

Grade level: 6-8  
Famine curriculum

Lesson aim: Students will map the Irish in New York City in 1855 by ward.

New York State Standard: 1. History of the United States and New York. Students will complete well-documented and historically accurate case studies about individuals and groups who represent different ethnic, national and religious groups. 3. Geography. Students will map information about people, places and environments.

Historical background: In Hasia Dinar's essay, "The Most Irish City in the Union" in The New York Irish, she places the number of Irish who arrived in New York between 1847-1851 at 848,000 ( of a total of 1.8 million emigrants). While many of the Irish only passed through New York on their way to other American cities, New York became America's most Irish city. "Between 1845-1851 New York housed 12 percent of America's Irish population. The U.S. census of 1850 counted 133,730 people (26% of the city's total population) born in Ireland, while the New York State census of 1855 reported 175,735 (27.9 of the city's population) born there (Bayor 91).

Lesson:

1. In 1855, New York City was just Manhattan. Look at Table A2 which lists the number and percent of Irish living in each ward of the city in 1855 according to the 1855 New York State Census. Make a chart of the wards that rank the percentages from highest to lowest. Which three city wards had the highest percentage of Irish-born residents? Where were those wards?
2. On your chart, assign a color code to the wards with more than 40% Irish-born residents, more than 35% Irish-born residents, more than 30% Irish residents, and more than 25% Irish-born residents.
3. On a map of New York for 1855 that shows the city wards, fill in the wards according to your color code. What conclusions can you draw about where in New York the Irish-born settled?
4. Using the New York State 1855 Census data, find out what the population of Irish-born residents of your nearest city. Where did they live? Can you trace the settlement of the Irish on city maps of the time?