

MODULE 4: AID, RELIEF, AND PHILANTHROPY

LESSON ONE: RELIEF & PHILANTHROPY

LESSON DESCRIPTION

This lesson will examine some of the aid and relief efforts made during a range of famines, including the role of outside agencies and philanthropic organisations. It will explore the reasons and motivations behind these networks and why different countries were supported.

The lesson will incorporate case studies and discussion of the following famines:

- >> The Finnish Great Hunger Years (1866-68)
- >> The Spanish Hunger Years (1939-52)
- >> The Ethiopian Famine (1983-1985)
- >> The Great Irish Famine (1845-1852)

LESSON INTENTIONS

- Discuss the importance of official state aid and the work of outside agencies.
- Understand the role of international organisations in famine relief.
- Understand that the motivations for providing famine relief can be more complicated than simply helping people.

LESSON OUTCOMES

- To distinguish between official relief efforts, philanthropy and private charity.
- Describe the significance and motivations behind transnational relief.

USEFUL ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Two examples of such NGOs are included here below, but there are a wide range of others, often working in specific countries and regions - you can easily find locally relevant examples by searching online.

Online Heritages of Hunger Repository

Online Heritages of Hunger Exhibition

Additional study stimulus to that included in the module can be found here:

- Appeal for donations for relief in Ireland in an American newspaper
- Irish workhouse relief video
- 'Black markets' and Spain

Established in 1961 as a United Nations initiative, the World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organization saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity, for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change.



EXAMPLES

'On any given day, WFP has 5,000 trucks, 20 ships and 152 aircraft on the move, delivering emergency assistance, relief and rehabilitation, development aid and special operations to people affected by conflict, droughts, floods,

(www.wfp.org)

In recent years, the WFP has been active in providing famine relief in Sudan, Somalia and Gaza.

INTRODUCTION

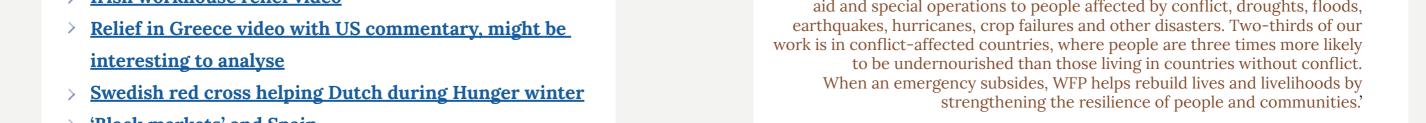
Famine is often seen as a shared tragedy for a community - one that affects most people equally in a specific place and doesn't discriminate in its impact - and victims of famine have traditionally attracted sympathy from others. They have regularly been regarded as innocent victims of circumstance and deserving of help and support to alleviate their suffering.

Famine relief often goes hand in hand with famine - for as long as there have been famines, there have been attempts to help. There are a number of charities and Non-Governmental Organisations today that are dedicated to helping victims of famine, and a number that have existed in the past in response to famine.



There are a range of other charities and NGOs working across the world to tackle both the causes and consequences of famine. Key organisations include the International Red Cross; Concern Worldwide; Oxfam (which was established as a direct response to the Greek Famine of 1941-44); Action Against Hunger, as well as a range of formal Governmental interventions from key nations across the globe.





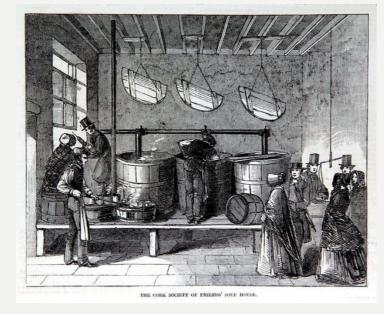
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

The Society of Friends, or Quakers, is a British based loosely Christian charity that was a key source of support and relief during the Irish Famine of the nineteenth century and continues to work around famine relief today. Their work in Ireland was followed by similar support efforts in Finland in the 1850s as they were faced with a catastrophic famine, securing their reputation for practical compassionate assistance for those impacted by famine, regardless of their background or circumstances.



