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY: Students will brainstorm a list of facts about Ireland using information obtained from maps.

Map 1 - The North Atlantic

Map 2- Europe

7.1 Our Trip to Ireland

Map 3- Weather Map

ACTIVITY:

Examine the chart “Comparing Ireland and the United States Today” and discuss ways that contemporary Ireland and the United States are similar and different.

Read and discuss “Our Trip to Ireland”. Key questions include:

Where is Ireland located? How has Ireland changed in recent years? What evidence is there that Irish civilization is very old? What evidence is there of Ireland’s religious traditions? Why was the potato famine a major event in Irish history? How do we heat our homes in the United States? How do they heat homes in parts of Ireland?

SUMMARY QUESTION: How is Ireland today most like the United States? How is Ireland today most different from the United States?

REFLECTION: The Great Irish Famine occurred from 1845-1852. Ireland has changed very much since then. Today it is a modern industrial country and a member of the European Economic Community. It has many of the same advantages and problems as the United States. This lesson is designed to both introduce students to Ireland today and to its history. If a classroom has internet access, pictures that accompany this story are available on the world wide web at http://people2.hofstra.edu/faculty/maureen_o_murphy.

HOMEWORK: Draw a picture, create a diorama or design a montage illustrating part of the story “Our Trip to Ireland”.

APPLICATION: Discuss other countries students or members of their families have visited or lived in. How are they most like the United States? How are they most different from the United States?

PROJECTS:

- Use reference material from the library or the internet to write reports on the history, physical geography, or people of Ireland.
- Write a play or a puppet show using the story “Our Trip to Ireland.”

Comparing Ireland and the United States Today

	Ireland	United States
Capital	Dublin	Washington, DC
Government	Parliamentary democracy	Presidential democracy
Population	3,632,944 (est., 1999)	272,639,608 (est., 1999)
Population density	132.6 per square mile	73.7 per square mile
Languages	English is in general use. Irish (Gaelic) mainly spoken along the west coast.	Predominately English. Sizeable Spanish-speaking minority.
Religions	Roman Catholic, 92%; Anglican, 3%; Other, 4%; None, 1%.	Protestant, 56%; Roman Catholic, 28%; Other, 6%; None, 10%.
Literacy (15 and over)	98%	97%
Voting	18 years of age	18 years of age
Area (size)	27,136 square miles	3,536,341 square miles
Climate	Temperate maritime	Mostly temperate with tropical and arctic regions
Land	Island; mostly level to rolling hills	Spans North American continent; vast central plain; mountains in west; hills and low mountains in east
Economy	agriculture, 8.5%; industry, 38.3%; services, 53.2% (1995).	agriculture, 2%; industry, 23%; services, 75% (1998).
Unemployment rate	11.8% (1997)	4.5% (1998)
5 Leading Industries	food products, brewing, textiles, clothing, chemicals	petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications
Currency	1 Irish pound £ = \$1.39 U.S.	1 U.S. dollar = .72 Irish £
Per capita income	\$18,600 (1998)	\$31,500 (1998)
Paved roads	54,053 miles	2,423,987 miles

1- Based on the information in this chart, how are Ireland and the United States similar?

2- Based on the information in this chart, how are Ireland and the United States different?

3- After reading the story “Our Trip to Ireland” and examining the pictures, discuss between 3 and 5 more ways that Ireland and the United States are either similar or different.

Our Trip to Ireland

by Alan and Judi Singer

Instructions: Read the story “Our Trip to Ireland” and answer questions 1-7.

- 1- Where is Ireland located?
- 2- How has Ireland changed in recent years?
- 3- What evidence is there that Irish civilization is very old?
- 4- What evidence is there of Ireland’s religious traditions?
- 5- Why was the potato famine a major event in Irish history?
- 6- How is life in Ireland similar to life in the United States?
- 7- How is life in Ireland different from life in the United States?

Word Bank: Irish vocabulary words

dhia dhuit - hello

seoinini - off-islanders

sceach- a lone tree, a mythical symbol

slan - good-bye

“*Dhia dhuit* (hello).”

My name is Alan Singer. And my name is Judi Singer. In June, 1999, we spent two weeks traveling in Ireland. This is the story of our trip.

We met our friend Professor Maureen Murphy at Kennedy Airport in New York City. Maureen is an expert on Irish history and literature. She has lived and studied in Ireland and speaks the Irish language. She joined us for our first week in Ireland.

