

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 16 Word Count: 1,249

Book Summary

The Great Hunger informs readers about the famine that swept across Ireland during the mid-1800s. Potato blight left poor tenant farmers with nothing to feed their families, but they were still forced to work the land and export grain to their landlords in Britain. Over the course of sixteen grueling years, Ireland's population dropped from over 8.5 million to 5 million. People died from starvation and disease, and millions more emigrated to the United States for the chance of a better life. Photographs, illustrations, and maps support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Ask and answer questions to understand text
- Understand and identify cause-and-effect relationships
- Identify irregular verbs
- Identify and use homophones

Materials

Green text indicates resources are available on the website.

- Book—**The Great Hunger** (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- A world map
- **KWLS / ask and answer questions, cause and effect, irregular verbs, homophones worksheets**
- **Discussion cards**



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on an interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if the books are reused.)

Vocabulary

*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on **VocabularyA-Z.com**.

- **Content words:**
 Story critical: **blight** (n.), **decay** (n.), **emigrants** (n.), **famine** (n.), **starvation** (n.), **tenant** (n.)
 Enrichment: **homeland** (n.), **immigrants** (n.), **Ireland** (n.), **landlords** (n.), **population** (n.), **workhouse** (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Create a KWLS chart on the board, with one letter as the heading of each of the four sections. Introduce and explain the **KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet**. Review or explain that the **K** stands for knowledge we know, the **W** stands for information we want to know, the **L** stands for the knowledge we learned, and the **S** stands for what we still want to know about the topic.

- Ask volunteers to share what they know about Ireland. Write *Ireland* on the board, and show students where the country is located on a map. Ask leading questions if necessary, such as what other countries are nearby, what ocean surrounds it, and what holiday is celebrated in the United States to recognize Ireland. As students share their prior knowledge, fill in the first row (K) on the board with information students already know about the topic. (There may be a very limited amount of information offered by students at this time, depending on their prior knowledge.) Have students complete the same section of their [KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet](#).
- Ask students what they would like to know about Ireland. Have them fill in the second row (W) of their worksheet. Write their questions on the class chart.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name, illustrator's name).
- Preview the table of contents on page 3. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of the book. Ask students what they expect to read about in the book, on the basis of what they see in the table of contents. (Accept all answers that students can justify.)

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Ask and answer questions**

- Discuss with students how having prior knowledge about the topic, and asking and answering questions while reading, can help readers understand and remember the information in a book.
- Direct students to the table of contents. After previewing the table of contents, use it to model asking questions.
Think-aloud: I can use the table of contents to think of questions I would like to have answered about Ireland and the Great Hunger. For example, the third section is titled "A Horrible Discovery." That makes me think something really awful happened in Ireland. Since the title of this book is The Great Hunger, I'm wondering if the horrible discovery had something to do with food in Ireland. I'll have to read the book to find out. I'll write my question on the chart.
- Have students look at the other section titles. Have them write any questions they have, on the basis of the covers and table of contents in the W section of their KWLS worksheet.
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at the photographs, illustrations, and maps. Invite students to read through the glossary. Have them add any additional questions they might have on their [KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet](#). Invite students to share their questions aloud. Write shared questions on the class chart.
- Explain that sometimes readers don't know anything about a topic before they read a book. Reassure students that it's acceptable to have a limited amount of information on the K section of their worksheets at this point. Explain to them that when they continue reading and filling out the worksheet, it will become evident how much more they know about the subject after reading the book.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Cause and effect**

- Review or explain that a *cause* is *an event that makes something happen*, and the *effect* is *what happens because of, or as a result of, the event*. Create a two-column chart on the board with the headings *Cause* and *Effect*. Write the following sentence on the board under the *Cause* heading: *I study for a test.*