Quaker Logo

A Quaker run Soup Kitchen from the Irish Famine - Image Credit 2





The use of "famine" in Finland in an international context had started already in 1856, when British Quakers – horrified at what they saw as their countrymen's unneccessary bombardment of Finland's west coast during the Crimean War – visited Finland in order to see how they might repair the damage (both to Finland's socio-economic infrastructure, and to Britain's international reputation). The British Navy saw Finland, a part of the Russian Empire, as a perfectly legitimate target. The Quakers – reflecting wider British popular opinion – failed to understand the benefit of sinking small fishing boats, attacking grain stores and other nonmilitary sites all along the coast from Oulu to Helsinki. Rumours of a poor harvest in 1856 prompted fears of what the Quaker visitors termed "famine" - the use of the word, they hoped, would resonate with the British public still shocked and ashamed of the events of the Great Irish Famine, less than a decade earlier. After the initial tour of 1856. a second Quaker trip to Finland took place in summer 1857, in order to see how the money raised could best be spent. As a part of this initiative, Wilson Sturge and George Baker visited Iisalmi on their way to Oulu in June 1857.

(Newby, 2014, p. 69; Newby, 2015, p. 112) https://katovuodet1860.wordpress.com/tag/quakers/

GOVERNMENTAL RELIEF

As well as these NGO type interventions, governments themselves can play a key role in famine relief efforts within their own countries. It is a key responsibility of a functioning government to ensure that its citizens have access to healthy and affordable food, and famine can be a cause of international embarrassment to a government, as well as humanitarian concern.

However, governmental efforts at famine relief can be very problematic in that they may be politicised. This can determine the seriousness with which the famine is regarded or exactly where, and to what extent, relief may be provided.



CASE STUDY

THE FINNISH GREAT HUNGER YEARS (1866-68)

Finnish Hunger painting
- Image Credit 3

The Finnish famine of 1866-1868 saw a number of government efforts at relief, complicated by the fact that Finland was a 'Grand Duchy' of Russia – autonomous but ultimately under Russian control. These efforts included:

Emergency loans

The Senate (the government of the Grand Duchy) took loans from abroad and from the Bank of Finland to finance relief efforts.

Grain imports

Efforts were made to import grain from Russia and other countries to supplement the failed harvests.

Soup kitchens

In some areas, soup kitchens were established to provide food for the starving population.

Public works

The government initiated public works programs to provide employment and income for those affected by crop failures.

Tax relief

Some tax relief measures were implemented for the most affected areas.

Crop diversification

The government encouraged farmers to plant more robust crops like potatoes to reduce reliance on traditional grains.







General Franco Image Credit 6

Food distribution in Spain Image Credit 5



THE SPANISH HUNGER **YEARS (1939-52)**

Spain's 'Hunger Years' in the 1940's saw a very mixed response from Franco's Government. General Franco's vision of a self-sufficient Spain was of a country not permitted to rely on imports or exports of food and other materials.

This policy was in significant part to blame for the famine, and the steps that were implemented by the Government to relieve the famine reflected a level of denial that things were as bad for people as they actually were.

The government introduced a strict rationing system for basic foodstuffs. However, this system was often inadequate and corrupt. Franco's regime pursued economic self-sufficiency (known as Autarky), which included attempts to increase domestic food production. However, these policies often made food shortages worse.

While officially illegal, the government often turned a blind eye to black market activities as a way for people to supplement their meagre rations. Initially, Franco's government was reluctant to accept international aid due to its isolationist policies. However, as the situation worsened, some aid was accepted, particularly from Argentina. The regime used propaganda to downplay the severity of the food shortages and to blame external factors.

> Franco's government's response to the famine was generally ineffective and in many ways made the problem worse:

The autarky policies hampered economic recovery and food production. **Corruption and favouritism** in the rationing system meant that many people, especially those seen as opponents of the regime, suffered disproportionately. The reluctance to seek international help early on prolonged the suffering.

