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Feed The Children First: Irish Memories Of The Great Hunger



Synopsis

The great Irish potato famine -- the Great Hunger -- was one of the worst disasters of the nineteenth century. Within seven years of the onset of a fungus that wiped out Ireland's staple potato crop, more than a quarter of the country's eight million people had either starved to death, died of disease, or emigrated to other lands. Photographs have documented the horrors of other cataclysmic times in history -- slavery and the Holocaust -- but there are no known photographs whatsoever of the Great Hunger. In *Feed the Children First*, Mary E. Lyons combines first-person accounts of those who remembered the Great Hunger with artwork that evokes the times and places and voices themselves. The result is a close-up look at incredible suffering, but also a celebration of joy the Irish took in stories and music and helping one another -- all factors that helped them endure.

Book Information

Hardcover: 48 pages

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers; 1 edition (February 1, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0689842260

ISBN-13: 978-0689842269

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.5 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,133,890 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #107 in [Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > Europe](#) #22438 in [Books > History > Europe](#)

Customer Reviews

In this somber anecdotal account, of likeliest interest to students, Lyons (*Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs*) compiles quotations from Irish citizens on the devastating effects of the potato famine that ravaged Ireland between 1845 and 1852; during those years more than one-quarter of the population either died of starvation or disease, or emigrated, primarily to the U.S. Lyons explains that many of the reminiscences here are abridged from those collected in a book published in Ireland in 1995, which itself drew from the Irish Folklore Commission's efforts in the 1940s to collect stories about the Great Hunger. Given this time frame, some of these observations are first-hand, yet a significant number offer a more remote voice (e.g., "My grandmother told me of her experience when a girl of seventeen in those awful days"). Though the speakers describe

affecting, even heartbreaking scenes, many entries use language that, however authentic, young readers are not likely to find compelling: "They lived from hand to mouth. Any failure in the crops meant great privation. Generally there was no money laid by." Period drawings, paintings and a handful of photos serve as illustrations. Ages 9-12. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Grades 4-8--This beautifully crafted work combines first-person accounts of Ireland's potato famine, the Great Hunger of 1845-1852, with artwork that recalls those times. Following a concise, informative introduction, the brief selections speak of the people and the land before the Great Hunger, the potato blight and subsequent starvation and illness, the poorhouse, soup kitchens, relief works, eviction, and emigration. They bear witness not only to unbearable suffering, but also to the humanity, dignity, and endurance of a people. Almost all are Irish voices, stories handed down through the families of survivors. Although no photographs of the Great Hunger exist, Irish newspapermen traveling through the country made sketches, and painters later used the theme; full-color reproductions of many are perfectly paired with the selections, as are a few photographs from a later famine. The attractive layout makes effective use of white space. The whole is a fine accompaniment to Susan Campbell Bartoletti's *Black Potatoes* (Houghton, 2001) and Patricia Reilly Giff's novel, *Nory Ryan's Song* (Delacorte, 2000), as well as powerful testimony to the suffering of famine victims worldwide. Diane S. Marton, Arlington County Library, VA Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

After reading a pile of books about this topic, I was pleasantly surprised to find out some new facts from this short and sweet book that was written for younger children and teens. Even as an adult I can appreciate it and enjoyed the illustrations very much.

fast delivery, written to be easily understood, gives a clear account of the terrible thing done to the Irish people

This is a children's book and provides a great overall look at the famine and it's impact on the families, especially the devastation imposed on the children of the period.

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