INTO THE MELTING POT:
THE ASSIMILATION OF IRISH POTATO FAMINE EMIGRANTS
IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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ABSTRACT

This historiography focuses on the experiences of the Irish people who immigrated to America as a result of the Potato Famine in Ireland during the years 1846-1851. These immigrants arrived on the East Coast of the United States, and many of them chose to stay in Eastern Cities that had been established for hundreds of years. However, some of these brave immigrants traveled across the frontier to San Francisco. In so doing, they faced the challenge of surviving the journey across the Atlantic, assimilating into American culture, and overcoming racial prejudice. The determination of the Irish to not only survive the Famine in Ireland, but to succeed in America is the underlying theme of this project.

The lesson plans developed for classroom use explore concepts in geography, immigration, and cultural awareness. Students explore the experiences of the Potato Famine immigrants as well as other foreign groups that immigrated to America with the hope of making a better life for themselves. As a result, the students will better understand the struggles that accompany immigration: leaving home, making the journey, arriving in a foreign country, acclimating and assimilating to a new culture, and achieving the reward of eventual success—The American Dream. The students will also explore the immigration patterns of their ancestors and learn more about their own ethnic customs. The lesson plan will help foster awareness among the students of both the benefits and challenges that exist when living in a pluralistic society.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I need to thank my grandfather, Sinon James Talty, who made the journey from Miltown Malbay to Chicago in pursuit of the American dream. He bravely left his home in Aylbrack, and we will always be grateful for the sacrifices that he made to give his family a better life in America.

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INTO THE MELTING POT: THE ASSIMILATION OF IRISH POTATO FAMINE EMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

“The more I investigated the generally available works on the subject, the more aware I became that the great famine was not a separate or isolated part of Irish history, but, rather, the nadir of that history, so stark and devastating in its effects, so crucial in what it said about the country’s relationship with England, that it was to shape not only the future of Ireland but the attitudes of the Irish all over the world on into the twentieth century—indeed, right up to the present moment.”

~Thomas Gallagher

“Tugged up from their roots, taken and going willingly from the sea smell and the peat smells. . . Shoved into a boat with sweating and cursing and stinking and praying, with deaths and births, with old age and youth, they landed and a shovel was placed in their hands or a hammer or a spade and they built Boston and New York and Chicago and Philadelphia. And in the evening they walked home in the leaning shadows of the gray stone to their one room or two rooms and fell into bewildered sleep.”

~Jack Dunphy

This historiography deals with the Irish emigrants who came to America during the time of the Irish Potato Famine (1846-1851). It examines the work of historians who studied the causes and effects of the Potato Famine on the destiny of the Irish people,
their journey to America, their assimilation into eastern cities upon arrival, and the experience of those who crossed the frontier, and migrated to San Francisco. By following the journey of these famine emigrants one can appreciate the determination of the Irish to assimilate in the United States.

The Potato Famine

The Irish Potato Famine of 1846-1851 spurred the largest influx of Irish emigration to the United States in American history, and consequently intertwined the fates of Ireland and America. William Shannon asserts that, “The main story of the Irish in America begins with the famine generation who began to come to this country after 1830.”2 According to Edward Laxton in *The Famine Ships*, the population of Ireland in 1841 was over nine million.3 Ten years later, the census in Ireland registered just over six and a half million. Laxton concludes that, “Death by Famine or departure by emigration, can logically claim a loss to Ireland in real terms, of two and a half million people—more than one in four.”4 Roughly 200-300,000 of these emigrants only made it as far as England to escape the Famine, another 340,000 embarked for British North America, and the vast majority sailed to the United States. Kerby Miller notes,” In all, over 2.1 million Irish—about one-fourth of the island’s pre-Famine population—went overseas; more people left Ireland in just eleven years (1845-1855) than during the

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4 Laxton, 248.
The future of Ireland was forever changed by the Famine, and its people are still living in its wake. The Famine prompted a trend of emigration that would continue for another century, making Ireland the only country in contemporary Western Europe that has fewer people than it did in the 1840’s.

Though Ireland had experienced blights that attacked and destroyed potato plants in 1822, 1831, 1835, and 1837, these were minor in comparison to the magnitude of the potato blight that struck between 1845-1851. In 1845, a previously unknown fungus, Phytophthora infestans, arrived without warning and destroyed Ireland’s potato crop at a devastating pace. The desperate situation is vividly described in Kerby Miller’s Emigrants and Exiles:

“The leaves turned black, crumbling into ashes when touched, and the very ‘air was laden with a sickly odor of decay, as if the hand of death had stricken the potato field, and . . . everything growing in it was rotten. In many places the wretched people were seated on the fences of their decaying gardens, wringing their hands and wailing bitterly the destruction that had left them foodless.”

The effect of the blight would be even worse in 1846-1848, and continued for another six years. The Irish remember 1847 as “Black ’47,” because it claimed 250,000 lives. Because Ireland’s farmers and laborers survived almost exclusively on potatoes, Kerby Miller explains that, “By midsummer 1845 it was obvious that only extraordinary relief

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7 Miller, 281.
measures could avert wholesale starvation.” The situation was so bleak that most Irish were forced to choose between starving at home or attempting to survive abroad.

As Thomas Gallagher notes, many other European countries, including France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, and Russia, also suffered a potato blight during the worst of the Irish Potato Famine (1846-1847), but these countries stopped exporting all other foods to make up for the loss and to prevent a “famine” from occurring. Gallagher asserts that the British forced the Irish to continue exporting all their other food products as its citizens starved throughout the country. Kerby Miller concurs with Gallagher that, “The potato blight was unavoidable, but the Great Famine was largely the result of Ireland’s colonial status and grossly inequitable social system.” Noel Ignatiev describes the inhumane policy of the British government, “While people in the Irish countryside were eating the bark off the trees, the British government’s adherence to market principles ensured that Ireland would continue to export food.” This policy was fatal to the Irish as the potato was vital to their lives and Ireland was, “the one country in Europe where seven out of eight people were almost completely dependent on it.” Gallagher goes on to explain that Ireland, during the Famine had, “an entire population, under the protection and dominion of Great Britain, whose shoreline was little more than a day’s sail away, starving to death while their own country’s produce, cattle, and wheat, oats,

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9 Miller, 282.
11 Gallagher, 88.
12 Miller, 286.
14 Gallagher, 14.
and barley were being shipped in British bottoms to British ports.\textsuperscript{15} Gallagher reveals that,

“During the winter of 1846-1847 alone, while over 400,000 persons were dying of famine or famine-related disease, the British government, instead of prohibiting the removal of Irish food from Ireland, allowed seventeen million pounds sterling worth of grain, cattle, pigs, flour, eggs, and poultry to be shipped to England—enough food to feed, at least during these crucial winter months, twice the almost six million men, women, and children who composed the tenant-farmer and farm-laborer population.”\textsuperscript{16}

These disheartening statistics seemingly justify the popular Irish expression, “God sent the blight, but the British sent the Famine,” and reveal why many Irish families became forced exiles from their native land and would embrace bitter anti-British sentiments for years to come.

In \textit{Irish America}, Byron disagrees with Gallagher, arguing that while the relief effort was problematic and insufficient, it was also, “massive, on a scale which rivaled or surpassed anything attempted by any country in the western world up to that time.”\textsuperscript{17} Byron further disagrees with Gallagher’s assertion that halting other Irish food exports would have prevented mass starvation and evictions. In addition to the soup kitchens that were set up in Ireland and the American maize that was shipped over, Byron points out that, “food imports to Ireland exceeded exports by a ratio of three to one, and ‘a ban on Irish food exports would not have compensated for losses in the potato crop: grain exports in 1846 had a food equivalent of less than ten percent of the lost potato crop.’”\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} Gallagher, 39.  
\textsuperscript{16} Gallagher 39.  
\textsuperscript{18} Byron, 46.
Regardless of hindsight, according to Gallagher, the relief effort of the British did what it intended to: “diminish the capital of Ireland, increase by a proportionate amount the poverty of her already starving people, and coerce them to leave their own country.”

The Potato Famine caused 1,360,000 deaths and forced the destitute, starving, and evicted Irish to take their chances on ships headed for America as their only hope for survival.

**Evictions and the Journey**

The Irish tenant farmers depended on their single-crop economy to pay the rent. As the potatoes died, the mass-evictions began. Gallagher explains that British absentee landlords owned 70 percent of Ireland, therefore the potato blight served as a perfect excuse to evict the Irish. They were easily replaced with cattle, which proved to be a more lucrative use of their land. In 1847, Parliament enacted the “Gregory clause” to expedite the eviction process. As Miller explains, this new law “forbade public relief to any household head who held a quarter-acre of more of land and refused to relinquish possession to his proprietor.” Thousands of Irish families surrendered their land to avoid starvation, becoming what Kerby Miller calls, “forced” or “involuntary exiles.”

William Shannon’s research supports Miller’s conclusion that the Irish had no choice but to leave their homeland: “Most did not leave willingly. They were hurled out, driven by

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19 Gallagher, 92.
20 Byron, 48.
21 Gallagher, 51.
22 Miller, 287.
23 Miller, 132.
forces larger and more complex than they could fully understand or cope with.” 24 After attending an Irish farewell ceremony called an “American wake,” many of these evicted Irish desperately sought survival rather than success when embarking for America on a “coffin ship.” Kirby Miller explains that,

“The motives governing most Famine emigrants were qualitatively different from those which had inspired earlier departures. In the previous Famine decades emigrants sought “independence,” economic improvement, in a land fabled for opportunity and abundance. During the Famine, however, most emigrants aspired merely to survive: ‘all we want is to get out of Ireland,’ testified one group; ’we must be better anywhere than here.’” 25

As the conditions in Ireland worsened, the hope for a new life in America became a reason to survive. In Hibernia America, Dennis Clark explains,

“To look at the sea that surrounds Ireland was to be made aware of the American possibility as ships in full sail moved to the horizon and beyond. The ravaging of Irish society had, as in the revelation of some mighty Gaelic epic, reached a climax just as the Western continent arose in the mind of the Irish victims as a dream of escape and redemption.” 26

The Irish, however, did not know how difficult it would be to escape Ireland. Reaching the nearest seaport was their first destination, but tragically most Irish made it no farther. One of the most popular misconceptions of Ireland’s Potato Famine is that the majority of the deaths were caused by starvation. In fact, the majority of casualties were the result of the fever and diseases that spread among the emigrants that crowded the seaports, trying to escape the Famine. In Irish America, Byron concludes that, “The overwhelming majority of deaths during the famine years resulted not from starvation,

24 Shannon, 25.
25 Miller, 298.
but from epidemics of contagious diseases. Relapsing fever, typhus, and dysentery were
the greatest killers.”

