Children in the Irish famine

‘Ireland in Schools’

A. Healthy Ireland  C. Famine strikes  E. Destitution  G. Relief
B. Inside Irish cabins  D. Eviction  F. Orphans  H. Emigration

A. Healthy Ireland

1. Irish Peasant Girl
   Watercolour
   by
   Frederick
   Goodall
   1845
   British Museum, London

2. Children Dancing at the Crossroads
   Trevor Fowler
   c. 1850
B. Inside Irish cabins

3. Scene in an Irish Cabin
Erskine Nicol
1851
Sheffield Art Museums

4. Interior of the cabin of J. Donoghue on O’Connell’s estate
Pictorial Times
7 February 1846
C. Famine strikes

5. The Discovery of the Potato Blight in Ireland
   Daniel McDonald
   c. 1847 University College Dublin

Far West a grim shadow was seen, as 'tis said, LIKE A SPECTRE FROM FAMINE AND PESTILENCE BRED; His gaunt giant-form, with pale Poverty wed.


The fell Spectre advanc'd - who the horrors shall tell OH HIS GALLOPING STRIDE, AS HE SOUNDED THE KNEEL OF THOUSANDS ON THOUSANDS WHO 'NEATH HIS EYE FELL?
8. Destitution
Failure of the potato crop
Pictorial Times
22 August 1846

9. Searching for potatoes
Cahera
Illustrated London News
20 February 1847

“At Cahera ... a famished boy and girl turning up the ground to seek for a potato to appease their hunger.”
10. Searching for potatoes in a stubble field
Illustrated London News
22 December 1849
'The people were digging ... like dogs after truffles ... in the hope of finding a few potatoes the owner might have overlooked ... it is the only means by which the gleaners could hope to get a meal.'

D. Eviction

11. A farming family defending their home against eviction
Pictorial Times
2 January 1847
Evicted families often built temporary shelters from the debris of their 'tumbled' cabins, known as scalpeens. The less fortunate got 'scalps' - holes less than a metre deep, covered with sticks or turf. They were eventually made to leave even these. A considerable number of those evicted in Mayo in 1848 were reported to have died on the roadside.

E. Destitution

13. Beggars on O’Connell’s estate
Pictorial Times
14 February 1846
Bridget was not only without a home, she and her children were ill with fever, and she was pregnant. The child was born dead and her thirteen-year-old son died of hunger.

F. Orphans

16. Starving child
Anonymous
watercolour
C. 1850
National Library
of Ireland

17. Orphan girl
at Crossmolina
Co. Mayo
Anonymous
drawing
C. 1850
National Library
of Ireland
A number of evangelical missionary groups made relief conditional on conversion to the Protestant faith. One of the most controversial proselytisers was Rev. Alexander Dallas who established schools in Connemara during the Famine, including this one.

To ease the food crisis, the government imported Indian corn (maize) from America - enough in the first instance to feed half a million people at a rate of 450 grams of meal a day. The aim was not to feed all the people but to regulate the price of provisions. When sales began in Cork depots in April 1846, "the crowds of poor persons who gathered round them were so turbulently inclined as to require the interference of the police, who remained there throughout the day."
20.
Central Soup depot Cork
Illustrated London News
13 March 1847

21.
A government official’s daughter, Miss Kennedy, seven years old, distributing clothing
Kilrush
Illustrated London News
22 December 1849
Miss Kennedy’s daily occupation was ‘distributing clothing to the wretched children brought around her by their more wretched parents... one woman crouched like a monkey... drawing around her the only rag she had left to conceal her nudity.’
H. Emigration

22. Leaving Ireland - the priest's blessing
Illustrated London News
10 May 1851

'None perhaps feel more severely the departure of the peasantry than the Roman Catholic clergy. Yet none take a more active part in seeing them safely out of the country ... my rev. friend ... had a word of advice to Pat, ... and he made a promise to Dan to take care of the "old woman", until the five pounds came to his "Reverence" to send her over to America ... he turned his moistened eyes towards heaven, and asked the blessing of the Almighty upon the wanderers during their long and weary journey.'

23. Emigrants arriving at Cork harbour
Illustrated London News
10 May 1851

Complaining of the untiring persecution of hotel touters, the writer continued, 'No sooner is the red plaid of an Irish emigrant girl, or the unbuttoned shirt-collar of a Kerryman recognised, than he or she is beset by those harpies, or mancatchers. It is sometimes impossible to escape, except by main force, and by the aid of the police.'
24. The Last Hour in the Old Land
Margaret Allen
c. 1877
Gorry Gallery
Dublin

25. Irish emigrants on the Mersey
Pictorial Times
6 June 1846