The flight from New York to Ireland takes over six hours. We flew east toward the sunrise, so the time in Ireland was five hours ahead of the time in New York (map 1 - North Atlantic). We left New York about midnight, but six hours later when we arrived in Ireland it was already afternoon.

The Republic of Ireland is located on an island in the Atlantic Ocean, off of the western coast of the continent of Europe (map 2 - Europe). Most of the island is part of the Republic, but a small section in the north is part of another country, the United Kingdom (also called Great Britain). The entire island is two-thirds the size of New York State and the population of the Republic (3.6 million people) is about half the population of New York City. The people there speak both Irish and English. Most are Roman Catholic and nearly everyone is literate.

At one time Ireland was among the most densely populated places in the world, but currently it is one of the least densely populated countries of Europe. In the past it was considered a poor country, but today Ireland is part of the European Economic Community and the country is prosperous. Its money is called the punt or Irish pound. One punt is worth about \$1.35 in United States money.

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If you look at a map of the North Atlantic, you will see that Ireland is located considerably north of New York State (map 1). It is approximately 2,000 miles due east of Newfoundland, Canada. However, the climate in Ireland is warmer than expected because Gulf Stream ocean currents from the Caribbean Sea moderate the temperature. It rarely gets either as warm or as cold as in New York and palm trees can grow on city streets (picture 1). While we were in Ireland, the temperature was about ten degrees cooler than in New York City, and it rained part of the time nearly every day (map 3- weather map). Because of its high level of rainfall, Ireland is very green, and its nickname is the "Emerald Isle."

The island of Ireland is nearly 300 miles from north to south and 170 miles from east to west (map 4 - Ireland). It has a 2,000 mile long coastline and no place on the island is more than seventy miles from the sea. Its coastal areas tend to be hilly while its central regions are flat. Its highest mountains are about the same height as the Catskill Mountains in southern New York State.

The three of us arrived in Dublin, the capital of Ireland, where we were met by our friend, Sister Margaret MacCurtain (picture 2). Margaret is an historian, a teacher and a Dominican nun. For the first few days, Margaret and Maureen acted as our guide (picture 3).

We spent the first two days of our trip in Dublin. Dublin is both an old and a new city. It is located on the east coast of Ireland where the Liffey River enters the Irish Sea (pictures 4a-b/ map 5 - Dublin).

The recorded history of Ireland goes back much further than the written history of the United States. An early settlement on the site of Dublin appears on an ancient Roman map. Later, Viking sailors built a small trading post on the river. In the 1100s, invaders from England made Dublin their stronghold (picture 5).

As you walk through the streets of Dublin or along the Liffey River today, you see buildings that date from the late 1700s and early 1800s. Dublin is famous for its brightly painted doors. There are also many new buildings and a railway system called the DART. There was a lot of construction going on in the city during our visit (pictures 6a-i).

In Dublin, we visited Trinity College, the National Library, the National Art Gallery, and the National Museum. We especially liked walking through St. Stephen's Green, a park in the center of the city. Dublin's parks and public places have a number of statues. In St. Stephen's Green there was a monument to people who died during the Great Irish Famine over one hundred and fifty years ago (pictures 7a-e). There was also a famine memorial along the river (pictures 8a-c). Other statues

celebrated national leaders, writers, and fictional characters like the fabled seafood vendor Molly Malone (pictures 9a-d).

At Trinity College we saw an exhibit of old Bibles that date from the 7th century. They were hand lettered and illustrated by Irish monks. The most famous ones are known as the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow (pictures 10a-c). The National Museum has major exhibits on the ancient history of Ireland and the 1916 uprising that led to Irish independence from the United Kingdom (Great Britain). It even has a full size model of a Viking boat that was built using traditional tools.

While staying in Dublin, we visited a former Roman Catholic monastery in Glendalough, a small village south of the city. The site has buildings that date from the tenth century. The solid stone walls of the building are still standing as reminders of the distant past (picture 11).

For us, the best part of Dublin and Ireland was the people we met. The National Library's Educational Officer, Noel Kissane, gave us a tour of the building. Maureen's friends, Andre and Dunlah, welcomed us to their home for dinner. While they normally speak Irish at home with their family, they spoke English during our visit so we would feel included (picture 12).

After Dublin, Margaret drove the four of us across the width of Ireland to the Atlantic coast. It was a trip of about 120 miles or the length of Long Island. We were both a little nervous about driving in Ireland because the cars are riding on the opposite side of the road from the direction they travel in the United States. We know that in Great Britain and in parts of the Caribbean traffic also flows this way.