As the Irish left their small villages seeking food and escape, they
unwittingly carried local diseases with them to new areas that had previously been
unaffected. Even the relief workers that spread throughout the country administering aid
to the suffering Irish added to their afflictions. In *The Great Hunger*, Cecil Woodham-
Smith concurs with Byron that, “perhaps ten times as many people died of fever as of
starvation.”

The failure of the potato crop was just the first of many challenges facing
the Irish during the Famine era.

For the Irish who were fortunate enough to avoid starvation and contagious
diseases, the next obstacle was surviving the journey across the Atlantic to reach
America. In 1846, when the Famine first struck, emigrants risked a winter passage in
order to escape Ireland. As the number of people trying to leave Ireland multiplied, the
conditions on board passenger ships worsened. Owners of the cargo ships, later termed
“coffin ships,” would overcrowd and undersupply their vessels in order to make a quick
profit. In *Fleeing the Famine*, the misery of being a passenger that traveled in steerage in
1847 is described in the letter of Stephen deVere:

> “Hundreds of people, men, women and children, of all ages from the driveling idiot
of 90 to the babe just born; huddled together, without light, without air, wallowing
in filth, and breathing a fetid atmosphere, sick in body, dispirited in heart; the
fevered patients lying between the sound, in sleeping places so narrow as to almost
deny them the power of indulging, by a change of position. The natural
restlessness of the disease; . . . living without food or medicine except as

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27 Byron, 47.
administered by the hand of casual charity; dying without the voice of spiritual consolation, and buried in the deep without the rites of the church.”

In *Paddy’s Lament*, Gallagher writes that, “out of roughly 100,000 emigrants carried aboard British ships to Canada in 1847, 25,000, or one in every four, died en route or within six months after arrival.” Mulrooney adds that there were more passenger deaths in 1847 than in any other year in the nineteenth century. However, as miserable as conditions were on board these “coffin ships,” most deaths were caused by diseases brought on board the vessels. Typhus was the greatest killer, and it wasn’t until the twentieth century that it became known that it was spread by lice. The Irish were tested during their six to eight week voyage, and only the strongest survived. Unfortunately, many of the Irish emigrants who reluctantly left their homeland in hopes of surviving abroad only found a watery grave. Laxton found that of the more than 5,000 ships that sailed during the six years of the Potato Famine, about 50 foundered, ending the hopes of these starving emigrants before ever seeing American shores.

The Famine emigrants who survived the journey did not know that they would arrive in America at a very opportune time, and that they would develop a symbiotic relationship with the young country as it matured. Industrialization was about to transform the American continent, and the Irish would be there in time to contribute to its

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29 Mulrooney, 18.
30 Gallagher, 211.
31 Mulrooney, 18.
32 Mulrooney, 18.
33 Mulrooney, 14.
34 Laxton, 90.
industrial and political machines. Dennis Clark describes the opportunities that faced Famine emigrants,

“Paradoxically, what almost wiped out this group also sent them to America as an emergent people ready to take up new ways and ideas. Patterns of chain migration, prepaid passages, family, and occupational connections would emerge that would greatly stimulate American life and change the history even of the nation’s most powerful city.”

In addition to the fortuitous timing of the arrival of Famine emigrants, their sheer numbers would help them endure their displacement as a massive group as they began the long and painful process of assimilating into American communities. Once the Famine emigrants arrived, William Shannon notes, “Neither the cities nor the Irish were ever the same again.” The Irish and the cities they settled in would grow together. The determination of the Irish to succeed in America would eventually eclipse their desire to merely survive.

Arrival and Assimilation into Eastern Cities

There was no Statue of Liberty to greet the Irish emigrants who were lucky enough to survive the journey across the Atlantic on board the Famine ships in 1847. For some of the emigrants on board, the sight of land alone was powerful enough to extinguish the flickering flame of life that they carried inside their withered bodies. For others, the sight of land rekindled their hopes of new opportunities in a new land. Those who lacked the strength to carry their own bags upon arrival were quickly preyed upon and coerced by the swindlers that swarmed the docks, looking to make a profit off the

35 Clark, 54.
36 Shannon, 33.
new arrivals. Those Irish emigrants who were healthy enough to unload their belongings off of the ship may have found that the first sign of welcome and hope was the pig. As Gallagher explained, “Accustomed as they were to the ubiquitous pig in Ireland, they burst out laughing at this sudden reminder of the old country in the city of New York. It was as if some Irishman had purposely sent the sow out as a welcome sign—‘No famine here!’—to his newly arrived countrymen.” To understand why a sow was such a welcoming sign for the famine emigrants during 1846-1851, one needs to remember that many of these Irish emigrants had never tasted a pig, and had only coveted one as a necessary means of paying the rent back home.

The Irish Potato Famine presented a “new” type of Irish emigrant to the United States. Prior to the Famine, the Irish who emigrated were usually the youngest in the family who were sent to work in the U.S. to save passage money for other family members that would join them later. Due to the desperate conditions caused by the Famine, however, entire families were now traveling together. Mulrooney describes how, “It became common for all members of the family, parents, grandparents, and children alike, to risk the uncertainty of the voyage and what might be awaiting them in North America. This was preferable to facing the certainty of starvation at home.”

Additionally, the Irish who emigrated during the Famine years were poorer and less skilled than prior emigrant groups. Finally, for the first time in American history, the vast majority of Irish emigrants were Catholic, and many of them spoke Gaelic.

37 Mulrooney, 5.
A popular misconception about Irish emigration is that because they spoke English they assimilated easier than other foreign born groups. Andrew Greeley writes,

“...Their early arrival, their skills with the language, their political and religious power all enabled the Irish Catholics to acculturate to American society more quickly than any other group but the Jews. The Irish ‘made it’ because the American economy was expanding at a fantastic rate, and the Irish were a large pool of laborers with knowledge of the language.”

However, Kerby Miller points out that, “Perhaps a fourth to a third of all Famine emigrants—as many as half a million people—were Irish-speakers.” Mulrooney’s research supports Miller’s descriptions of the Famine Irish:

“Ships manifests from New York City in 1846 revealed that as many as 75 percent were laborers or servants, compared with 60 percent in 1836. Although the number of Catholics leaving Ireland had risen steadily since 1815, they now constituted an overwhelming majority. Moreover, 54 percent of the Catholics spoke Gaelic.”

Language was another obstacle that many Famine emigrants had to overcome when acclimating to New York. It would take a long time for the Irish who arrived in America during the time of the famine to become accepted in society, and they would have to struggle to succeed more than any previous emigrant group from Ireland.

The majority of Famine Irish made New York City their new home. Dennis Clark explains, “No other place became such an institutionalized destination as New York, where patterns of ethnic acceptance, association, and subcultural affiliation had long ago become traditional. The experience of emigration itself and all that went with it had

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39 Miller, 297.
40 Mulrooney, 24.
become a central feature of New York life, just as it had in Ireland.” Edward Laxton writes in *The Famine Ships*, “a staggering average of 300 were disembarking daily, every day for six years: on some days more than 1,000 would arrive on a single tide.” Laxton goes on to reveal that, “by 1850 the residents of New York were 26% Irish.”

After surviving the 3,000-mile journey across the Atlantic, which often lasted two to three months, there was no need for most Irish to travel any further than New York. In *A Nation of Immigrants*, John F. Kennedy writes, “The Irish congregated mainly in the cities along the Eastern seaboard for they did not have the money to travel after reaching shore.” John B. Duff’s research supports Kennedy’s assertion: “The Irishman chose to fight it out in the dangerous city rather than turn to the West.” In *The Irish in America*, Frank McCourt writes, “Look at what the land had done to them in Ireland. They’d stay in the big cities, never again be victims of the treacherous spud.”

Most historiography on Irish emigration focuses on eastern cities, because of the large number of emigrants whose journey ended there. However, *The Uncounted Irish* suggests that historians have ignored the “rural Irish,” and Margaret E. Fitzgerald and Joseph A. King attempt to fill that void by tracing the settlement patterns of Irish on the American frontier. Fitzgerald and King conclude that not only did many Irish emigrants

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41 Clark, 62.
42 Laxton, 3, 26.
45 Golway, 11.
choose to settle in rural areas, but that they statistically made a greater impact and experienced success faster than their urban counterparts.  

In *Paddy’s Lament*, Thomas Gallagher describes the fortuitous timing of Famine emigrants arriving in New York: “It was as if they had emigrated just in time to fill an urgent need. Not only did they add to and stimulate the city’s growth during these years, they also made that growth possible by supplying the men needed to take charge of the city’s increasing animal population and the manure that population created.” Ireland’s potato blight, and the resulting exodus of its people, occurred at a time when New York was ripe for this influx of Irish emigrants. Thomas Gallagher states that many Irish emigrants arrived, “with that fatal Irish flaw: a willingness generated by a lifetime of oppression to do whatever was necessary to succeed in British-free America.” This “Irish flaw” proved to be both a gift and a curse to the Irish who were assimilating into American society in the nineteenth century. It proves to be an asset to the Irish because they knew that success in America could only be achieved through hard work, and no job was beneath them. On the other hand, desperate Irish emigrants created a new, cheap labor force, which lowered wages, threatened the employment of “Native Americans,” and challenged the paradigm of “slave-labor.”

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46 Fitzgerald, xi.
47 Gallagher, 288.
48 Gallagher, 276.
49 The concept of “Nativism” or “Native American” has existed in the minds of Americans since the Revolutionary War, when they rejected foreign rule and defined themselves as independent and patriotic people. Historian John Higham defines nativism as, “intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign connections,” or a “defensive type of nationalism.” Though nativism can spawn harmless patriotic...
Clark notes that New York was a city “built on motion and the hope of improvement,” and the Irish arrived just in time to take advantage of the work that this city offered. In *Hibernia America*, Clark further explains how the desperate Irish were a perfect match for the labor that New York City demanded:

“Immigrants took jobs at whatever wages they could get on the docks, in the lofts, and in the ditches of the city. Cheap labor built the sewers, water lines, tunnels, streets, and foundations that would underly the city buildings and traffic and bear the weight of an amazing new technology. And it was the Irish who were the chief excavators, haulers, and lifters in this ceaseless urban effort. Machines at this time were still unequal to the task, and the most arduous and perilous jobs fell to the immigrant poor in the labor of building for the comfort and utility of New York’s population.”

Shannon notes that even the “Native Americans” who despised the Irish did not foresee the extent to which they would depend on them to keep up with industrial expansion. The only thing that Famine emigrants had when arriving in New York was their hands and the willingness to work. In 1846, one newspaper commented: “America demands for her development an inexhaustible fund of physical energy, and Ireland supplies the most part of it. There are several sorts of power working at the fabric of this Republic—waterpower, steam-power, and Irish-power. The last works hardest of all.” Shannon continues that,

“The Irish were in great part the physical builders of the cities. Their labor met the urgent need of overgrown colonial towns for better streets and sewers, larger water rhetoric, it can also promote racism and hostility towards any foreigners that challenge the status quo with their language, skin color, ethnic customs, or ideology.

