



In Quarantine: *Life and Death on Grosse Île, 1832-1937*

Educational Resources

Handout 2.3c

Witness Group Reading Assignment

Landlords, Ship Owners, and Captains

Source No. 1

Note to Students:

The following excerpt was taken from the Epilogue of *The Journey of an Irish Coffin Ship* by Robert Whyte. A full version of the text is available at www.aepizeta.org/~codine/famine/diary1.html.

"At length it was discovered that the best plan would be to get completely rid of those who were so heavy a burden upon them by shipping them to America; at the same time publishing to the world as an act of brotherly love and kindness, a deed of crafty, calculating selfishness: for the expense of transporting each individual was less than the cost of one year's support in a workhouse." (Epilogue)

Source No. 2

Note to Students:

The following excerpt was taken from the BBC online: "A Short History of Ireland." A full version of the text is available at www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/ashorthistory/archive/intro186.shtml.

"On Grosse Isle Robert Whyte went to the funeral of the wife of an emigrant from Co Meath. After the grave was filled up the husband placed two shovels in the form of a cross and said, 'By that cross, Mary, I swear to avenge your death. As soon as I earn the price of my passage home I'll go back and shoot the man that murdered you-and that's the landlord.'" (Paragraph 9)

Source No. 3

Note to Students:

The following excerpts were taken from parts 1 and 3 of *Summer of Sorrow* by Pádraig Breandán Ó Laighin. A full version of the text is available at www.ballinagree.freesevers.com/sumsorrow.html.

"'Emigration on an extensive scale,' he [Landowner Major Dennis Mahon] stated, 'was the principal Feature of my Plan; as while the large and completely pauperised Population which was on the estate remained, Rent could not be collected, nor could any System for the Amelioration of the Condition of the People be introduced.'" He had made his calculations . . . " (Part 1, paragraph 8)

"Then Francis Spaight, magistrate . . . arranged to provide them with free passage on condition that they demolished their dwellings and surrendered their holdings to him. At first a hundred had gone, then 710 that year, 1847, at a cost of £3-10s per adult; 'and,' he added with brutal frankness, 'I consider the failure of the potato crop to be of the greatest possible value in one respect-in enabling us to carry out the Emigration System.'" (Part 3, paragraph 2)

Source No. 4

Note to Students:

The following excerpt was taken from an account entitled *The Force of Hope: The Legacy of Father McGauran*. A full version of the text is available at www.whitepinepictures.com/seeds/i/2/sidebar.html.

"The prospect of emigration seemed simple enough. Newspapers carried advertisements and placards were pasted up everywhere announcing departures: the *Jane* from Ireland for Montréal on the 20th of April next, the *Superior* for Québec on the 13th of July. Emigrants were lured by agents, sent into the countryside to recruit as many emigrants as possible to fill space. These agents were paid by the number of passengers they could attract. They often gave exaggerated descriptions of shipboard facilities, with assurances that the voyage would be short and provisions abundant." (Paragraph 5)