- Model identifying a series of cause-and-effect relationships.
Think-aloud: *If I study hard for a test, I might get a good grade on the test. If I get a good grade on the test, someone in my family might want to reward me. If they want to reward me, I may be able to have dinner at my favorite restaurant. Sometimes a cause and its effect cause other events to happen.*
- Retell the series of cause-and-effect relationships about the good grade on the test. Ask students to identify the causes and effects. Write each cause and its effect on the chart on the board. When finished, point out how each cause-and-effect relationship leads to other cause-and-effect relationships.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- As students preview the book, ask them to talk about what they see in the photographs, illustrations, and maps. Reinforce the vocabulary words they will encounter in the text.
- Write the following vocabulary words on the board: *blight*, *famine*, and *starvation*. Remind students that they can look for context clues in the text, photographs, and illustrations to help them define an unfamiliar word.
- Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to locate a word's meaning. Have a volunteer read the definition for *blight* in the glossary. Have students follow along on page 14 as you read the sentence in which the word *blight* is found, to confirm the meaning of the word.
- Point to the word *blight* on the board and repeat the pronunciation. Ask students to look at the illustration on page 7, and have volunteers use the word *blight* in their own sentence to tell about what they see.
- Have a volunteer read the definition for *famine* in the glossary. Have students follow along on page 15 as you read the sentence in which the word *famine* is found to confirm the meaning of the word. Point to the word *famine* on the board and repeat the pronunciation. Have students look at the illustration on page 8 and use the word *famine* in a sentence of their own to tell about what they see.
- Have a volunteer read the definition for *starvation* in the glossary. Have students follow along on page 10 as you read the sentence in which the word *starvation* is found to confirm the meaning of the word. Point to the word *starvation* on the board and repeat the pronunciation. Have students look at the illustration on page 11 and use the word *starvation* in a sentence of their own to tell about what they see.

Set the Purpose

- Have students think about what they already know about Ireland and the Great Hunger as they read the book to find answers to their questions. Remind them to write what they learned as they read in the *L* section of their KWLS worksheet.


During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 7. Remind them to look for information about Ireland and the Great Hunger that will answer questions on their KWLS worksheet. Encourage students who finish before everyone else to go back and reread.
- When students have finished reading, have them circle any questions on their KWLS worksheet that were answered and write any new questions that were generated.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Great Hunger

- Model answering a question and filling in the third section (L) of the KWLS chart.
Think-aloud: I wanted to know if the horrible discovery had something to do with food in Ireland. I found out that in 1845 farmers went to their fields and smelled decay in the air. I read that something had happened during the night, and that their crop of potatoes had been destroyed. I know that farmers grew the potatoes to feed their families, which makes me wonder how the families survived without food. I also wonder if they were able to eat the wheat or other grains they grew on their land for their landlords. I will write these new questions on my chart. Encourage the students to write different questions on their own chart.
 - Have students write answers to the questions they circled in the L section of their KWLS worksheet. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read the book. Record shared responses on the class KWLS chart.
 - **Check for understanding:** Have students read pages 8 and 9. Have them write any answers they found while reading in the L section of their KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet and additional questions they raised in the W section. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read pages 8 and 9. Write shared responses on the class KWLS chart.
 - Create a cause-and-effect chain on the board. Write *potato crops failed in Ireland in 1845* under the *Cause* heading. Ask students to use the text and the Think-aloud discussion to identify the effect of this cause (*farmers didn't have enough food to feed their families*). Write this information on the chart under the *Effect* heading.
 - Introduce and explain the [cause-and-effect worksheet](#). Ask students to write the information from the board on their worksheet. Have them identify and write on their worksheet a cause-and-effect relationship that happened as a result of farmers not having enough food to feed their families. (Cause: *the struggling families became desperate for food*; Effect: *they sold their furniture, livestock, and clothes to buy food*.) Point out how the chain connects the first cause-and-effect relationship with the second (the effect, *farmers didn't have enough food to feed their families*, is connected to the next cause, *the struggling families became desperate for food*).
 - Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to continue to look for and write answers to their KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet questions and to identify important details in each chapter. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their worksheet as they read.
-  Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- **Think-aloud:** *I wanted to know how the families survived without food and if they were able to eat the wheat or other grains they grew on their land for their landlords. I read that families sold their livestock, furniture, and clothing to buy food. I also read that the government opened large workhouses where desperate families could live in exchange for work. I will write those answers down in my chart. I also read that more people died of diseases like typhus and cholera than of starvation. I read that, despite many pleas for help, British landowners did not allow their farmers to keep the grain that was grown in Ireland, and it was exported to other countries. This makes me wonder if people in Britain knew just how bad things were in Ireland or if they only realized the severity too late, once millions had died. I will write this question down in my chart.*

- Ask students to share questions they added to their KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet while reading, and ask them what questions were answered (or not answered) in the text. Have students write answers they found while reading in the *L* column of their worksheet.
- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading and looking for the answers while reading keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they have read.
- Remind students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this text. Brainstorm other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions. Invite students to fill in the final section (*S*) of their KWLS worksheet with information they would still like to know about Ireland and the Great Hunger.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Discuss with students the information on their cause-and-effect worksheet. Point out the last effect in the chain (*they sold their furniture, livestock, and clothes to buy food*). Have students reread page 10 to identify the cause-and-effect relationship that happened as a result of so many families needing to live in the workhouses. (Cause: *with nothing left to sell, families had to move into the workhouses*; Effect: *diseases spread easily and many people died*).
- **Independent practice:** Have students complete the cause-and-effect worksheet. If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after students finish.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about a time when Ireland was overcome with hardship and how little was done by Britain to help in its time of need. Now that you know this information, do you think it is important for countries to help one another or do you think each country should fend for itself?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Irregular verbs

