

grade level 4-6  
Famine curriculum

Lesson aim: To see that the lesson in "Mrs. Fitzgerald and the Milk" and "A Meal for a Stranger" is a very, very old one.

New York State Standard: Language Arts 2. Students will read a variety of literature of different genre.

Historical Background: This very old poem from the thirteen century manuscript the Leabhar Breac (LAUW-er BRACK) which means "speckled book" gives the reader some idea of how early the custom of hospitality was articulated in Irish literature.

Lesson:

1. Read "Mrs. Fitzgerald and the Milk" and "A Meal for a Stranger."  
What is the lesson in each story?

2. Now read this very, very old prayer in the form of a poem. What does the speaker in the poem promise God? What does the poem say we should do? Why? Does this sound like the golden rule? (Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.) How do other cultures express this idea?

#### HOSPITALITY IN ANCIENT IRELAND

Oh King of stars!  
Whether my house be dark or bright,  
Never shall it be closed against any one,  
Lest Christ close His house against me.

If there be a guest in your house  
And you conceal aught from him,  
'Tis not the guest that will be without it,  
But Jesus, Mary's Son.

Translated by Kuno Meyer  
from the Leabhar Breac (Speckled Book)  
13th century

3. Even today in the Irish countryside, a candle is lit and placed in the window on Christmas Eve to show Mary that she and Jesus would be welcome in that house. Do we have any customs that welcome strangers?