The famine eased gradually in the 1950s, more due to a slow economic recovery and a shift away from autarky policies than due to effective government intervention during the crisis years.

It is worth noting that information about this period was heavily censored under Franco's regime, and full details about the government's response and its effectiveness are still subject to historical research and debate.



Food distribution in Tampere, Finland - Image Credit 4

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EFFORTS

Despite these efforts, the famine resulted in the deaths of approximately 150,000 people (about 8-9% of the population), indicating that the relief measures were not entirely effective. The government's response was often criticised as being too slow and inadequate, especially in the early stages of the crisis. Poor transportation infrastructure made it difficult to distribute aid effectively, particularly to remote rural areas. Finland's economy was not strong enough to fully cope with the crisis, and the government's resources were limited. Some officials adhered to liberal economic policies that discouraged extensive government intervention, limiting the scale of relief efforts.

While the Finnish government did make efforts to alleviate the famine, these efforts were generally considered insufficient to fully address the crisis. The scale of the disaster, combined with economic, ideological, and infrastructural limitations, hampered the effectiveness of the relief measures.



Throughout history, famines have often been accompanied by famine relief, either from Governments, charities, NGO's, or a combination of them - working to help those affected by the consequences of food shortages.

However, it is important to consider the motivation of any of these groups or organisations in their work. Whilst genuine philanthropy - the desire to help and save life for purely humanitarian reasons - can be the key factor, there can also be political or social reasons for help to be offered, and it may have longer term implications for those that are helped.

RELIGIOUS PHILANTHROPY

Inspired by their faith, churches and other religious organisations are often important sources of aid during times of hunger. Through their international and local networks, they collect and distribute charity. While such help is generally unconditional, it is often used as a way of promoting the religion of the donating institution..



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES IN ETHIOPIA (1980S)

During the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) played a significant role in providing aid:

Food Distribution

CRS distributed food to millions of starving Ethiopians.

Medical Care

They set up emergency medical facilities to treat malnutrition and related illnesses.

Agricultural Support

CRS provided seeds and tools to help rebuild local agriculture.



While delivering this crucial aid, CRS also:

Incorporated prayer and religious services into aid distribution events.

Distributed Bibles and religious materials alongside food and medical supplies.

Used Christian imagery and messaging in their camps and facilities.

Encouraged local staff to share their faith with aid recipients.

This approach provided essential relief but also raised questions about the ethics of combining humanitarian aid with religious promotion in vulnerable communities.

FOOD FOR WORK

In 19th-century Europe, it was feared that charity would make people lazy, so governments required people to work in return for help. During famines, the poor could work at so-called 'relief works' in exchange for aid or (too little) money to buy food. Sadly, these often did more harm than good. People endured bad working and living conditions, got sick easily, and did not get enough food.

FINLAND





Construction of the Taipale Channel - Image Credit 8

In Finland, construction work on the new and larger Taipale channel began in December 1867 and lasted until 1871. Construction work was done during the Great Hunger Years. Soon word got around about the possibility to work and be paid in grain. Workers arrived from all over Finland. In January 1868, 600 men worked on the channel. Many had brought their families with them. Many had to live in pits dug into the ground. The primitive living conditions along with diseases led to increased deaths. Between April and May 1868 alone, 281 people were buried.



POLITICS OF RELIEF

Countries give help to build friendships with other nations. After World War II, humanitarian aid played a big role in early Cold War politics





POST WWII BERLIN

After World War II, Germany and Berlin were divided into zones - occupied by the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain. To regulate the food distribution in the whole of Berlin, the Soviets instituted a blockade. Western media portrayed this as a plot for mass starvation, while the Airlift was represented as a way to prevent this supposed starvation. As such, the Airlift served political goals. By sending chocolate instead of bombs, Americans posed as friends of West Germany, ready to team up in the Cold War.