Travel in Ireland is slower than in New York because there are few highways. Trucks, cars, buses and farm vehicles share two lane roads and some of the roads were very narrow (map 4- Ireland). At one point, we took a ferry across the Shannon River to get to the town of Kilrush in Co. Clare (pictures 13a-c).

In Kilrush, we visited a local history museum that had an exhibit on battles between tenant farmers and landlords over control of the farmland of Ireland. We also spoke with a local baker who gave us a tour of his shop. The Considine Bakery was started by his family in 1847 to help supply bread to people whose potato crop had failed during the Great Irish Famine. He showed us bars on windows that were put there because bakers feared that hungry people would break into the bakery to steal loaves of bread (pictures 14a-b).

The next day we visited the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher. The Burren is a plateau overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The land is so rocky that it is difficult to grow

crops here, though tiny, brightly colored flowers make their way through cracks in the rocks (pictures 15a-e).

Farmers tried to clear the land of rocks by building long, low, stone walls. They planted potatoes in mounds of soil laid out in rows and fertilized with kelp from the sea. Life in the Burren is so harsh that a surveyor once described it as “savage land, yielding neither water enough to drown a man, nor a tree to hang him, nor soil to bury.” The most strikingly beautiful part of the Burren are the Cliffs of Moher. At their highest, they tower over 600 feet above the Atlantic Ocean. Below, waves pound on the rocky shore (picture 16).

While we traveled around Ireland it seemed that Maureen and Margaret knew people everywhere. After touring the Burren, we visited Maureen’s old friends, the Mac Namara family, on their farm, and we were invited to a traditional Irish dinner of roasted lamb and potatoes (pictures 17).

After County Clare, Maureen and Margaret returned to Dublin and we continued to travel on our own. We took a small eight seat airplane to the island of Inishmaan in the Aran Islands, a chain of small islands in the Atlantic Ocean near the city of Galway (map 6- Aran Islands). The entire population of Inishmaan is less than 150 people. Its two-classroom elementary school has only sixteen students between the ages of four and fifteen.

Inishmaan was a place of incredible beauty and we went for many long, quiet walks. Because we were so far north and it was the middle of June, it did not get dark until almost eleven o'clock at night. At times the sky was very bright and it seemed as if we could see forever. However, when heavy clouds and fog rolled in off the sea, it was so overcast that we could not even see to the next island.

The entire island is criss-crossed by low stone walls that divide the land into small plots that are used for grazing cows. Some of the plots were covered by a lush coating of green grass dotted with tiny flowers and some seemed to be entirely a sheet of rock. The island still has many old stone buildings and impressive stone forts that were first built over one thousand years ago (pictures 18a-h). On Inishmaan we saw our first potato fields (pictures 19a-c).

Most of the people of Inishmaan are native-speakers of Irish, though they were always willing to speak English with *seoinini* (off-islanders). Ireland requires that all public school teachers speak both Irish and English. While we were on the island a group of about eighty college students studying to become teachers were attending an institute to improve their ability to speak Irish. They were very friendly and glad

to discuss schools in the United States and Ireland. They also invited us to join them in a game of basketball and at a pub to listen to Irish music and singing.

When we were ready to leave Inishmaan the entire island was blanketed by a heavy fog. We decided to take a ferry boat, and that was another adventure. We gritted our teeth and closed our eyes as waves and a storm tossed the small boat around. We were glad when we finally docked on the mainland after a half hour trip that seemed much longer.

During the next week we traveled by car and bicycle around the Irish countryside. We saw cows, goats, and sheep everywhere. We visited a modern mushroom farm where the mushrooms were growing inside giant humidified plastic tents. We also saw people using traditional tools to cut peat in the bog. A bog is the remains of a shallow lake filled in with partly decomposed vegetation. A foot or two under the top soil, the compressed plant matter has been laying for thousands of years, since the last ice age. For centuries it has been cut into rectangular blocks, laid out to dry in the sun, stored, and used instead of wood or coal as a fuel in a fireplace or stove (pictures 20a-j).

Highpoints of our trip included the town of Strokestown where we visited a museum that teaches about the Great Irish Famine (picture 21). At Sligo we visited a long abandoned famine graveyard. A bronze statue of a *Faoin Sceach* from the graveyard became the symbol for this Great Irish Famine project. In Ireland, the lone tree or *sceach* is a symbol from early Celtic mythology. The boulder stones surrounding its base represent ancient burial customs. The *sceach* is also a famine symbol because trees like these often took root in stone houses that were abandoned when people died or emigrated (pictures 22a-).