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50 Clark, 54.
51 Clark, 52.
52 Shannon, 39.
53 As quoted in Shannon, 29.
systems, and new housing. The Irish swung the picks, lifted the shovels, and brought down the hammers that transformed the towns into cities."  

Eventually, the Irish would be rewarded for taking the lowest jobs in New York and their right as preeminent New Yorkers would be expressed in the slogan: “We built it. We won it. We run it!” Their success was echoed in verse and song, such as in this stanza from *When New York Was Irish* by Terence Winch, “We worked on the subways, we ran the saloons, We built all the bridges, we played all the tunes, We put out the fires and controlled City Hall, We started with nothing and wound up with it all.” But success did not come quickly or easily to the Irish. They embraced the lowest paying and most dangerous jobs in America, and had to endure the racial and religious prejudice of the ruling Native American class. This racial backlash lead to the establishment of the anti-emigrant, nativist Know Nothing Party of the 1850’s. According to William Shannon, “The last great surge of nativism came in 1854 with the emergence of the American, or Know-Nothing Party.” Unfortunately for the Irish, the inception of this Party coincided with the peak of Irish emigration in 1854. The Whig Party was dying, the Democratic Party was in transition, and the Republican Party had just been born. This enabled the Know-Nothing Party to emerge as a “halfway house for voters seeking a new political home.” While the Know Nothing Party existed for less than a decade, Golway explains

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54 Shannon, 28.
55 Clark, 64.
56 As quoted in Golway, 85.
57 Shannon, 45.
58 Ignatiev, 162.
59 Shannon, 45.
that it remains, “one of the most successful third parties in American history.” More importantly, it reveals the popular mindset of many Americans at the time that Famine emigrants were flooding American shores. Those in the Know-Nothing movement despised blacks and foreigners in general, but Terry Golway explains that, “its specific complaint during and after the Famine emigration was with Catholics.” William Shannon agrees: “In this period of rapid political flux, the Know-Nothings represented an effort to divert attention away from the slavery issue to the “safer” issues of anti-Catholicism and anti-immigration about which the native community could more easily agree.” As a result of the Know-Nothing Party, policymakers passed two new pieces of anti-emigrant legislation: one federal law requiring naturalized citizens to live in the United States for twenty one years before being able to vote, and one state law prohibiting emigrants from holding elective office in Massachusetts.

The 1850’s were an extremely difficult time to assimilate into American cities. The Irish were quickly stereotyped as “Paddy,” a poor and dirty ape-like creature with a strange accent, and a propensity for alcoholism. As Mulrooney indicates, this image was promoted in newspapers and magazines, “in editorials, jokes, and vignettes that illustrated the supposed defects of Irish immigrants.” Businesses hung signs that read: N.I.N.A. (No Irish Need Apply) to discourage Irish people from trying to settle and work in their communities. Indeed, Mulrooney explains, “In the hostile climate of nativism,
manifested in political, economic, and social assaults, Irish Catholics struggled to survive.”\textsuperscript{65}

One of the popular misconceptions regarding Irish assimilation in America is that, in addition to having some knowledge of the English language, they were white, and therefore did not suffer from racism as African and Asian emigrants did. This is not entirely true. In \textit{How the Irish Became White}, Noel Ignatiev explores this topic in further detail and concludes, “While the white skin made the Irish eligible for membership in the white race, it did not guarantee their admission; they had to earn it.”\textsuperscript{66} Ignatiev goes on to explain that the Irish were frequently referred to as, “niggers turned inside out,” and negroes were often called, “smoked Irish.”\textsuperscript{67} In \textit{That Most Distressful Nation}, Andrew Greeley supports Ignatiev’s research that the Irish and blacks were both victimized by racist natives. Greeley writes,

\begin{quote}
“Practically every accusation that has been made against the American blacks was also made against the Irish: their family life was inferior, they had no ambition, they did not keep up their homes, they drank too much, they were not responsible, they had no morals, it was not safe to walk through their neighborhoods at night, they voted the way crooked politicians told them to vote, they were not willing to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, they were not capable of education, they could not think for themselves, and they would always remain social problems for the rest of the country.”\textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

The Irish, desperate to establish a foothold in American society, were the only people who were willing to do jobs that were previously only done by slaves. This pitted the blacks against the Irish in the job market, and created hostility and competition between

\textsuperscript{65} Mulrooney, 70.
\textsuperscript{66} Ignatiev, 59.
\textsuperscript{67} Ignatiev, 41.
\textsuperscript{68} Greeley, 120.
the two races. Before the abolition of slavery, newly arriving Irish emigrants were often preferred for the more dangerous jobs that had high mortality rates, such as working on the docks and building canals. Because slaves were assigned a higher monetary value than the Irish, many companies did not want to hire them for jobs where the workers were expendable. Ignatiev explains, “Many of the newly arrived Irish, hungry and desperate, were willing to work for less than free persons of color, and it was no more than good capitalist sense to hire them.”69 Dennis Clark supports Ignatiev’s view of the Irish as expendable labor:

“In some respects they were more reliable and valued than slaves, especially if only recently arrived in the country. But in other respects they were expendable. Frederick Law Olmsted notes, that in ports they were employed in dangerous loading because they had no monetary value as slaves did.”70

The hostility between Irish and black laborers would continue for years after the arrival of Famine emigrants.

Though the Irish struggled to become accepted in American society for upsetting the labor market, they were most resented for clinging to their Roman Catholic faith. Lawrence J. McCaffrey notes that the Irish, “were the first victims of the anti-Catholic core of American nativism.”71 To understand why Americans detested Catholicism so much, one must remember that the first settlers of the continent were Protestants escaping the formalities of religion, and establishing Puritan communities. Byron illustrates the fact that the Famine emigrants were the first Catholics to arrive in America in large

69 Ignatiev, 109.
70 Clark, 97.
numbers, and the country had remained predominantly Protestant to that point.\(^{72}\) Dennis Clark writes, “The Irish had no part in the Puritan covenant. They bore a religious identity at variance with America’s mainstream Protestant heritage.”\(^{73}\) It is important to consider that the Irish, suffering under British Penal Laws for the last century, had not been permitted to practice their faith publicly, yet their faith had survived. Clark demonstrates that for this reason, their desire to reestablish their Roman Catholic institutions was stronger than ever as they crossed the Atlantic.\(^{74}\) Andrew Greeley describes the value that the Irish placed on their religion:

> “There was one thing the Irishman did have, whether he was scheming rebellion, dying of famine, fighting fever on the ship, or struggling to make it through the slums of New York City. That was his religion. The Irishman clung to his religion as though it were all he had, and frequently it was.”\(^{75}\)

William Shannon further describes the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church on the Irish:

> “The Church’s mere survival affirmed the continuity with the past. Its corporate existence, directed and sustained from Rome, made it the one national institution to persist unchanged through the terrors, miseries, and disintegration of defeat. It was the one Irish institution the people could regard as peculiarly their own and in which they could invest their strength.”\(^{76}\)

As the Irish arrived in America, thanking God for having survived the journey, they were not prepared for the hatred that they would encounter from Native Americans for their

\(^{72}\) Byron, 51.  
\(^{73}\) Clark, 183.  
\(^{74}\) Clark, 57.  
\(^{75}\) Greeley, 63.  
\(^{76}\) Shannon, 20.
religious beliefs. In *Fleeing the Famine*, Margaret Mulrooney describes the emphasis placed on religion in nineteenth century America:

“Religion often proved a more compelling determinant of an individual’s social, economic, and political status than did secular considerations. Arguably, it constituted the most conspicuous piece of ‘cultural baggage’ that people transported to the New World.”

Even though Native Americans believed that being an Irish Catholic was incompatible with becoming a successful American, the Irish proved them wrong. Kerby Miller explains, “The great majority of Irish Catholic emigrants not only remained loyal to the church but eventually became more faithful practitioners than they had been at home.”

Though the Native Americans continued to resent the Irish in America, the Irish built their churches and eventually became successful Americans. Dennis Clark describes the ultimate success of the Irish Catholics that emigrated at the time of the Famine:

“Something quite new had been created by this group—a kind of Catholicism that did not exist elsewhere. While the church was losing the allegiance of workers in Europe, the American Catholics led by the Irish had created a democratic Catholicism with popular support, financial and social, for what would become the country’s largest religious establishment.”

The Famine emigrants built their communities around their churches, and they had strength in numbers. They organized later under the auspices of the Democratic Party, which further as Ignatiev theorized, insulated them from nativist hostility. Eventually the Civil War and the development of the transcontinental railroad system secured a place for the Irish as successful working class Americans, thereby completing their

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77 Mulrooney, 64.
78 Miller, 332.
79 Clark, 58.
80 Ignatiev, 76.
assimilation. But for some Irish emigrants, assimilation on the Eastern seaboard was not enough. For these adventurous Famine emigrants, successful assimilation occurred after a westward journey to Californian and settlement in San Francisco.

*Westward Immigration to San Francisco*

In 1845, the first year of the Famine, three out of four emigrants arrived in New York, and the majority remained on the east coast. Though the port of New York received more than half of the Famine emigrants, it was not the only American port of entry. Canada was by far the cheapest option; therefore, many emigrants came through Canada and then migrated south. Other cities that served as ports of entry for Famine emigrants include Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans. New Orleans, being the most western port, was the most costly, and therefore the least popular. R.A. Burchell’s research suggests that, even when the opportunity arose to go west, the Irish remained in eastern cities:

“The Irish arrived on the east coast of the United States and there the majority of them stayed, settling particularly as a result of their low level of skills and capital in the ill prepared urban areas. Even in 1870, when sufficient time had passed for Irish immigrants to have joined the westward movement, over half the Irish-born population of the country lived in the three states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.”

Gallagher’s research supports Burchell’s point of view, and further explains why Irish emigrants arriving in New York were not compelled to explore the frontier of the American West:

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“Besides, the great city they had in so many ways feared turned out to be not so foreign and unaccommodating after all. The horses and pigs in the streets, the slaughterhouses and tanneries, the stables and blacksmiths’ shops and all the rural smells they created, the hotels with their efficient Irish servant girls and slender young Irish waiters, the burly Irishmen laying the city’s gas lines and Croton Water Works pipes in the streets—all these made staying in New York City more attractive than heading into the unknown countryside, where building canals, cutting through forests, laying railroad lines, or working the land presented almost the only ways to exist, all of them in lonely places bereft of the kind of “society” most Irishmen craved.”