CONCLUSION

Famine relief has been critical in saving lives in many famine situations throughout history. Relief can come from official Government programmes, from charities and from NGO's and whilst it is intended to lessen the suffering caused by famine, it can also have other underlying motivations which need to be considered in terms of their longer term implications for those that are helped.







ONLINE RESEARCH PROJECT

Have students research a current famine relief effort by an NGO or government agency. They should create a digital presentation summarising the organisation's approach, challenges, and impact.

INTERACTIVE TIMELINE

Using a free online timeline tool, ask students to create a chronological representation of major famine relief efforts throughout history, including key events, organisations involved, and outcomes.





ROLE-PLAY

Divide the class into groups representing different stakeholders in a famine situation (e.g., local government, international NGOs, affected communities). Have them simulate a meeting to discuss and plan relief efforts.



Students research a case study of a historical famine. In small groups, have them analyse the relief efforts, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and potential improvements.



POSTER CREATION

Ask students to design informative posters about different types of famine relief organisations, their methods, and impacts. Display these around the classroom for a gallery walk discussion.





Image Credit 1

WFP/Mohamed Galal 2024 https://www.wfp.org/sites/default/files/ styles/media_embed/public/2024-12/ WF1960520%2020241126_SDN_ Mohamed-Galal_0483.jpg?itok=an3v2ams

Image Credit 2

Illustrated London News, 1847 https://www.rte.ie/history/famineireland/2020/1116/1178533-a-labour-oflove-the-contributions-of-the-society-offriends/

Image Credit 3

Eero Jarnefelt, 1893 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/ File:Eero J%C3%A4rnefelt - Under the_Yoke (Burning_the_Brushwood) -_ Google_Art_Project.jpg

Image Credit 4

Unknown, 1868 https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_image_ view/189

Image Credit 5

Hector G Barnes, date unknown https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_text_view/162

Image Credit 6

Heinrich Hoffmann 1940 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meeting_at_Hendaye#/media/File:Meeting_at_Hendaye_(en.wiki).jpg

Image Credit 7

RS/Achuoth Deng https://portlanddiocese.org/sites/ default/files/styles/bp_featured_ image/public/2024-08/south_sudan. jpg?h=c74750f6&itok=xspip4hl

Image Credit 8

Arnold Boos, 1868 https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_image_ view/206

Image Credit 9

Eduard Ludwig, 1951 https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_memorialsite_view/24

Image Credit 10

German Stamp, 1956
https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_artefact_view/22





LESSON TWO: COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY



LESSON DESCRIPTION

This lesson will explore the actions of local communities during famine crises, including the solidarity and perseverance shown. Students will explore case studies and understand the ingenuity and actions taken within communities. The lesson will incorporate case studies and discussion of the following famines:

- >> The Dutch Hunger Winter (1944-45)
- **The Greek famine (1941-1944)**
- >> The Great Irish Famine (1845-1852)

LESSON INTENTIONS

Discuss why communities took action into their own hands.

Understand the significance of local aid in supporting people.

> Global Famine Case Studies

- Online Heritages of Hunger Repository
- > Online Heritages of Hunger Exhibition

Additional study stimulus to that included in the module can be found here:

- > Example of local initiative of relief for children
- > Food droppings the Netherlands
- > Food droppings in Spain
- > Picture of soup kitchen for children in Greece during the war
- > Song on the support given by the Choctaw people to the Irish during the Irish Famine of the 19th century
- > Video exploring the Indigenous Canadian Aid to Ireland



LESSON OUTCOMES

Be able to explain how and why communities rallied in support of one another.



Whilst famine can provoke powerful reactions from governments, Charities, and NGOs in terms of their response and famine relief, famine can also have a significant unifying impact on the communities that are directly affected by them.



LOCAL SOLIDARITY

The desperation that starvation causes for people can be a catalyst for real ingenuity, perseverance, and solidarity as the struggle for nutrition and survival brings people together in a sense of a common mission. At times of such shared suffering there have been many examples of selfless charity and cooperation between people.



