



## **Paddy's Lament, Ireland 1846-1847: Prelude to Hatred**

*Thomas Gallagher*

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Ireland in the mid-1800s was primarily a population of peasants, forced to live on a single, moderately nutritious crop: potatoes. Suddenly, in 1846, an unknown and uncontrollable disease turned the potato crop to inedible slime, and all Ireland was threatened. Index.

## **Paddy's Lament, Ireland 1846-1847: Prelude to Hatred Details**

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## **From Reader Review Paddy's Lament, Ireland 1846-1847: Prelude to Hatred for online ebook**

### **John says**

This book will make you cry. I learned about the Irish Famine in history class years ago, but Gallagher makes it come alive. The suffering was enormous, and he says it's now considered the worst famine of the 19th century. As if the famine itself wasn't bad enough, the conditions on the "coffin ships" that brought Irish emigrants to America were appalling. A quarter of the people died en route. What broke my heart to read were the descriptions of how important it was to the Irish to have a decent burial, and even the poorest of the poor kept a little money hidden away for their funeral, so they could be buried in consecrated ground. During the famine, conditions got so bad that people were buried in mass graves, without even a prayer said over them, and others were buried at sea. Both of these were affronts to the Irish view of death. Not to mention the fact that so many had to emigrate to America, knowing that they would never go back to Ireland, and would be buried in a strange land. You alternate between rage at the British and heartbreak for the victims of this terrible famine.

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### **Bethany says**

Three and a half stars. (If you ever want to know what the Irish have against the English, I suggest starting with this book.)

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### **Pam says**

This was the first book I read of this period in history. It was fascinating and heartbreaking. Those who don't remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Someday I hope that humans will learn they can't treat one another this way.

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### **Karen says**

Wonderful thorough research, well written - it gives the story of the Irish famine with heart wrenching agony so that people never forget what the Irish Catholic population went through and why - this was not an accidental famine caused by the potato blight, but a deliberate attempt to get rid of a group of people that the British people considered less than human.

A must read for anyone who cares about humanity.

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### **Jon Manchester says**

"...although three quarters of Ireland's cultivable land was in "corn" -- a general term that included such grains as wheat, oats, and barley -- almost all of it was shipped to England. The cattle and sheep grazed in

Ireland, and the pigs fed, were likewise not eaten in Ireland but sent to Britain for consumption by either the British people or those maintaining her colonies."

"...anything left over was needed for the tithe (one-tenth the value of his produce) to the Anglican church, to which he did not belong."

The potato is "a remarkable source of protein, amino acids, and all the important mineral elements, such as nitrogen, iron, calcium, magnesium, sulphur, chlorine, and potassium...it was capable of preventing scurvy, building and protecting sound teeth, and supplying all the energy needed for a good day's work."

"Even in good years, July was known as 'Hungry July' for the winter supplies were often exhausted before the potatoes were fit to dig."

"During the winter of 1846-47 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."

"For every death on board an American ship, there were three on board a British; for every diseased person arriving in America aboard an American ship, there were five aboard a British."

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### **Dana says**

Every single person of Irish descent should read this book. Hands down one of the best - and most painful - slices of history I have ever read.

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### **Niall O says**

Fantastic but harrowing read. Would highly recommend to anyone who wants to learn the truth about the Irish Famine

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### **Nannie Bittinger says**

Painful to read. Very extensive research judging by the bibliography and end notes. Such negative generalizations made about the Catholic Irish back then. Same thing going on today, just a different nationality and religion. Do we never learn?!

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### **East Bay J says**

The potato famine in Ireland starting in 1846 killed over a million Irish, more from disease than starvation and sent many hundreds of thousands across the ocean to the United States and Canada.

In *Paddy's Lament*, Thomas Gallagher does an outstanding job of relating the story of the blight, famine and exodus. The book is highly engaging and carries the reader along at a fast pace, as horrible as the events are. Gallagher's inclusion of statistics, newspaper articles, letters and eyewitness testimony coupled with his use of invented but appropriate dialogue makes the read well rounded and engaging. His attention to detail and in depth examination of life in Ireland, aboard the British ships that took the Irish across the ocean and life in New York and other U.S. cities is informative and extraordinary. You get a strong sense of who these people were and what their motivation was as well as a great deal of respect for the strong, good natured and resilient 1800's Irish. You also get the full and horrible realization that the English government, who ruled Ireland at the time, differed little from Germany's Nazis in the 1940's. Perhaps the main difference is the Nazis were direct in their extermination, whereas the English government murdered slowly through laws and poor governing. This also explains the deep seated hatred of the Irish towards the English, unlike the discrimination of the English toward the Irish, which seems to have no explanation other than ignorance.

*Paddy's Lament* is well written, moving and educational and serves as an excellent way to better understand the Irish Potato Famine.

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### **Donna says**

No doubt we've all heard of the Irish potato famine. But I'd bet unless you're a direct descendant of those affected, or a history buff, you have no real concept of the horrors of the famine, the role of England's parliament and the media, and the aftermath that shook Ireland for more than 100 years after. I think this book should be mandatory reading for all high school students, not just for the history, but as a tool for critical discussion of moral, political and social issues that are utterly contemporary.

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### **Carole says**

Without exaggeration I can say this is one of the best books I have ever read. This well written investigation and revelation of the near termination of the Irish people during the potato famine at the hands of the British is one that should be read by all interested in history. The cruel history of Ireland under rule of England is thoroughly laid out here. Even the African American slave was treated better by his slave masters in America in that he was fed the waste and guts of hogs, the Irish were left to starve slowly to death. Can England ever be forgiven of her crimes against this humanity, the Irish? Pity those that stood in judgement before a just God. This book should be required reading in all high school history classes. Pity my poor ancestors...God rest their souls.