Some Irish emigrants did not settle on the east coast, but chose instead to continue westward across the frontier, especially to San Francisco. Many historical accounts have been written on the Irish in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, but by contrast there is very little historiography written on the San Francisco Irish. Dennis Clark notes that the impact of famine emigration “is not usually followed beyond the Eastern seaboard cities and is rarely analyzed for its notable implications for American life.” Maureen Dezell’s research concedes that the majority of Famine emigrants remained in eastern cities, but also notes that, “tens of thousands went west, and in 1880 more than one-third of the Irish born in the United States lived somewhere other than the East Coast.” In *Irish America*, Reginald Byron’s research concurs that many Famine emigrants did explore the frontier, but concludes that their story remains untold. Byron writes,

“The experience of the Famine-era Irish Catholic immigrants in New York, Boston, and other big cities does not tell the whole story of the Irish in the United States, or even more than a small part of it. We know, for example, that of the 1.8 million immigrants, who landed at the port of New York during the Famine years, 848,000 were Irish (the rest were mainly German); but only 134,000 Irish-born people were resident in New York City when the census of 1850 was taken. Even at the height

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82 Gallagher, 289.  
83 Clark, xiv.  
84 Dezell, 39.
of the Famine migration, 85 per cent of those arriving from Ireland used New York only as a stepping-stone.”

In *The Uncounted Irish*, Margaret Fitzgerald and Joseph King assert that the story of Irish emigration to California remains overlooked because the census data from the first half of the nineteenth century was inadequate. For example, it wasn’t until 1850 that a person’s country of birth was even recorded. *The Uncounted Irish* focuses on those Irish emigrants who chose the frontier over urban communities, and have remained “uncounted” by most historians. Fitzgerald writes, “The rural Irish have been both ignored and denied by historians focusing on ‘city-Irish.’ The fact is that the majority of Irish immigrants in the period before the Civil War, 1815-1860, settled not in the cities but in rural America.” The need for more historiography on the rural Irish in America is apparent, as most historical research has been limited to “city-Irish.”

The historians that have focused their research on the “city-Irish” build a strong case for why most Irish settled relatively near ports of entry. One of the reasons is that Famine emigrants, having survived the hellish journey across the Atlantic, were not eager to embark on another dangerous 3,000-mile journey upon their arrival to the United States. Dennis Clark describes the challenges of the frontier: “The trek west was an epic of discomfort, and later romantic views of it do the reality a disservice. It was chaotic and dirty, plagued by disease and a hapless misfortune for many of those who tied their

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85 Byron, 55.
86 Fitzgerald, x.
87 Fitzgerald, xiii.
hopes to the journey.” 88 In The Irish in America Peter Quinn supports Clark’s descriptions of frontier life: “Out west, the Irish who went to the frontier often wrote of the loneliness and disorientation they experienced amid the wide open spaces other settlers seemed to thrive on.”89

The majority of Irish emigrants who arrived in America during the Famine years had been rural farmers, but their occupations drastically changed upon arrival. In The American Irish, William Shannon explains, “In America they concentrated in the cities and shunned the farms. The first reason was economic. Having arrived in the seacoast cities virtually penniless, they had no funds to travel inland.”90

The Irish are a communal people, and after finding work in the cities, many were content to build their communities there. But many Irish emigrants wanted to escape the slums of eastern cities, and chose to travel west chasing opportunity and seeking fortune across the frontier. The war with Mexico, the gold rush of 1849, and the building of the transcontinental railroad in the 1860’s pulled greater numbers of Irish out west.

Despite all of its inherent danger, the west held a romantic mystique in the minds of Americans, and it presented a new challenge to the Irish. After all, as Golway reminds us, it was an Irishman, John L. O’Sullivan, that coined the phrase “manifest destiny” in 1845 as pre-Civil War America set its sights westward.91 Dennis Clark describes the attraction between the Irish and the west:

88 Clark, 143.
89 Golway, 43.
90 Shannon, 27.
91 Golway, 33.
“As a former subject people, the West for them was the apotheosis of their liberation. For marginal men in a new society, the Western frontier was especially appropriate for the Irish. The Irish as a group had to prove themselves in America, and the West was the place to do it with flair—high in the saddle and hard for the ride. Thus it was that the Irish figured vividly in the creation of the myth of the West, the nation’s epic tale of pioneering, democratic mission, and struggle with disorder.”92

The Gold Rush attracted many emigrants to California in 1849 when Famine emigrants were arriving. It is for this reason that San Francisco, transitioning from Mexican to American authority between 1846-1850, was ripe with opportunity for the Irish emigrants brave enough to embark upon another westward journey. For the Irish who made the journey, they contributed greatly to the city of San Francisco. William Shannon’s research explains that, “No important fortunes were made by Irishmen in the goldfields, but in the later development of San Francisco they were in the forefront.”93 Maguire confirms the success of the San Francisco Irish: “There is not a State in the Union in which the Irish have taken a deeper and stronger root, or thriven more successfully, than California.”94

Before experiencing success in San Francisco, the Irish first had to adapt to this new society. The differences in the societal structure of eastern cities like Boston and New York, and that of San Francisco during the time of Famine emigration were extreme. The most obvious difference results from the fact that Europeans predominantly settled the United States from east to west, therefore some cities on the

92 Clark, 187.
93 Shannon, 87.
east coast had existed for some two hundred years before the establishment of many west coast cities. San Francisco’s population in 1848 was less than one thousand people, compared with the population of New York two years later: a staggering 515,547 inhabitants. California was admitted to the Union in 1850 at a time when New York society had been evolving for over two hundred years. Burchell describes:

“This, though, was the story in the eastern United States, where immigrants found themselves in communities that could have, by 1850, two hundred years of history, where much of the power and status had been handed down from generation to generation within a group of often intermarried families. The immigrant faced an enemy who stood behind massive fortifications.”

Eastern cities at the time of the Potato Famine had extremely stratified societies. The Irish had to struggle for centuries to be accepted there, and success was slow to come. Conversely, San Francisco offered newly arriving Irish emigrants in 1850 opportunities that did not exist on the east coast. In the introduction to California: The Irish Dream, Kerby Miller juxtaposes the emigrant opportunities in cities like Boston and San Francisco during the time of the Famine:

“In eastern cities Irish immigrants—usually poor and unskilled—were obliged to compete for the lowest-paid and most dangerous jobs at the bottom of American urban society. Living in crowded, disease-ridden cellars, shanties, and tenement slums, the Irish in cities such as Boston encountered a firmly-entrenched Yankee Protestant upper- and middle-class whose members regarded the largely Catholic newcomers with resentment and prejudice which sometimes, as in the 1850’s, flared into open hostility and violence. By contrast, when the first waves of Irish immigrants arrived in California the Gold Rush was just underway, San Francisco and Los Angeles were sleepy Mexican pueblos, and the Irish were able to rise in wealth, social status, and political power along with the booming communities which they inhabited and soon dominated by force of numbers, energy, and talent.

95 Burchell, 3.
97 Burchell, 2.
In short, the American western frontier provided the Irish with a much more open and fluid environment than did the nation’s eastern states, and the Irish were quick to take advantage of their unparalleled opportunities.98

Though the majority of famine emigrants remained on the east coast, success came more rapidly to those who reached San Francisco. The ruling Anglo-Protestant class was well established in eastern cities when the Famine emigrants arrived. Conversely, Fitzgerald indicates, in 1850 San Francisco was a city with “no history,” therefore “Protestants and Irish Catholics began the race on the same starting line.”99 Without a ruling class of Native Americans running San Francisco, the Irish were not victimized by the hostile nativist movement that dominated politics and deterred their assimilation on the east coast during the 1850’s. In the nineteenth century, San Francisco welcomed the Irish.100

In *The San Francisco Irish*, R.A. Burchell explains that there were two main differences between the Irish emigrants who arrived on the east coast and those that reached the west coast: the length of time of their previous residence in the United States, and the lack of hostile natives and harsh anti-immigration laws.101 According to Fitzgerald and King in *The Uncounted Irish*, “Know-Nothingism is San Francisco was short-lived and largely ineffective.”102 Unlike the competition on the east coast between blacks and Irish for the lowest paying jobs, on the west coast, the Chinese immigrants

98 Dowling, xxi.
99 Fitzgerald, 321.
100 Clark, 150.
101 Burchell, 38.
102 Fitzgerald, 252.
occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder. In *Hibernia America*, Dennis Clark notes that the Irish actually benefited from the presence of Chinese laborers. Clark writes,

“The Chinese population in the city in an indirect way aided Irish mobility, for it occupied the lowest social and labor position in which the Irish were usually to be found in the nineteenth century. The Irish were able, despite rancor with the Chinese and others, to legitimize their own presence and move quickly to positions of political power and economic advancement.”

R.A. Burchell concurs with Clark: “It is almost true to say that, if the Irish had required the degree of success they achieved in the city, they would have needed to invent the Chinese outsider.” The Irish moved up the social ladder in record time in San Francisco and acquired white-collar jobs for the first time. San Francisco grew with amazingly speed, and the Irish assumed positions of power just as quickly. In *California: The Irish Dream*, Patrick Dowling describes, “Almost overnight, the Irish swept into leadership, as planners, builders, merchants and financiers. Ordinary laborers swiftly advanced to foremen; the more ambitious became leading merchants; and former Irish saloonkeepers became kings of industry, banking, and commerce.” According to R.A. Burchell, the Irish exercised political power in San Francisco within just one decade of the end of the Famine emigration. San Francisco elected its first Irish mayor, Frank McCoppin in 1867. By comparison, Boston elected its first Irish mayor in 1884, and

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103 Clark, 151.  
104 Burchell, 181.  
105 Dowling, 21.
New York did so in 1880. Burchell concludes that the Irish were more successful in San Francisco politics by 1870 than anywhere else in the United States.

Another major difference that influenced culture on the west coast compared with the east coast is that of religion. Mostly English Protestants settled the east coast, and anti-Catholic sentiment dates back to the first colonial settlement in Jamestown in 1607. Conversely, Spanish Catholics settled California, and the missions that still stand in California are a testament to that faith. Arriving in a city that shared their Catholic faith made it much easier for Irish emigrants to assimilate, and made them more hopeful of succeeding there. Dowling explains, “But once arrived in California, the Irish found life radically different from their earlier experiences on the Eastern seaboard, where they had endured harassment and insults because of their adherence to Catholicism in a predominantly Puritan society.” During the famine years, religion had always been a disadvantage for the assimilating Irish in eastern cities, yet in California it actually became an asset to them. Dowling describes the inevitable union of Irish and Spanish faith in California:

“In the more fluid and open frontier society of Spanish California, any discrimination or prejudice the Irish pioneers might possibly have feared because of their race or religion was negligible. Indeed, the Irish vanguard to California was welcomed with open arms by the Spanish, who professed the same Catholic religion. Thus began the romance of two old-world cultures, the Spanish and the Irish, who were united by a common bond: the cross of Christianity. The Irish were to leave their stamp on every epoch of California history: from Spanish

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106 Burchell, 7.
107 Burchell, 154.
108 Dowling, 18-19.
hegemony to Mexican rule to the first (pre-Gold-Rush) settlers to the Gold Rush influx, on to the 1890s and continuing down to the present day.”