- Write the following sentence on the board: *The government will start public work projects.* Ask students to identify the verb and the verb tense (*start*, present). Write the words *present tense* on the board.
- Write the words *past tense* on the board. Ask a volunteer to change the tense of the sentence into the past tense. (*The government started public work projects.*) Ask students to identify what changed to make the verb tense change (add the suffix *-ed* to the verb).
- Write the word *take* on the board. Ask a volunteer to use the word in a sentence. Write the sentence on the board and circle the verb. Ask students to identify the tense of the verb (*present*).
- Have students turn to page 8. Read the first sentence from page 8 aloud: *The landlords took the farmers' grain as payment for rent.* Point out the word *took* and explain that the word is the past-tense form of the verb *take*. Invite students to explain the difference between the formation of the past tense for the words *start* and *take* (the suffix *-ed* was added to *start*; a spelling change was required for *take*).
- Explain that *took* is an example of an *irregular past-tense verb* because its past tense is formed without adding *-d* or *-ed*.
- Have students turn to page 9. Reread the page aloud, and have students identify the irregular past-tense verbs (*bought, got, became, was, took*). Invite students to identify the present-tense forms of these verbs (*buy, get, become, is, take*). Write these examples on the board under the *present tense* and *past tense* categories.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the present-tense verbs *begin, wear, and win* on the board. Have students work in pairs to create present- and past-tense sentences using these verbs. Have them share their examples aloud.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **irregular verbs worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after students finish.

Word Work: Homophones

- Have students turn to page 9. Read the following sentence aloud: *Food got more expensive, and people became desperate to find a way to earn money.* Have them circle the word *way*. Ask students to explain what the word means in this sentence (manner, mode, or fashion).
- Write the following sentence on the board: *How much do you weigh?* Circle the word *weigh*. Ask students to explain what the word means in this sentence (using a scale to find out how heavy something is).
- Ask students to identify which words in the sentences sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings (*way, weigh*). Write these words on the board. Explain to students that words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings are called *homophones*.
- Have students return to the sentence on page 9, and circle the word *find*. Ask students to explain what the word means (to come upon or discover). Write the following sentence on the board: *He was fined for driving too fast.* Circle the word *fined*. Ask students to explain what the word means (charged money as a penalty). Ask students to identify which words in the sentences sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings (*find, fined*). Write these homophones on the board. Point out that there are two other homophones in the sentence (*more, moor* and *to, two, too*).
- ✍ Have students turn to page 8 and circle all of the words that they know have homophone pairs. Have them write the homophones in the right-hand margin of the book (*where, wear; in, inn; for, fore, four; one, won; to, two, too* and *no, know*). Write these pairs on the board.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the homophones *write* and *right* on the board. Have students use each word in a sentence on a separate piece of paper. Invite them to share their sentences aloud.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [homophones worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after students finish.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have students also take home their completed KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet and explain what each column means.

Extend the Reading

Expository Writing Connection

Provide print and Internet resources for students to find out more about the history of Ireland, as well as present-day Ireland. Citing information from their research and the book, have them write a report that includes at least three paragraphs, including an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Encourage them to add illustrations, maps, or photographs to their report. Have students create their own book about Ireland, making sure that it includes a front and back cover, and illustrations or photographs. Point out that their writing should include more than just information about the Great Hunger. Have each student proofread and edit their book before submitting a final copy. Either bind each report separately or bind all of the reports together to make a class book with its own front and back cover.

Visit WritingA-Z.com for a lesson and leveled materials on expository writing.

Social Studies Connection

Create a forum for discussion about the Great Hunger of Ireland. Have students bring their research notes and book to the conversation, so that they can back up their opinions with facts. Ask students to share what they think Britain's responsibility was, as the richest nation in the world. Ask volunteers to share new information about the country's recovery from the Great Hunger and Irish emigration. Discuss how learning about culture and keeping traditions is an important way for people of Irish descent to honor their family history, even if they don't live in Ireland.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently ask relevant questions about a topic prior to and during reading; locate answers to their questions and write them on a worksheet
- understand and identify cause-and-effect relationships in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet
- correctly identify and understand the formation of past-tense irregular verbs during discussion and on a worksheet
- accurately identify and understand the use of homophones during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**