

SDG15 Seeding Sustainability

Micro Module 2: Food Sovereignty and Security



MM2: Food Sovereignty and Security

Programme Phase 1: Research and Development

Lesson 6 Could you survive on...?

Subjects: English; History;
Home Economics

Lesson Title and Summary: Could you survive on...?

The pre-famine diet in Ireland is considered one of the most unusual in the world. It looks at key differences in diet between the rural poor and elite and how the diet was impacted by natural and man-made forces. This lesson encourages discussion and research on past and present diets, based on the listening task completed before the lesson.

Vocabulary: Famine; Monotony; Import; Social Security; Seed Catalogue

In this lesson, the learner will:

- actively listen for specific detail
- reflect on the information they have listened to
- share opinions and ideas
- summarise and synthesise information
- apply critical thinking skills to information

Materials

- Flipped Classroom Task: Could you survive on a pre-famine diet?
- Podcast episode: <https://tinyurl.com/1nukr04y>
- Poster paper
- Markers



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ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

*** Learners need to complete Flipped Classroom Task: Could you survive on a pre-famine diet? before doing this lesson.*

Activity 1 Flipped classroom task review (10 mins)

- 1) In pairs, share answers to the pre-listening questions from the Flipped Classroom Task.
- 2) Review the answers to the listening activity in the Flipped Classroom Task as a whole group.

Activity 2 Facilitated research (40 mins)

- 1) Put learners into small groups of 3. Once the groups are formed, ask them to decide who will be:
 - The timekeeper: decides how much time should be spent on each question and moves the group through the research, keeping time. Must also participate in the research.
 - The recorder: writes down the ideas that are researched in the group. Must also participate in the research.
 - The spokesperson: summarises the group research and ideas to the whole class. Must also participate in the research.
- 2) Put the research questions on the board and give the groups 1-2 minutes of preparation time. The timekeeper needs to decide how much time to spend on each question (there will be 20 mins total research time) and get the timer ready, the recorder can collect the poster paper and markers.
- 3) Give the groups 20 minutes to research the following questions (monitor and assist where needed).
 - What are the top three items consumed on average in Ireland?
 - Are you surprised at this? Why do you think people consume these items in great volume?
 - Are the top 3 items easily be locally grown/produced or are they imported?
- 4) Come together as a whole group and ask each spokesperson to summarise the thoughts and ideas of their group (for the final 10 minutes). Assign the extra questions in the Extension Box for homework, or in a follow up lesson.

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REFLECTIVE EXERCISE: 3-2-1 (10 mins)

- Three things they feel they have learnt from the tasks.
- Two things they found most interesting and would like to explore more.
- One – their opinion they have about the tasks.

Use Post-its or a mentimeter survey - www.mentimeter.com - to gather reflections

EXTENSION / REDUCTION ACTIVITIES:

Reduction: For a shorter lesson, complete Activity 1 and Steps 1-3 in Activity 2. Assign Step 4 as an out-of-class writing task. Learners can take photographs of their recorder's notes to assist them in writing up a summary of their group's ideas. This can be submitted as a homework assignment or can be used to prompt further discussion in the next class.

Extension: For a longer lesson, continue to research modern-day diets in Ireland.

- If situations like import delays or natural disasters were to happen, would we be able to source enough of these items (top 3 items consumed in Ireland) to sustain the country?
- How would climate change impact the consumption of these items?
- Could we live healthily with only these 3 items in our diet?
 - Why/why not?

MEDIA BOX: (materials, online video links, extra resources, case studies etc)

Could you survive on a pre-famine Irish Diet (30:32min)

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1UfJNenQfjiV3iNAK6v010?context=spotify%3Ashow%3A2a2URhT3m5IPhb9Xp8dNWo&si=H1k4dj6KSKi487CXIt6gpw&nd=1>

Monoculture and the Irish Potato Famine:

https://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/agriculture_02

Quakers & The Famine: <https://www.historyireland.com/18th-19th-century-history/quakers-the-famine/>

LOCAL TRIP / EXPERTISE

Invite a local chef or forager to hold a cooking demonstration and tasting using ingredients from the pre-famine diet.