The Irish became successful in California, and according to many historians, they did so long before their eastern counterparts. Burchell concludes, “The point is that, given the time, the mid-to later nineteenth century; the place, the United States; and the group, the Irish, their history in San Francisco was, by contrast with that elsewhere, comparatively successful and fortunate.” San Francisco is where the Irish first established a large community, and within less than a decade, it was the size of Philadelphia—a feat that took the Philadelphians 150 years to achieve. In *California: The Irish Dream*, Dowling writes, “California has always been a land of enchantment, from horizon to horizon. Nowhere on God’s green earth could such a vigorous and romantic people as the Irish find a more suitable rebirth.”

**Conclusion**

The assimilation of the Irish emigrants who fled from the Potato Famine in the mid-nineteenth century exemplifies the American dream. Irish emigrants had to overcome one obstacle after another to successfully assimilate in the United States. It began with the failure of their crops and evictions from their farms, and continued with their struggle to survive disease-ridden seaports and ships. When the Irish finally reached American shores, they had the strength to endure the lowest paying and most dangerous

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109 Dowling, xiii
110 Burchell, 184.
111 Clark, 150.
112 Dowling, 15.
jobs in America and to meet these challenges in the face of the scorn and hatred of Native Americans. Famine emigrants did not quickly transition from rags to riches, but they built a foundation in America upon which each succeeding generation could build. In *That Most Distressful Nation* Andrew Greeley describes the gradual ascent of the Irish working class:

> “From canal workers and railroad builders they became policemen, streetcar conductors, school teachers, and clerks. From the coalmines, stockyards, and steel mills they moved into offices, classrooms, and political headquarters. Then some began to go to law school, medical school, and dental school. And of course they flocked to the seminaries and convents.”

As Shannon writes, the second and third generations of Famine emigrants were the first to secure their power in American politics and white-collar professions on the east coast. As this historiography has shown, upward mobility was expedited on the west coast, especially in San Francisco. R.A. Burchell writes that,

> “Overall, developments in San Francisco and its Irish community between 1848 and 1880 ensured that they were a generation ahead of much of the remainder of the United States, where only by 1900 were the Irish ‘beginning to emerge from the immigrant community which the first and second generations had created.’”

The Irish survived British rule in Ireland, and continued to attain success in America. In *Irish America*, Mary Gordon writes,

> “The Irish have managed to do these things no one else could do.” The English told them they couldn’t learn to read, and they produced some of the best literature in the English language. Their church wasn’t supposed to exist, and it became the strongest Catholic Church in the world. A whole population is wiped out by

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113 Greeley, 120.
114 Shannon, 39.
115 Burchell, 184.
famine, and they come here with no skills, no money, no family, and prosper beyond anyones’ expectations.”  

The Irish did “make it” in America and succeeded beyond all expectations, because their fate was intertwined with the fate of America. Dennis Clark poses the question: “Considering the triple handicaps of ethnic, religious, and social disabilities the Irish bore, how is it that they were able to penetrate the mainstream American culture that had originally reviled them?”  

The Potato Famine coincided perfectly with American opportunities in the nineteenth century that had never existed in America until that time, thereby bolstering the success of the Irish in America. The industrialization of cities that required unskilled laborers, the war with Mexico, the Gold Rush, the Civil War, and the building of the transcontinental railroad were all opportunities for the Irish that proved indispensable to their adjustment and assimilation in America.

Today the United States boasts a population of over 44 million people who have some Irish ancestry, or approximately 1 in 7. Roughly five generations have passed since the Irish Potato Famine, and the descendants of its refugees are now thoroughly assimilated Americans. Famine emigrants who were told by nativists one hundred and fifty years ago that being Irish and Catholic was incompatible with becoming American, now have descendants that have become the most successful of all Americans.

The Irish were able to assimilate and succeed in America while sustaining their own values and culture, which gives hope to emigrants around the world today. The

116 Dezell, 72.
117 Clark, xiii
118 Dezell, 9.
119 Byron, 287.
Famine emigrants left Ireland with the hope of a second chance, and America rewarded them. In *Hibernia America* Dennis Clark describes the inception of Irish America:

“For the emigrants the ways of America became a means to stabilize themselves in the face of historic stress. In America a refuge could be found, and a transitional culture formed that was an asylum for several generations until the damages of affliction and disruption could be repaired. By partly fusing with the dominant American culture and partly retaining that which was Irish, the emigrants both pursued their new dispensation and kept a sustaining identity. It was this transitional medium that was Irish-America.”

The historical research of Famine emigrants to America examined herein primarily focuses on the Irish in the eastern cities, though many researchers concede that multitudes of Famine Emigrants headed west. Thanks to R.A. Burchell’s *The San Francisco Irish* and Margaret E. Fitzgerald and Joseph A. Kings’ *The Uncounted Irish* the story of Irish emigrants crossing the frontier has begun to be told. Additionally, three other books on the California Irish provide a more narrow focus: *Forgotten Pioneers* by Thomas F. Prendergast, and *California: The Irish Dream* and *Irish Californians*, both by Patrick J. Dowling. Each of these books provide vignettes on specific families that were successful in California without providing the larger context of the Irish race assimilating into society. In *Irish America* Reginald Byron identifies the void created by historians on the assimilation of the Irish on the west coast:

“They could be argued that these people, whose histories have scarcely begun to be written, were the real heroes and heroines of the Irish diaspora. They were enormously successful in integrating into American society; so successful that they almost immediately vanished into the social and economic landscape of a rapidly industrializing America.”

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120 Clark, 191.
121 Byron, 55.
Further, as Fitzgerald states, “No major studies have been published of the rural Irish of California.”\textsuperscript{122} Clearly, there is a need for much more scholarly work on Irish emigrants in California.

\textsuperscript{122} Fitzgerald, 213.
LESSON PLANS

Into the Melting Pot: The Assimilation of Irish Potato Famine Emigrants in the United States will give fifth grade students a lens through which to view emigration and assimilation to the United States.123 The Irish are just one of many foreign groups that have emigrated to America with the hope of making a better life for themselves. Through their story, the students will better understand the struggles that accompany emigration: leaving home, the journey, arriving in a foreign country, acclimating and assimilating to a new culture, and the hopeful reward of eventual success—The American Dream.

From our study of American history, beginning with the Colonial era, the fifth graders realize that people chose to come to America for many different reasons. We sometimes refer to the three motivational G’s: Gold, God, and Glory, which brought throngs of emigrants to American shores. The Virginia Company established Jamestown to make a profit, the Pilgrims and Quakers settled in America to enjoy religious freedom, and emigrants are still arriving at our shores today seeking citizenship and American opportunities. As the students study the history of American emigrant groups, such as the Potato Famine refugees in the 1840’s and 1850’s, they will also understand that the

123 The nouns “immigrant” and “emigrant” and the verbs “immigrate” and “emigrate” are often used interchangeably in the literature that I researched, and will sometimes appear in direct quotes as used by each author. An “emigrant” is a person that leaves their homeland never to return to live there permanently, whereas an “immigrant” is a person entering a new country to take up permanent residence. For the purposes of my historiography and these lesson plans, the nouns emigrant and emigration and the verb emigrate will be used.
concept of coming to America for freedom and opportunity still exists today in the twenty-first century. As such, this lesson plan meets several of the fifth grade California Social Studies Standards. (See Appendix A).

Though centuries have passed since emigrants first arrived at American shores, the challenges that face them still exist today. From reading from the Social Studies textbook, the fifth graders will understand that America is a pluralistic society, and has been referred to as a “Melting Pot” because it is a mixture of many cultures. We will discuss the positive and negative connotations of the “Melting Pot” theory and contrast it with the “Salad Bowl” theory. Living in America is an advantage for many emigrants because they can bring their culture with them and eat the foods they want, speak their native language, and practice the religion of their choice. Living in a country full of emigrants is also beneficial because we have the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the diversity of many cultures—whether it is food, music, or holiday celebrations. But living in a pluralistic society also poses many challenges to its citizens, such as losing one’s cultural identity in order to be accepted in mainstream society, having tolerance for conflicting belief systems of different emigrant groups, and trying to avoid thinking that one’s culture is superior to another.

The students will read several books to enhance their understanding of the emigrant experience in the United States. In addition, each student will complete a “Family Roots Project” in which they research their own ancestry to gain awareness of their own, unique, personal heritage. This project will encourage cultural awareness, and help nurture respect for the contributions of all cultural groups to America’s richness.
The theme for this Emigration Unit is, “There are many benefits and challenges for emigrants that come to America.” The students will study a range of emigrant groups and ascertain, “What were the benefits of coming to America for this particular emigrant group?” and “What challenges did this particular emigrant group face?” Viewing emigration in this context, from the first European explorers to the present day, will allow the students to realize that the benefits and challenges of emigrating to America have remained constant. When the students research their own family history, this theme will be reinforced as they discover the challenges that their ancestors faced when emigrating, and the benefits that came with becoming an American.

Prior Content Knowledge and Skills

It is preferable that this emigration unit be used towards the end of the fifth grade school year, by which time the students should have a solid overview of American history from American Indian nations’ first contact with Europeans through the writing of our Constitution. It is more powerful for students to understand where their families originated from and how they ended up in America after studying the history of the United States from its inception to present day. This unit will culminate with each student’s Family Roots Project, which will involve researching their ancestors’ emigration history and ethnic customs. This will allow the students to recognize and celebrate the cultural diversity within our own classroom.

In order to participate successfully in this unit of study, students must be proficient with reading and writing at the fifth grade level. The students will be
responsible for reading charts and graphs, and must be able to analyze maps, photographs, drawings, and songs for historical content. The students will also need some basic interviewing and note taking skills, as these will be used when they conduct their research on their Family History. In addition, students need to be familiar with public speaking, and have a cursory knowledge of how to effectively create and use a visual aid (poster) as part of their Family Roots presentation. All of these skills will help foster their understanding of American emigration, and enhance the quality of the Family Roots reports that they will create.

Lesson Content

This lesson plan is designed for two full weeks of 45-minute classes each day, with a Family Roots Project that extends for six additional weeks. This unit will begin with a hook comprised of a simple statement: “America has been historically referred to as a ‘Melting Pot.’” The students will then be asked to take a few minutes to reflect on what images a melting pot brings to mind, and then to do a “quick-write” or journal response on why they think this metaphor has been used to describe our country. Once the students have had time to respond, they will be asked to share their opinions.