In Athlone, we saw the remains of a workhouse from the era of the famine and we biked along the banks of the Shannon River (pictures 23a-f). In Tullamore, we biked on the towpath of the Grand Canal that connects the Shannon River and the west coast with Dublin and the east coast. The canal was first opened in the 1790s (pictures 24a-d).

One of the most beautiful parts of Ireland, and perhaps the entire world, is the Ring of Kerry. It is a hundred mile long loop on the Iveragh Peninsula in southwestern Ireland. We started in Killarney at a national park with sparkling lakes, bicycle and hiking paths, mountains with peaks lost in the clouds, a working farm with buildings and tools from the early 1900s, and a fancy country estate that was built in the early 1800s. After Killarney we drove through mountain passes and along cliffs overlooking the ocean. We stopped at a museum that honors Daniel

O'Connell, who is considered by many Irish to be the "father of their country."
(pictures 25a-c)

We finished our tour of the Ring of Kerry at Tralee, where we attended a performance of Siasmsa tíre, the National Folk Theatre of Ireland. Performers used traditional songs and dances to show life and work in a farming village during the summer, fall, winter, and spring seasons. In the first and last song and dance of the show, the performers pantomimed cutting peat in a bog.

After Tralee it was time to drive back to Dublin and to head home to New York. On the way we stopped for souvenirs of our trip. We bought a lot of books and posters about the history of Ireland and its people. We also purchased woolen scarves and tweed hats that will continue to remind us of the people we met and the places we visited. In Dublin, Margaret met us for one last Irish dinner. We were sorry to be leaving. The next morning, we hurried to the airport and caught our plane home.

"*Slán* (good-bye)".

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- 1- Because of Ireland's mild climate, palm trees can grow on the streets of Dublin.
- 2- Judi and Margaret at Dun Laoghaire. Dublin Bay is in the background.
- 3- (L-R) Judi Singer, Margaret MacCurtain, Alan Singer and Maureen Murphy on the Mac Namara farm in Co. Claire.
- 4- a) Downtown Dublin. Evening on the River Liffey in Dublin.
b) Dublin Bay, Dun Laoghaire. In the background on the left is James Joyce's Tower. It plays a prominent role in the opening chapter of his novel *Ulysses*.
- 5- This early map of Ireland is displayed in the National Museum. North is on the right.
- 6- a) The DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transport). Judi is sitting on the left.
b) Double-decker buses on the streets of Dublin.
c) Dublin is well known for its colorful painted doors.
d) Grafton Street "street scene" in downtown Dublin.
e) Flower seller on Grafton Street.
f) Street buskers perform on Grafton Street.
g) Campaign posters from a European Union (EU) election.
h) Working-class housing in Dublin.
i) Crossing the street. An orange construction crane is in the background.
- 7- a) Government buildings in Dublin.
b) Dublin Castle was the center of British control over Ireland. Today it is a government building.
c) The an old Protestant Church of Ireland building is now a tourist office.
d) A famine memorial in St. Stephen's Green.
e) A statue commemorating nuns who aided refugees following World War II.
- 8- a-c) A famine memorial along the River Liffey.
- 9- a) James Connolly, a labor union official, was a leader of the Easter 1916 Uprising. Connolly was executed because of his involvement.
b) A statue of James Joyce in front of one of his favorite coffee houses.
c) The Amnesty International Torch of Peace.
d) A song about Molly Malone celebrates Dublin's street vendors.
- 10- a) The central court at Trinity College Dublin.
b) A wedding party at Trinity College.
c) An illustration from the Book of Kells.
- 11- Maureen rubs grass on a tombstone to make it possible to read the imprint.
- 12- Dinner at Andre and Dunlavy's house.