Have learners develop recipes based on the pre-famine diet and local ingredients.

Linked learning: Media Communication Modules 1-4: 1. Producing a video; 2. Pecha Kucha Presentation; 3. Poster; and 4. Podcast.

MM2; L6TG COULD YOU SURVIVE ON A PRE-FAMINE DIET?



ANSWER KEY

- a) Adult males consumed and average of just over 6kg of potatoes per day.
- b) Landless labourers, small plot farmers with large families.
- c) Availability of heating- i.e. open fire, what utensils they had- pot, basket, eating communally by hand.
- d) The way the potatoes were cooked allowed for some variety, i.e. ember-cooked potatoes had darker and textured skins, while pot-boiled were softer.
- e) Accompaniments varied according to season and region. Dips like skimmed or butter milk, water and pepper, fermented residue of oats. Coastal communities- seaweed, shellfish, commercial activity- herrings and other cheap market foods.
- f) Depending on potato stocks/time of year- low stocks 2 potato meals per day.
- g) A lot of people in today's times consider it a limited diet in terms of vitamins, comparing the rural poor to their counterparts in industrialised Britain, the diet is quite healthy, the accompaniments like seaweed, shellfish and herring provided micronutrients.
- h)
- Seasonal collapse: transition period July-Aug when previous harvest stocks are depleted and people are waiting to pull new crops
 - Lack of social security system: no support for those who are without food in the transition period
 - Land producing crop: putting pressure on the land to return high volume of crop each year, crop might fail which leads to localised famine.
 - Imports: cheap crop importation like Indian meal or maize to fill the gaps of dwindling crop.
- i) They may have partially cooked the potatoes so they were harder in the middle to slow down digestion.
- j) The more elite members of society would have typically consumed trout, eggs, veg, alcohol, oats, bread, potatoes, meat and butter.
- k) Places like Cork would have had access to more varieties of food like dried fruits, sugar, oats etc. Seed catalogues from bigger cities show great varieties in the types of fruit and vegetables that were cultivated. These diets were accessed by the Irish elite rather than rural poor.
- l) He didn't enjoy the diet and wouldn't have found it easy to continue living on it. Learner's own ideas.

MM2; L6WS COULD YOU SURVIVE ON A PRE-FAMINE DIET?



The diet of the rural poor in Ireland prior to the Famine is one of the most unusual in modern history. In The Irish History Podcast, presenter Fin Dwyer, tries out the diet and chats to Regina Sexton, a food historian in University College Cork about how people consumed and flavoured this diet.

Before listening to the episode, answer these questions.

a) What do you think the pre-famine diet largely consisted of?

b) Do you think that many people in Ireland may eat similarly to the pre-famine diet, today? Why/why not?

c) List anything you already know about the pre-famine diet.

1. Open the link to the episode; ['Could you survive on a pre-famine diet? I tried...'](#)

2. Listen and answer the following questions.

a) Why is the pre-famine diet in Ireland considered one of the strangest in the modern world?

b) Who was considered the 'rural poor' in Ireland?

c) What determined how the pre-famine diet was cooked?

d) How did the cooking method impact the diversity of the diet?

e) In what ways did people try to avoid the monotony of the diet?

MM2; L6WS COULD YOU SURVIVE ON A PRE-FAMINE DIET?



f) How did mealtimes vary?

g) How healthy was the pre-famine diet?

h) Describe some of the pressures mentioned:

- Seasonal collapse:
- Lack of social security:
- Land producing crop:
- Imports:

i) What was one of the examples given to explain how people of the time may have dealt with hunger when potato stocks were low?

j) How did the diet of the more elite of society differ from the rural poor?

k) What do you notice about the variety of food that was available in bigger cities?

l) What was the presenter's overall feelings about the pre-famine diet he lived on for the day? Would you agree with him?