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### **Amy Karon says**

A must-read for anyone interested in Irish immigration to the U.S., the potato famine, and British oppression of the vast Irish peasantry (a.k.a how to be a horrid landlord). Deeply researched and sure to fascinate, regardless of whether this is your first book about Ireland or your hundredth.

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## Glen says

This is the third book I have read about The Great Hunger (aka, The Irish Famine) and it is by far the best. Gallagher's prose is lively and forceful, his descriptions, although at times gut-wrenching, are very good indeed. Though the book is very well documented, he writes as a humanist first and a social scientist second, so the felt quality of the disaster that befell Ireland in the mid-19th century is transmitted to the reader in all its bewilderment, despair, physical and mental misery, and outrage. Several reviewers have commented that this was a hard book to read, and while I think I know what they mean (when Gallagher writes about what diphtheria does to a human body, for example, you may want to set aside any food or drink for awhile), I found it very hard to put down. My only criticism is that in his depiction of the journey of the "coffin ship" the *Mersey* and the characters he creates to detail the voyage, he crosses a bit over from history into historical fiction, but he does not conceal what he is doing, and in the end it has an effect similar to that of literary journalists like Tom Wolfe or Hunter Thompson when they use the devices of the novelist to depict real events. Highly recommended reading.

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## Mikala Valosin says

The book Paddy's Lament written by Thomas Gallagher provides, in great detail, the event of Ireland's great potato famine, as well as firsthand accounts of what life was like for the Irish and how unresponsive Great Britain truly was. By reading this book I have learned why the tension exists between Britain and Ireland and at the level of which it does because when Ireland was in a dire time of need the British offered no help and rather than cutting back on the exports they received from Ireland, they continued taking in a majority of the livestock, including pigs, sheep, and cattle as well as the grains such as barley, wheat, and oats grown there. Most people living in Britain did not feel bad for those in Ireland and blamed them for overpopulating their country and being unable to satisfy the needs of their people. This only heightened the tension between the two countries and developed a deeper hatred where Britain was tired of their states thinking that they would come save the day and provide everything for them. Farmers went to bed one night with luscious and plentiful crop, but woke up to a mysterious fog that blackened and spotted their potato crops. In an effort to save as many of the potatoes they could farmers all over the land were ripping them from the ground, but all they found were the miniscule remnants, often a sack of mush already that quickly disintegrated, of their precious potatoes. The typical diet in Ireland consists mainly of potatoes and buttermilk, so the people quickly had to turn to their other resources which put a lot of stress on farmers and families in general and gave birth to the violence and crime that arose following the discovery of the diminished crops. Since a large portion of Ireland's crop that does not comprise the essentials of their daily diet are exported to Britain, there were less of those resources for the people and at night, in desperate attempts to support children and families, people broke into property and stole what they could find. For example, often times people would go to farms and search the fields for even the smallest thing to satisfy their hunger or steal grains. Also, adults would kill any small animal they could find, even rats, and without the children knowing they would put the meat into the pot with whatever grains and things were available. Everyone was starving and starving animals often were killed and eaten or parts traded for food from Britain. Mentioned in the book is the story of one little girl who was so desperate for money to buy food that she danced the Irish jig for miles not saying a word until the people whose carriage she was dancing next to gave her a small amount of money and she ran away back to her family holding the shilling tightly so as not to chance dropping it and throwing away her family's satisfaction. As I suggested earlier the potato famine in Ireland gave rise to some heat between them and Great Britain. Politically and economically this strained both countries and their relationship with each other. Ireland was not happy at the lack of compassion and assistance from Britain in the same way that Britain was not happy about the selfish accusations. One British pressman can be quoted as saying that "He is to be condemned for preventing overpopulation, but to be detested for tolerating first, and then exterminating it" (Gallagher 50). This man was placing the blame on the Irish for letting such an

event happen and was being unsupportive of the way they own their land. Both countries placed the blame for this extent of this catastrophic event on one another which did not lessen the tension. Ireland turned to the United States for aid and this only angered Britain more because they have a system of laissez faire economics and outside aid hurts the economy; also, the Irish people started thinking that since the United States was being more helpful and generous that it would be a better place to live than under the British government. Quoting from the book I can support the Irish attitude favoring leaving by the following: “but it was the famine, the whole, complex of physical, emotional, social, and family suffering it created, and what Britain did and did not do about it that changed the attitude of the people toward leaving. Emigration was no longer a banishment but a release” (Gallagher 138). People were walking tens of miles just to find a port from which they could leave. One man had said that if his landlord hadn’t taken his pig as payment for rent that he too, would have left for America. There was a large influx of Irishmen to America which had an impact on both our economy as well as the United Kingdom’s because now we had all these immigrants without jobs and the Ireland had jobs without people to fill them. Also, in the United States we have policies about immigration and border control, but this massive amount of people flooding in goes against what we say about having strong border control and immigration laws. Thomas Gallagher is the son of an Irish immigrant to America, so his bias puts Britain at fault for the level of catastrophe accompanying this event. Rather than telling of the event in such way that placed equal blame, or blame slightly more to one side, Gallagher made known that he has something against Britain regarding this particular historical happening. At the beginning of the book in the prologue he states that he and his siblings “did not know what to make of the anti-British remarks made over and over again by other Irish children in the Amsterdam Avenue neighborhood” which is where they resided, so all his life he was exposed to hate of Britain and those feelings can be detected when reading this book. Overall, with taking the bias into consideration I could form my own opinion about the infamous potato famine in Ireland after reading firsthand accounts as well as historical aspect and I truly believe that this book has taught me more about the event and its impact on multiple nations than any chapter in a history book could.

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### **Jim Mullen says**

I now understand the Irish animosity toward the British. This book is an important read for anyone of Irish extraction.

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