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- 13- a) Shannon River ferry.
b) Colorful shops and houses in Kilrush, Co. Claire.
c) A memorial for rebels who died in an 1867 revolt against British rule.
- 14- a) Considine's, a famine-era bakery.
b) The bakery was founded in 1847.
- 15- a) Margaret, Judi and Maureen on a burren hillside.
b) Alan and Judi on a hillside in the Burren.
c) A burren stone wall. Stone wall design varies from region to region.
d) Many evicted families ended up living in roadside ditches.
e) Potatoes were planted in above ground "lazy bed" on hillsides. The ridges are still visible.
- 16- The Cliffs of Mohr point toward the Atlantic Ocean.
- 17- A lake on the Mac Namara farm.
- 18- a) Judi prepares to board the plane to Inishmaan.
b) Judi and Alan flew to the Aran islands aboard this plane.
c) On Inishmaan the land is divided into a checkerboard of small plots.
d) An old stone hut now used for storage.
e) A close-up of Judi with an old stone hut with a thatched roof.
f) The harsh coast line of Inishmaan.
- Scenes from Inishmaan on the Aran Islands.
b) Potato plants in bloom. The blight kills the potato fungus.
- 19- a) Alan experiments digging peat.
b) A traditional weaver near Galway.
c) An old stone village. Some of the buildings are still being used by farmers.
d) Baby goats.
e) A mushroom farm near Athlone on the Shannon River.
f) Peat being cut, dried, gathered and stored.
- 20- The Strokestown Manor in Roscommon.
- 21- Famine Graveyard in Sligo.
- 22- a) Scenes from Athlone along the Shannon River. The bridge was built in 1844.
b) The famine-era workhouse in Athlone.
- 23- The Grand Canal near Tullamore.
- 24- The Ring of Kerry and Killarney National Park.

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- 2- Judi and Margaret at Dun Laoghaire. Dublin Bay is in the background.
- 3- (L-R) Judi Singer, Margaret MacCurtain, Alan Singer and Maureen Murphy on the Mac Namara farm in Co. Claire.
- 4- a) Downtown Dublin. Evening on the River Liffey in Dublin.
4b) Dublin is well known for its colorful painted doors.
4c) Dublin Bay, Dun Laoghaire. In the background on the left is James Joyce's Tower. It plays a prominent role in the opening chapter of his novel *Ulysses*.
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- 6- a) The DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transport). Judi is sitting on the left.
6b) Double-decker buses on the streets of Dublin.
6c) Campaign posters from a European Union (EU) election.
6d) Grafton Street "street scenes" in downtown Dublin.
6e) Working-class housing in Dublin.
6f) Crossing the street. An orange construction crane is in the background.
- 7- a) The central square at Trinity College, Dublin.
7b) A wedding party outside the Trinity College Chapel.
7c) Government buildings in Dublin.
7d) The old Anglican Church of Ireland. It is now a tourist office.
7e) Dublin Castle was the center of British control over Ireland. Today it is a government building.
7f) A famine memorial in St. Stephen's Green.
7g) A statue commemorating nuns who aided refugees following World War II.
7h) A famine memorial along the River Liffey.
7i) James Connolly, a labor union official, was a leader of the Easter 1916 Uprising. Connolly was executed because of his involvement.
7j) A song about Molly Malone celebrates Dublin's street vendors.
7k) A statue of James Joyce in front of one of his favorite coffee houses.
7l) The Amnesty International Torch of Peace.

8- Illustrations from the Book of Kells.

9- a) “The Eviction” by Erskine Nicol, 1853.

9b) The pre-famine Irish countryside.

9c) A painting celebrating the opening of the Grand Canal in the 1790s.

9d) A copy of the proclamation declaring Irish independence in 1916.

10- a) Maureen rubs grass on a tombstone to make it possible to read the imprint.

10b) Scenes from St. Kevin’s Monastery in Glendalough.

11- Dinner at Andre and Dunlah’s house.

12- a) Shannon River ferry.

12b) Colorful shops and houses in Kilrush.

12c) A memorial for rebels who died in an 1867 revolt against British rule.

13- a) Considine’s, a famine-era bakery.

13b) Exhibits from the Kilrush museum teach about the Great Irish Famine.

14- a) Alan and Judi on a hillside in the Burren.

14b) Scenes from the Burren.

14c) Famine era ruins at Moveen. These stone buildings were featured in a drawing in the Illustrated London News in 1847.

14d) Stone wall design varies from region to region.

14e) Many evicted families ended up living in roadside ditches.

14f) Potatoes were planted in “lazy bed” on hillsides.

15- The Cliffs of Mohr point toward the Atlantic Ocean.

16- A lake on the Mac Namara farm.

17- Judi and Alan flew to the Aran islands aboard this plane.

18- a) Scenes from Inishmaan on the Aran Islands.

18b) Potato plants in bloom. The blue powder kills the potato fungus.

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- 19- a) Alan experiments digging peat.
- 19b) A traditional weaver near Galway.
- 19c) An old stone village. Some of the buildings are still being used by farmers.
- 19d) Baby goats.
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