Next, share the origin of the “Melting Pot” theory (See Appendix B) and explain that in broad terms, it refers to the diverse society that has been created by the emigrant groups that have come to the United States. Introduce the word “pluralistic” to the students, meaning “more than one,” which describes the cultural diversity in American society. Explain to the students that there are many benefits that America offers...
emigrants from other countries, but that there are also challenges that the emigrants must
overcome in order to assimilate into American society. Remind the students of the
groups that we have studied thus far in Social Studies that arrived in America with unique
cultural backgrounds such as the Pilgrims, the Quakers, African slaves, and French and
Spanish settlers. Considering that these groups immigrated long ago, ask the class if they
think that emigrants still come to our country today, and how their motivations may have
changed. Introduce the “Nativist” movement of the 1850’s that resented foreigners based
on race and religion, and explain to the students that there are many “anti-emigrant”
groups still in existence today. For example, in addition to the Border Patrol that our
country has set up to prevent Mexicans from freely entering our country, Mexican
emigrants also face the challenge of vigilante groups such as the Minuteman Project, who
have taken the law into their own hands. Even once these emigrants have legally
settled in America, they may continue to be victimized by racism in their new
communities. Students will realize that many challenges that faced emigrant groups that
came to America hundreds of years ago still exist today.

New vocabulary for this Unit will be introduced and discussed at this point.
Students will write down the definitions of these terms in their Social Studies notebooks.

Vocabulary:

**Melting Pot:** Large groups of immigrants have settled in the United States creating a
diverse society that is made up of many ethnic groups. The two different Melting
Pot theories will be discussed with the class on Day Two.

124 [www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=576]
**Pluralistic society:** A society that has a number of different ethnic, racial, religious, and social groups.

**Culture:** The attitudes, beliefs, and customs of a group of people that are passed from one generation to another.

**Ethnic custom:** A practice of a certain cultural group that is passed from one generation to another.

**Immigrant:** A person who leaves his or her own country to live permanently in another.

**Famine:** An extreme shortage of food.

**Prejudice:** An unfavorable opinion formed without knowledge of the facts.

**Stereotype:** An idea that many people have about a thing or a group and that may often be untrue or only partly true.

Next, divide the class into two groups. Each group will pick a recorder that will take notes on a sheet of paper. One half of the class will list all of the benefits of living in a pluralistic society, and the other class will brainstorm all of the challenges of living in a pluralistic society.

The results of these lists will be shared orally, and will later be transferred to chart paper that will go on a bulletin board in the classroom to reinforce the theme of this Emigration Unit: “There are many benefits and challenges for emigrants that come to America.” It will be a working list, and as the students learn more about emigration, items will be added to our lists. Then tell the students that it is likely that some of their ancestors immigrated to America and brought some ethnic customs and traditions with them from their native countries. Announce that they will later be learning more about
their family history, and sharing it with the rest of the class as part of the Emigration Unit.

After the initial hook, transition to the first day of the lesson plan content.

**Day One:**

1. Review key terms that were introduced in yesterday’s lesson: Melting Pot, pluralistic society, and ethnic custom.

2. Review the challenges and benefits of living in a pluralistic society that the students drafted yesterday. These should be posted on chart paper on the bulletin board. Let the students know that they will continue to add to these lists as they study emigration, and to be thinking of more examples as the discussion of emigration continues.

3. Students will be reminded of the Melting Pot theory, which is explained below as **THEORY 1**. Point out to the students that, according to this theory, emigrants who come to the United States often adopt our American culture and tend to stop practicing their traditional ethnic customs. Remind students that this is a challenge that emigrants face when trying to assimilate into American society. Discuss why a person would reject their traditional culture in an effort to be socially accepted in a new country, and the positive and negative ramifications of this approach.
THEORY 1: The concept of a melting pot is usually associated with the United States. The trend has been for emigrants to shed their ethnic identities by adopting the dominant ways of American society in order to become successful.

(See Appendix B)

4. Introduce the students to the Salad Bowl theory, (explained below as THEORY 2), which contrasts with the Melting Pot theory of emigration to America. Explain to the students that this theory suggests that, rather than losing one’s native culture when arriving in America, each person’s culture can be shared and celebrated. Students will be reminded that being exposed to a variety of cultures is a benefit of living in a pluralistic society.

THEORY 2: The Salad Bowl theory contrasts with the melting pot theory. In a “melting pot,” native cultures are lost as they blend together, whereas in a “Salad Bowl” each culture retains its integrity, thereby contributing to a successful and unique pluralistic society. (See Appendix B)

5. In a class discussion on these two interpretations of emigration to the United States, students will be asked which one they think happens most often among emigrant groups. Provide examples of how the Salad Bowl theory benefits the lives of all Americans. For example, list all of the different types of ethnic restaurants that are local to your area. Point out that if it weren’t for these emigrant groups, which have moved here to make their native foods available, we would have fewer choices in what we could eat. Students usually make a quick
connection with food, and are grateful that some emigrants choose to share their native customs rather than reject them.

6. Pass out lyrics to *The Great American Melting Pot* (Appendix C), and play the song for students to enjoy. Discuss how the lyrics of the song describe the benefits that America offers her emigrants, and gives hope to those who choose to emigrate here.

Discussion Questions for *The Great American Melting Pot*:

- What benefits does the song suggest that America offers to emigrants?
- Does the song suggest that assimilation into American society is easy or hard?
- What time period is the song describing?

*Day Two:*

1. Pass out the *Emigration Questionnaire* (Appendix D) for students to fill out. Upon completion, each student will share their favorite ethnic custom that they currently practice, and then collect their responses.

2. Next, introduce the concept of “push-pull” factors that have historically lead to large groups of emigrants arriving in the United States around the same time. Then review emigrant groups that the students have already studied including the Virginia Company establishing Jamestown, the African slave trade to the southern colonies, the Quakers settling in Pennsylvania, and the Spanish establishing missions in California. The students will discuss which of these were caused by “push” and “pull” factors.
3. PUSH: Explain that many of America’s emigrants loved their native countries and probably would have chosen to stay there had it not been for political, religious, or economic conditions that “pushed” or forced them to move to the United States. Push factors can be viewed as challenges that the emigrants face in their native countries; for example, the Irish Potato Famine and the Pilgrims suffering under the Church of England.

4. PULL: Explain that at certain points in time America offered more opportunities for emigrants. Emigrants would hear attractive stories about these opportunities and benefits that awaited them in America, which, like a magnet, would “pull” them toward the United States. Examples are the California Gold Rush and the building of the transcontinental railroad.

5. Emphasize that sometimes, both “push” and “pull” factors can affect an emigrant’s fate in America. For example, some Irish emigrants that were “pushed” from Ireland because of the Potato famine in the late 1840’s arrived just in time for the “pull” of the California Gold Rush in 1849.

Day Three:

1. Begin by reviewing the factors that “push” and “pull” emigrants to America, and share examples of the challenges and benefits of different emigrant groups.
2. Next, read *Grandfather’s Journey*, by Allen Say. Before reading, ask the class to consider if this emigrant is more affected by “push” or “pull” factors when emigrating to the United States.

3. After reading *Grandfather’s Journey*, we will discuss how the main character from Japan was “pulled” to America by his desire to see new places. After settling in California, this Japanese immigrant is also “pulled” back to Japan because he misses the old country and his friends. This book will provoke a discussion about the problem that immigrants face when having two homes. Often they are successful in their new country, but still long to return to their native homeland. I will stress with my students that by holding on to one’s ethnic customs, a person stays connected to their native country.

*Day Four:*

1. Begin by reviewing “push” and “pull” factors that influence emigration.

2. Students will then analyze the picture “Here and There: Emigration a Remedy.” (Appendix E) This picture contrasts the conditions in Ireland during the time of the famine with the conditions in America at that time. The students will contrast the two images and understand that drawings such as these would help attract (pull) many Irish emigrants to America during the Famine years. This illustration exemplifies the benefits that emigrants would receive once settled in America.

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Discussion Questions for “Here and There: Emigration a Remedy”

- What differences do you notice between the family that is in Ireland and the one that is in America?
- If you were in Ireland during the famine, would a picture like this motivate you to emigrate to America? Why or why not?
- What benefits does this picture suggest are offered to Irish emigrants in America?
- Have you ever seen an advertisement that made you want to be somewhere else? Explain.

3. Each student will create a poster that advertises an opportunity in a foreign country. This will give them a chance to think creatively about job opportunities that motivate people to emigrate to foreign countries. Posters will be shared and then posted on the bulletin board.

Day Five:

1. Begin by reviewing the “push” and “pull” factors that have influenced emigration. Students will be asked to give examples from emigrant groups that they have studied in American history this year, including the benefits and challenges faced by each group. Remind them of the Japanese emigrant that they read about in *Grandfather’s Journey* who was “pulled” by the attraction of new land and scenery in America. Tell your students that today they will learn from a book called *Irish Immigration* that focuses on the surge of Irish emigration in the 1840’s that resulted from the Potato Famine.
2. Read *Irish Immigration*, pages 4-16 by Murray Pile.126

3. Discuss the “push” factor of experiencing a crop failure in your own country. Explain that many other countries besides Ireland have experienced crop failures, but because Ireland was a British colony at this time and the majority of the population depended on the potato for food and money, it devastated the country.

4. These historical facts on the Potato Famine will be shared with students:
   - Many Irish farmers depended solely on the potato crop for their existence. It was used to pay their rent and feed their families.
   - A fungus that destroyed their crops caused the Potato Famine of 1846-1851, causing starvation and widespread disease amongst the Irish.
   - The Potato Famine is considered the most tragic event in Irish history and it also caused the largest influx of emigrants to America from Ireland.
   - The population of Ireland was reduced by more than two million as a result of the Potato Famine.127

5. Explain that the Irish Potato Famine occurred at a time when the United States was ripe with opportunity for those willing to do tough manual labor. The Gold Rush was on in California, laborers were needed to build the major cities, canals needed building for transportation and drainage, and soon the transcontinental

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127 For more information on the Potato Famine, go to *<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/2807/index.html>*>
railroad would be built. This demand for American labor would ultimately benefit Irish emigrants.

6. Tell the students that Irish Potato Famine emigrants exemplify a pattern that many emigrant groups have experienced. They were “pushed” out of their native country, punished for their ethnic customs in America, but eventually became incredibly successful Americans. This is what many people refer to as The American Dream—emigrating with nothing and ending up a successful American.

7. Share this quotation from an Old Italian story that is displayed at the Ellis Island Museum of Immigration. It exemplifies what many emigrants experienced in their pursuit of the American Dream: “Well, I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I found out three things: fist, the streets weren’t paved with gold; second, they weren’t paved at all; and third, I was expected to pave them.”

