



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

Educational Resources

Handout 2.3d

Witness Group Reading Assignment

Administrators of the Grosse Île Quarantine Station

Source No. 1

Note to Students:

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

"Nor were their sufferings ended with the voyage. Oh, no! far from it. Would that I could represent the afflictions I witnessed at Grosse Isle! I would not be supposed to think that the medical officers situated there did not exercise the greatest humanity in administering their disagreeable duties which consisted not in relieving the distress of the emigrants but in protecting their country from contamination. Still, it was most afflicting that after combating the dangers of the sea, enduring famine, drought and sickness, the wretched survivors should still have to lie as uncared for as when in the centre of the Atlantic Ocean." (Chapter 14)

Source No. 2

Note to Students:

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

"Four days later, on 21 May 1847, Dr. Douglas was informing the Governor General that every single ship that had arrived up to that point had been in a bad state of sickness and misery. He mentioned the seven boats that had followed the *Syria*, from Limerick, Dublin, Cork and Liverpool, with 2,778 passengers, of whom 75 had died on route. He said that the hospital sheds were full, and that over 200 patients had been left on the last ships to arrive, because he had neither beds nor space for them." (Part 1, paragraph 13)

Source No. 3

Note to Students:

The following excerpt was taken from the Parks Canada website: "Quarantine and Public Health: The Changing Role of Grosse Île" by André Sevigny. A full version of the text is available at www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/qc/grosseile/natcul/natcul1a_E.asp.

"First, the Canadian government did not really have a say in this so-called British emigration, which was managed by the colonial authorities. Second, the operation of the station was characterized by haste, improvisation, and trial and error, without any real understanding of the causes, spread and treatment of infectious diseases. Moreover, the island's facilities were ill equipped to accommodate and safely treat large numbers of immigrants, especially when they were sick." (Paragraph 4)