

# Escape to Hope

The powerful story of a boy who survived the Great Irish Famine

## About the Story

**Lexile:** 940L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

**Learning Objective:** to explore key ideas and details in a narrative nonfiction article

**Key Skills:** author's craft, cause and effect, compare and contrast, key ideas and details

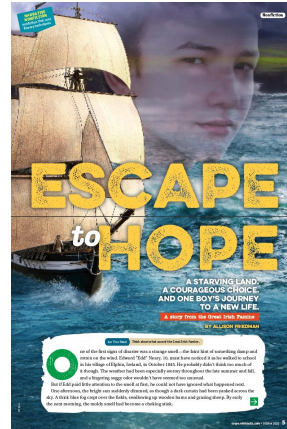
### Essential Questions:

- How can one event change the course of history?
- What responsibility do governments have in times of disaster?
- What does it mean to be an American?
- Why do people migrate?

### Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, W.3, W.4, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



## Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

### Audio:

- Audio read-aloud
- Text-to-speech

### Video:

- Time Machine: Ireland in 1845

### Vocabulary Slideshow

### Differentiated Articles:

- Lower-Lexile version
- Spanish language version

### Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Writing Planner: Causes of the Great Irish Famine
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Video Discussion Questions
- Choice Board
- Vocabulary: Definitions
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing\*, Text Features, Text Structure\*, Nonfiction Elements
- Quiz\*
- Contest Entry Form

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson

## 1. Preparing to Read

15 minutes

### Do Now: Reflect on Statistics (10 minutes)

- Display the statistics and reflection question below on your board for students to respond to in their journals or on a piece of paper:
  - According to the Institute for Food and Development Policy, there is enough food in the world to provide every person with at least 4.3 pounds of food per day: two and a half pounds of grains, beans, and nuts, about a pound of fruits and vegetables, and nearly a pound of meat, milk, and eggs.
  - According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, between 702 million and 828 million people in the world face hunger today.

**Taken together, what do these statistics make you wonder about? Make a list of questions in response.**

- Tell students that today they will read a story about a boy who lived through the Great Irish Famine. (A famine is a severe shortage of food that affects many people over a wide area. During a famine, much of a population goes hungry and many people die of starvation and disease.)

### Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. The audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Highlighted words: *bountiful*, *emigrate*, *empire*, *flourished*, *malnourished*, *thrived*.

## 2. Reading and Discussing

55 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 5 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article once as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the **lower-Lexile version** or the **Spanish version** of the article.*) Optionally, have students listen to the article read-aloud while they

follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.

- Divide students into groups to read the article again and respond to the following close-reading questions.

### Close-Reading Questions

(15 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

- 1. Sensory details use descriptive words that appeal to the five senses. They allow readers to feel like they're living in the story. What does author Allison Friedman use sensory details to describe? What do these details add to the story?** (author's craft) *Friedman speaks to the reader's sense of smell as she describes "the faint hint of something damp and rotten on the wind," "a lingering soggy odor," and a "moldy smell" that became "a choking stink." Readers can easily visualize the sickly potatoes when she describes them as "scarred and shriveled" with "dark, stinking slime" that "oozed from the vegetables' skin." The vivid adjectives she uses to describe Ireland make it easy to picture: its "velvety" mountains, "glassy" lakes, "lush" farmland, and "spongy" wetlands. When describing the weather, she writes that "the bright sun suddenly dimmed, as though a dark curtain had been yanked across the sky" and "a thick blue fog crept over the fields, swallowing up wooden barns and grazing sheep." These details help readers imagine Ireland and the effect late blight had there.*
- 2. What role did the weather play in the potato disaster?** (cause and effect) *Ireland has a cool, damp climate. The mold that causes late blight in potatoes thrives in these conditions. And the summer and fall of 1845 were especially stormy; powerful winds blew the mold specks across the island, and rains helped them sprout and sink deep into the soil.*
- 3. How was the second round of late blight worse than the first?** (compare and contrast) *The second round of late blight destroyed an even larger percent of the potato crop: Three-quarters of the potato crop died. Additionally, Ireland's laborers were in worse shape than during the first round; most did not have any possessions left to sell to help them purchase food. The laborers grew frail and thin, and their bodies became too weak to fight off dangerous germs. Many died from diseases such as typhus and cholera.*
- 4. How did Edd's family fare during the famine compared with most people in Ireland? Why?** (compare and contrast) *Edd's family likely had a small piece of land on which they grew potatoes, and they would have certainly been affected by the blight. However, Edd's father was a teacher, and with his salary, the family was able to purchase foods such as bread and fish. Ireland's laborers, on the other hand, who made up three quarters of Ireland's population, did not have that option. Many sold their few possessions to purchase food. Some ate weeds and snails*

out of ditches, or stole grain from the fields of wealthy landlords and farmers. While Edd and his family were able to get by, laborers were evicted from their homes when they couldn't pay rent and were at much greater risk of dying.