Day Six:

1. Begin by reviewing the causes and effects of the Irish Potato Famine on American emigration.

2. Next, ask the students to give examples of emigrant groups they studied that had a hard time assimilating, or adjusting to life in America. Students will be asked to give specific examples of challenges that particular emigrant groups have faced.

Discussion Questions:

128 Taken from a display at Ellis Island Museum of Immigration
a. Why might an American citizen not treat emigrants as equals?

b. How can you tell that a person is an emigrant?

c. How do you think emigrants feel when their native culture is criticized?

3. These questions will help students understand that there are challenges that face emigrants and native citizens that live in a pluralistic society. For example, different languages, religions, skin color, and ethnic customs can prevent emigrants from fitting into mainstream society. Remind the students of the two theories, Melting Pot and Salad Bowl that describe how emigrants try to “fit in” to their new society. Students will realize that each emigrant must decide which native customs to keep and which new customs to adopt.

Discussion Question:

a. Based on what you know about the Irish, do you think that they had an easy or more difficult time assimilating or “fitting in” to American society than other emigrant groups? Why?

Students will probably respond that based on their white skin color and knowledge of the English language that it would be easier for them than other ethnic peoples.

4. Tell the students to listen to an Irish emigration song and to take notes on any words that they hear that help them to understand the emigration story that is being told in the song.
5. Play *Erin’s Lovely Lea* by Willie Clancy.¹²⁹

Discussion Questions:

a. Summarize what you think this song is about.
b. List three images that you think are important in the song.
c. What is the tone or mood of this song?
d. What time period do you think the song is describing?
e. What do you like about the song?
f. What do you dislike about the song?
g. What more would you like to know about the singer/song?
h. Does you think that coming to America offered more challenges or benefits to this emigrant?

   Students will find it hard to understand the story being told in the song due to the Irish accent (brogue) of the singer. We will discuss the words that they recognized to help us analyze the historical content of the song, for example “Yankee boys,” “New York,” or “stars and stripes.”

6. Next, pass out the lyrics of the song and let them listen one more time. Students will have much higher comprehension this time. An important concept to teach about the song is that emigrants are not always at first easily understood—it may take some time and effort to grasp the meaning of their words and actions. For example, ask the students if they knew that “Erin” is the Gaelic word for Ireland, or if they realized that even though many Irish emigrants could speak English, it

was not always easy to understand them, and this was one way that they stuck out in American society and were resented for sounding different. Also discuss the sad tone in the song and look closely at the lyrics that describe being “forced to go” from Ireland. The symbols in the song, such as the green flag and the harp will also be analyzed and discussed as national symbols of Ireland.

Summary of Erin’s Lovely Lea: Set in Ireland in 1867, this patriotic ballad describes the journey of an Irishman across the Atlantic to New York. The trip takes six weeks, and the “Yankee boys” in New York greet the men on board the ship with excitement. Upon arrival, the emigrant is tested for his knowledge of Irish history by being asked a range of questions about Irish patriots, what they did, and where they are buried—and the singer answers each one. The singer longs to return to Ireland and later does so.

Day Seven:

1. Ask students to analyze three pictures that were published in the 1880’s to understand how many Americans viewed the arrival of Irish emigrants at this time in history. (See Appendix F for all three pictures)

   Picture #1: “The Mortar of Assimilation—And the One Element that Won’t Mix”

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130 http://museum.cl.msu.edu/Exhibitions/Virtual/ImmigrationandCaricature/7572-126.html
The editorial that goes with this picture asks, “What is an American?” and depicts the racism that Irish emigrants faced in America. Explain to students that racism continues to be a challenge that emigrant groups must overcome in America today. Students will be asked to answer the following questions about the picture:

- Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
- What symbols do you recognize in the picture? Explain their meanings.
- What does the picture suggest about America giving all emigrants equal treatment?
- How did some Americans view Irish emigrants differently than other emigrant groups? (The Irishman is standing on top of the bowl)

**Picture #2: “Uncle Sam’s Lodging House”**

The caption that goes with this picture has Uncle Sam addressing the Irishman: “Look here, you, everyone else is quiet and peaceable, and you’re all the time a-kicking up a row!” Explain that Irish emigrants were also challenged by stereotypes that included being heavy drinkers. This is illustrated in the picture by a bottle of booze sticking out of the disgruntled Irishman’s pocket.

Students will be asked to answer the following questions about the picture:

- Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
- What symbols do you recognize in the picture? Explain their meanings.
- What details do you notice about the Irishman that differs from the other emigrant groups?

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• Explain the message of this cartoon.

• List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

• What stereotypes of the Irish does this cartoon reinforce?

**Picture #3: “The Irish Declaration of Independence”**

The caption beneath this picture reads “The Irish Declaration of Independence that we are all familiar with.” Explain that the Irish were also stereotyped as the “Fighting Irish” for being quick-tempered, angry, and tough. The servant breaking a plate and brandishing her muscles depicts this stereotype.

Students will be asked to answer the following questions about the picture:

• Describe the action taking place in this cartoon.

• What symbols do you recognize in this picture? Explain their meanings.

• Explain the message of the cartoon.

• What stereotypes of Irish women are being reinforced in this picture?

• What do you think the artist is saying about how the Irish declare their independence?

• List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

• Do you think the slogan “The Fighting Irish” has a positive or negative connotation for their race?

2. Promote class discussion on what these images have in common, as well as how they are different. Afterwards, explain that promoting these negative stereotypes of Irish emigrants is a type of prejudice that made it harder for them to be

accepted in America. Tell the students how harmful stereotypes can be for people, and warn them about believing everything they hear about a certain group of people.

Day Eight:

Divide students into study groups to review key terms from this Emigration Unit, and make flash cards for the vocabulary words that will be on tomorrow’s exam. (See Evaluation: Emigration Exam #1)

Orally review and discuss key terms from this Emigration Unit in preparation for the exam.

Day Nine:

1. Students will complete Emigration Exam #1 (See Evaluation: Emigration Exam #1)

Day Ten:

1. After the students have completed Emigration Exam #1, the two-week Emigration Unit is finished.

2. At this time, the Family Roots Report extension project can begin. Students should be given four weeks to compile research in their Family Roots Notebook, and to submit a rough draft of their Family Roots Report. They will then be given an additional two weeks to type the final draft of their reports, and to prepare backboards that will be used for a visual aid for their oral report presentations.
Oral Reports will be scheduled for the final week of this Unit, with five students presenting each day for approximately five minutes each. Students are encouraged to use primary sources for their presentations, such as photos, maps, music, clothing, heirlooms, and even ethnic food. Sharing Family Roots is a very exciting and festive event in the classroom. The students will celebrate the diversity of culture within their own classroom, and get to know each other better. Students gain an awareness of their own, unique heritage, and also learn to respect the diverse backgrounds of their peers.

3. Teachers must obtain copies of two reference books to be used for blackline masters for the Family Roots Notebook, *My Family Tree Workbook*, by Rosemary A. Chorzempa, and *Climbing Your Family Tree*, by Ira Wolfman. In addition, several websites will need to be accessed to assist students with their genealogy research.

4. New vocabulary for the Family Roots Project needs be introduced at this point. Students will write down the definitions of these terms in their Social Studies notebooks.

134 <www.pbs.org/kbye/ancestors/charts>
<www.workman.com/familytree>
<www.ancestory.com/save/charts/ancchart.htm>
<www.familytreemagazine.com/forms/download.html>
<www.genealogyforum.com/gfaol/beginner/beginner.htm>
<www.familysearch.com/sg/>
<www.usigs.org/index.htm>
Vocabulary:

Generation: The amount of time between the birth of parents and their offspring.

Paternal: The father’s side of the family.

Maternal: The mother’s side of the family.

Ancestor: A relative who lived before you; a parent, grandparent, great-grandparent, and so forth.

Descendant: A person who is born to particular parents, grandparents, and more distant ancestors.

Nationality: Country or nation where your ancestors originated.

5. The teacher should model their own family tree on the overhead projector, explaining nationalities on both maternal and paternal sides. This reinforces new vocabulary words such as generation, ancestors, descendant, and nationality.

6. Explain that they will begin researching their own family history to find out where and when their ancestors emigrated. They will be responsible for completing family history worksheets in their Family Roots Notebook, a typed report on their findings, and an oral report with a visual aid as a culminating activity at the end of this Family Roots Project. (See Evaluation #2 for Report Outline)
Day Eleven:

1. Create Family Roots Notebooks from the resources acquired for the Family Roots Project, and then distribute research notebooks along with the Family Roots Report Outline and Project Extensions. (See Evaluation #2)

2. Model teacher Family Roots Report on the overhead projector, to explain how to sequence their family history in chronological order, beginning with great grandparents on both paternal and maternal sides and ending with himself or herself.
**Evaluation #1**

*Emigration Exam*

**VOCABULARY:** Match each vocabulary word with its definition. (5 points each)

1. Culture____
2. Ethnic custom____
3. Immigrant____
4. Descendant____
5. Prejudice____
6. Famine____
7. Stereotype____

A. An idea that many people have about a thing or a group and that may often be untrue or only partly true.
B. A practice of a certain cultural group that is passed from one generation to another.
C. A person who is born to particular parents, grandparents, and more distant ancestors.
D. The attitudes, beliefs, and customs of a group of people that are passed from one generation to another.
E. An extreme shortage of food.
F. An unfavorable opinion formed without knowledge of the facts.

G. A person who leaves his or her own country to live permanently in another.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS:** Answer each of the following questions in a fully developed paragraph on a separate sheet of paper. (20 points each)

1. Compare and contrast the two Melting Pot Theories: America as a “Melting Pot,” and America as a “Salad Bowl.” Which theory do you believe is most true in our society and why? Give specific examples in your explanation.

2. How do you think Americans benefit from living in a pluralistic society? Give specific examples to support your opinion.

3. How does living in a pluralistic society challenge Americans? Give specific examples to support your opinion.

4. If you were somehow forced to emigrate to a different country, where would you want to go and why? Which ethnic customs would you try to preserve in your new home, and which might you be willing to give up? Explain.

*Immigration Exam #1 Answer Key*

**Vocabulary:**

1. D
2. B
3. G
4. C
5. F
6. E
7. A

Total Points Possible: 35
Essay Questions:

1. Answers should include that Theory 1 (Melting Pot) involves emigrants losing their traditional ethnic customs in order to assimilate into the dominant American culture. Theory 2 (Salad Bowl) suggests that emigrants keep their traditional ethnic customs and share them in America.

2. Benefits of living in a pluralistic society could include sharing customs, foods, games, language, music, and gaining cultural awareness.

3. Challenges of living in a pluralistic society could include language barriers, prejudice between different cultures, and accepting differences in family structure, religion, and education.

4. This is a subjective response and should be graded according to content and effort.

Total Points Possible: 80

Total Points Possible for entire exam: 115
Family Roots Report Outline

I. Introduction
   a. Provide a brief overview of who you are, your nationality(ies) and where your ancestors came from on both sides of your family.

II. Father’s side of family
   a. Arrival in America (approximate year)
   b. Settled in what area of the United States
   c. Interesting facts/stories
   d. Nationality (ies)

III. Mother’s side of family
   a. Arrival in America (approximate year)
   b. Settled in what area of the United States
   c. Interesting facts/stories
   d. Nationality (ies)

IV. Family Traditions Passed Down (both sides!)
   a. Holiday customs/celebrations
   b. Special foods, music, crafts, skills
   c. Special traditions

V. Conclusion
   a. Summarize findings
   b. Favorite traditions
   c. Include the most interesting thing that you learned about your family

In addition to this roots report, students will pick one of the project extensions on the following page to complete along with their Report.
Family Roots Project Extensions

(Please check one!)

_____ 1. Write a fictional narrative from the perspective of a relative that has emigrated to America. Describe their homeland, the journey across, or adjusting to life in the United States.

_____ 2. Research one of the countries that you have ancestors from. Using an encyclopedia and books from the library, find out more about your heritage by studying its culture. Create a brochure advertising this country.

_____ 3. Interview one of your relatives (not a parent) to find out more about your family history. Work with your teacher to develop a list of interesting interview questions. You can use a tape recorder, a video camera, or record their responses in a notebook.

_____ 4. Design an illustration related to the theme of emigration. It could be a poster advertising an emigration route, a specific map, or a scene depicting an emigrant’s journey.

_____ 5. Create your own project.

Describe your idea

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Teacher Approval_____________
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Supporting California State Standards

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

1. A Students correctly apply terms related to time, including past, present, future, decade, century, and generation.

2. Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.

3. Students use map and globe skills to determine the absolute locations of place and interpret information available through the map’s legend, scale, and symbolic representations.

4. Students judge the significance of the relative location of a place (e.g., close to a harbor, trade routes) and analyze how those relative advantages or disadvantages can change over time.

Research, Evidence and Point of View

1. Students differentiate between primary and secondary sources.

2. Students pose relevant questions about events encountered in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, maps, art and architecture.
Historical Interpretation

1. Students identify and interpret the multiple causes and effects of historical events

Cultural Literacy

To develop cultural literacy, students must:

1. Understand the rich, complex nature of a given culture: its history, geography, politics, literature, art, drama, music, dance, law, religion, philosophy, architecture, technology, science, education, sports, social structure, and economy.

2. Take pride in their own cultural heritages and develop a multicultural perspective that respects the dignity and worth of all people.

National Identity

To understand this nation’s identity, students must:

1. Recognize that American society is and always has been pluralistic and multicultural, a single nation composed of individuals whose heritages encompass many different national and cultural backgrounds.

Grade 5 California History-Social Science Standards

5.4.3. Describe the religious aspects of the earliest colonies (e.g., Puritanism in Massachusetts, Anglicanism in Virginia, Catholicism in Maryland, Quakerism in Pennsylvania).

5.8 Students trace the colonization, immigration, and settlement patterns of the American people from 1789 to the mid-1800s, with emphasis on the role of
economic incentives, effects of the physical and political geography, and transportation systems.

5.8.1. Discuss the waves of immigrants from Europe between 1789 and 1850 and their modes of transportation into the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys and through the Cumberland Gap (e.g., overland wagons, canals, flatboats, steamboats).

4.8.4. Discuss the experiences of settlers on the overland trails to the West (e.g., location of the routes; purpose of the journeys; the influence of the terrain, rivers, vegetation, and climate; life in the territories at the end of these trails).
Popular use of the melting-pot metaphor is believed to have derived from Israel Zangwill's play The Melting Pot, which was first performed in Washington, D.C. in 1908. The play was an adaptation of William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet, set by Zangwill in New York City.

The melting pot idea is most strongly associated with the United States, particularly in reference to "model" immigrant groups of the past. Past generations of immigrants in America, it is argued by some, became successful by working to shed their historic identities and adopt the ways of their new country. Typically immigrants absorbed the ways of the "host" society, while loosening to varying degrees their connection to their native culture.

APPENDIX C
MELTING POT VS. MULTICULTURALISM:
THEORY 2
The idea of multiculturalism is often put forward as an alternative to assimilation. This theory, which contrasts to the melting pot theory, is described as the salad bowl theory, or, as it is known in Canada, the cultural mosaic. In the multicultural approach, each "ingredient" retains its integrity and flavor, while contributing to a successful final product. In recent years, this approach is officially promoted in traditional melting-pot societies such as Canada and Britain, with the intent of becoming more tolerant of immigrant diversity. It is difficult to assess the degree to which a government can influence the manner of integration of immigrants and the extent to which it is up to the immigrants themselves. Immigrant communities in the United States, for example, display the influences of both multicultural and melting pot approaches.

The decision of whether to support a melting pot or multicultural approach has developed into an issue of much debate. Many multiculturalists argue that the melting pot theory is simply an instrument of intolerance that forces third world peoples and other immigrants to abandon their cultures in order to be accepted into mainstream society. Assimilationists (as proponents of the melting pot theory are called), on the other hand, assert that multiculturalism, as a form of communitarianism, will only destroy the fabric of society due to the ethnic divisions and economic burden that multiculturalist policies create. This debate includes a number of issues: idealism and realism, socialism and capitalism, and more.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melting_pot#Origins_of_the_term
APPENDIX D
"THE GREAT AMERICAN MELTING POT"
SONG FROM SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK
My grandmother came from Russia
A satchel on her knee,
My grandfather had his father's cap
He brought from Italy.
They'd heard about a country
Where life might let them win,
They paid the fare to America
And there they melted in.
Lovely Lady Liberty
With her book of recipes
And the finest one she's got
Is the great American melting pot
America was founded by the English,
But also by the Germans, Dutch, and French.
The principle still sticks;
Our heritage is mixed.
So any kid could be the president.
You simply melt right in,
It doesn't matter what your skin,
It doesn't matter where you're from,
Or your religion, you jump right in
To the great American melting pot
The great American melting pot.
Ooh, what a stew, red, white, and blue.
America was the New World
And Europe was the Old.
America was the land of hope,
Or so the legend told.
On steamboats by the millions,
In search of honest pay,
Those nineteenth century immigrants sailed
To reach the U.S.A.
They brought the country's customs,
Their language and their ways.
They filled the factories, tilled the soil,
Helped build the U.S.A.
Go on and ask your grandma,
Hear what she has to tell
How great to be American
And something else as well.
APPENDIX E
EMIGRATION QUESTIONNAIRE
Imagine that you were forced to move to a new country with your family. This new country will be totally different from where you have lived your whole life. Its people may eat different foods, play different games, and celebrate different holidays than what you are accustomed to. What are some of your ethnic customs that you would want to hold on to? Explain which customs, traditions, or rituals are most important to you in America and why you would not want to give them up in a foreign country:

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This cartoon, appearing July 15, 1848, appears to be anonymous. It portrays a poor family in Ireland and a prosperous family living abroad. Notice the strained inclusion of a shovel among the prosperous family, a symbol of labor.

The entire caption reads "Here and There; or, Emigration a Remedy."

http://vassun.vassar.edu/~staylor/FAMINE/Punch/Emigration/Emigration.html
On March the sixth in sixty-three we sailed from Queenstown Quay
With the Fenian boys from Erin’s isle bound for Amerikay
While journeying with that happy band, as you may plainly see
We were forced to go from sweet Cloghroe down Erin's lovely Lea

For six long weeks we ploughed the sea, from Queenstown Quay in Cork
Just like an arrow through the sky till we landed in New York
Then the Yankee boys with stars and stripes came flocking around to see
That gallant band of Fenian lads from Erin's lovely Lea

Well one of them stepped up to me and asked me did I know
The green hills of Tipperary or the Glen of Aherlow?
Or could I tell where Crowley fell, his native land to free?
And the tower that Captain Mackey sacked, down Erin's lovely Lea

Yes I can tell where Crowley fell, 'twas in Kilclooney Wood
And the tower that Captain Mackey sacked, 'twas by his side I stood
When he gave the word, we raised the crying that made the tyrant frown
And we raised the green flag o'er our heads, the harp without the crown

The next thing that he asked me is where your Wolfe Tone's body lay?
Or could I tell the resting place of Emmet's sacred clay?
Or did I know of bold Dwyer, the Wicklow mountain lion?
Or the three Manchester martyrs - Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien?

When I was leaving Ireland, we came through sweet Kildare
And if I do not now mistake, Wolfe Tone lies sleeping there
While coming round through Dublin Town, we passed Glasnevin too
And there young Robert Emmet lies, a patriot loyal and true

And now I'm tired of roving and the seas I will cross o'er
To feel the clasp of honest hands when I return once more
When I go home through sweet Cloghroe the boys will welcome me
And we'll help to float a Fenian boat, down Erin's lovely Lea

~Willie Clancy
The accompanying Puck editorial asks, "What is an American?" In response, it answers that an American is the assimilation of all immigrants who settled in this country, and urges everyone to be American, American born or American made. What else is the illustration communicating?

http://museum.cl.msu.edu/Exhibitions/Virtual/ImmigrationandCaricature7572-126.html
Caption: "Uncle Sam's Lodging House"

Source: Puck
Date: June 7, 1882
Artist: J. Keppler

Second caption reads: "UNCLE SAM [to Irishman]: 'Look here, you, everybody else is quiet and peaceable, and you're all the time a-kicking up a row!"

Puck's accompanying editorial was virulently anti-Irish: "the raw Irishman in America is a nuisance, his son a curse. They never assimilate; the second generation simply shows an intensification of all the bad qualities of the first. They are a burden and a misery to this country." Further, Irish had corrupted our politics, lowered the standards of domestic service, and waged an "imbecilic and indecent war" against the English government. The time had come to clear the Irishman from Uncle Sam's lodging house, where all races and nationalities, except the Irish, got along with each other!

Would this editorial cartoon have been drawn not using caricature? Compare Irish and non-Irish caricatures in this cartoon. Is there a difference in the nature of caricature between the "good" guests and the presumed bad one?

http://museum.msu.edu/Exhibitions/Virtual/ImmigrationandCaricature/7572225.html
The Irish Declaration of Independence, May 9, 1883

This cartoon, published in 1883, portrays a stereotypical image of the Irish American woman who is large, with big feet and muscular arms and a violent, domineering temper. Like the image of the violent pug-nosed Irish man, this image of the Irish woman as large, coarse, and vulgar reinforces the idea that the Irish are unnatural, measured by their deviance from normative gender roles.

http://www.hsp.org/files/irishdeclaration.jpg