5. **How did the British government respond to the disaster?** (key ideas and details) Many British leaders placed blame on the Irish people and showed them little compassion. It took Britain months to respond to the disaster. Eventually, the British government set up a system that required laborers to do backbreaking work for a wage that they could use to buy corn, which was less nutritious than potatoes. And, Friedman explains, by this point laborers were too weak to do such work. When the following year's crop failed, the British government had already ended many of its relief efforts. It did nothing to stop landlords and farmers from selling their bounty of wheat, oats, and barley to England and other countries, rather than making it available to the starving people right there in Ireland.

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Consider the article's title, "Escape to Hope." What were people escaping from? What did they hope to find? Do you think they found it?** People were escaping hunger, disease, death, and the control of a government that didn't support them in their time of greatest need. They were driven from their land, persecuted for their Catholic faith, and prevented from voting, owning land, and holding certain jobs. They undertook a voyage into the unknown in the hope of survival and a better future for their families. While the places they immigrated to offered more opportunities than Ireland did at the time, immigrants in the U.S. faced much discrimination. This must have made starting their new lives difficult.
2. **Friedman writes, "And the Great Irish Famine, as it would come to be known, would change the course of history forever." How did the Great Irish Famine change the course of history?** The Great Irish Famine changed Ireland and the world. Had late blight not come to Ireland's shores, or had the disaster been handled differently, the world might look different than it does today. The events of the 1840s angered those who stayed in Ireland and made them more determined than ever to free themselves of British rule. After centuries of bitter conflict and being controlled by Britain, most of Ireland won its independence in 1921. Those who left Ireland changed how history would unfold in the places where they arrived. For example, roughly 1.5 million Irish people moved to the United States and helped make the country what it is today, constructing its railroads and canals, working in coal mines, and fighting for workers' rights.
3. **Describe what you see in the photo of the memorial to An Gorta Mór in Dublin, Ireland. What do you think is the memorial's purpose? In general, what impact do memorials have on us and the way we think about history?** Answers will vary. Students may offer that the memorial's sculptures are a snapshot of life at the time of the famine—worn, malnourished

*people clutch their few belongings as they walk by the water's edge, seemingly searching for a better life. The memorial is likely meant to remind the people of Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the world of the 1 million people who died of starvation and disease during the famine, and the 2 million others who crossed the Atlantic in search of a better life. Perhaps memorials have many purposes—to honor lives lost, to teach us about the past, and to help us reflect on the type of future we want to build.*

4. **Were there parts of the story you found particularly captivating? Emotional? Surprising? Shocking? Explain.** *Answers will vary.*

#### Watch a Video (10 minutes)

- Show students the video **Time Machine: Ireland in 1845**, which presents first-hand accounts from the Great Irish Famine. Have students respond to the **Video Discussion Questions** (available in your Resources tab) in small groups or pairs.

### 3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete the **Writing Planner: Causes of the Great Irish Famine**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the activity on page 10 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

## Support for Multilingual Learners

These questions are designed to help students respond to the text at a level that's right for them.

### Yes/No Questions

Ask students to demonstrate comprehension with a very simple answer.

1. Is Ireland on an island? *Yes, it is.*
2. Did most Irish people rely on the potato for food? *Yes, they did.*
3. Did the British take over Ireland? *Yes, they did.*
4. Did scientists at the time understand what was happening to the potatoes? *No, they didn't.*

### Either/Or Questions

Encourage students to use language from the question to support their answer.

1. In the 1800s, was Ireland a poor place or a wealthy place? *In the 1800s, Ireland was one of the poorest places in Europe.*
2. Did the potato blight last for one year or for more than one year? *The potato blight lasted for more than one year, from 1845 to 1852.*
3. Did all the crops in Ireland fail or only the potato crops? *Only the potato crops failed.*
4. Did Edd Neary's family stay in Ireland or immigrate to the United States? *Edd Neary and his family immigrated to the United States.*
5. Is Ireland still under British rule or did it win its independence? *Most of Ireland won its independence.*

### Short-Answer Questions

Challenge students to produce simple answers on their own.

1. How did the weather help the potato disease spread? *The mold that causes the disease thrives in cool, damp weather like Ireland's, and stormy winds blew the mold across the island.*
2. Why did so many people die from disease during the famine? *Because people did not have enough to eat, their bodies were not strong enough to fight off infections.*

### Language-Acquisition Springboard

**Discuss the sounds of *ou* while previewing vocabulary.**

Before reading the article, preview the vocabulary words using our audio-visual vocabulary slideshow. Point out that two of the words have the vowel combination *ou*, and it is pronounced differently in each word.

- Say *bountiful* aloud. Then give examples of other words in which *ou* is pronounced the same way it is in *bountiful*. (*about, mountain, house*)
- Say *flourished* aloud. Then give examples of words in which *ou* is pronounced the same way it is in *flourished*. (*courage, journal, nourish*)

**Language Stretch: Introduce *ou* words with two additional pronunciations:**

- Say *group* aloud. Then give examples of other words in which *ou* is pronounced the same way it is in *group*. (*you, soup, crouton*)
- Say *cousin* aloud. Then give examples of other words in which *ou* is pronounced the same way it is in *cousin*. (*country, double, young*)