THE DUTCH HUNGER WINTER (1944-45)





Community picking Beets Sacks tulip bulbs - Image Credit 2/3

Alternative food sources

People began eating tulip bulbs, sugar beets, and other unconventional food items. They developed recipes to make these more palatable and nutritious.

Urban farming

Many city dwellers converted parks, gardens, and even bombed-out buildings into small vegetable plots.

Fuel alternatives

With coal in short supply, people burned furniture, books, and even parts of their homes for heat and cooking fuel.

Bartering systems

Complex bartering networks emerged, allowing people to trade goods and services outside the official rationing system.

Secret radio

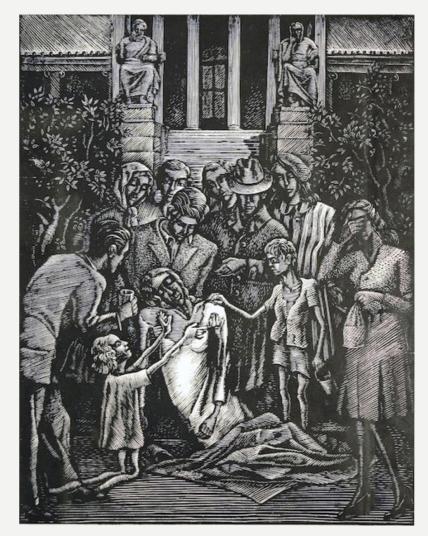
Despite the confiscation of radios by German forces, some Dutch people created hidden crystal radio sets to stay informed about the war's progress and potential relief efforts.

Food expeditions

Some people, often men, would embark on long bicycle journeys to rural areas to trade valuables for food with farmers.

These examples demonstrate how extreme circumstances can drive people to find creative solutions for survival, often repurposing everyday items or skills in unexpected ways.

Famine is often not so much an issue of an absolute lack of food, but a lack of access to food. This can often be made worse by market forces or governmental actions and may lead the communities affected by famine to take action themselves to secure access to food - working outside official channels to highlight their situation or secure food.





THE GREEK FAMINE (1941-1944)

The Greek famine of 1941–1944, occurring during World War II and the Axis occupation of Greece, led to widespread starvation and the emergence of extensive 'black markets' as a survival mechanism. As official food distribution systems collapsed, underground networks arose to trade essential goods.

Athens, 1941 - Image Credit 4

'Black marketeers', known as "mavragorites," operated clandestinely to procure and sell food and other necessities. They often sourced items from rural areas, where some food was still being produced, and smuggled them into cities like Athens and Piraeus. These operations involved complex networks of farmers, transporters, and urban sellers, all working to evade occupation authorities.

The 'black market' became a double-edged sword. While it provided a lifeline for many, allowing access to food that was otherwise unavailable, it also led to extreme price inflation. Basic foodstuffs could cost hundreds of times their pre-war prices, forcing many to sell their possessions or resort to bartering to obtain sustenance.

The desperation of the population and the potential profits involved ensured the 'black market's' persistence. For many Greeks, participating in or purchasing from the black market became a necessary evil for survival.



Sacred Feathers, Philip Cote - Image Credit 5

THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

Berlin Airlift Image Credit 6



The Berlin Airlift, known as "Operation Vittles" to the Americans and "Operation Plainfare" to the British, was a remarkable logistical operation that took place from June 1948 to September 1949. It was initiated in response to the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, which cut off all land and water routes to the city, threatening its 2 million inhabitants with starvation.

The airlift's primary goal was to provide essential supplies, including food, fuel, and medicine, to the isolated population of West Berlin. At its peak, planes were landing every 30 seconds at Berlin's airports, delivering up to 13,000 tons of supplies daily. The operation not only prevented famine but also demonstrated the Western Allies' commitment to a free Berlin.

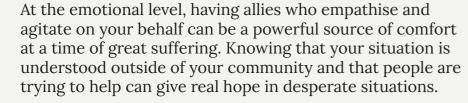
The airlift faced numerous challenges, including harsh weather conditions, limited airport capacity, and the need for constant aircraft maintenance. Despite these obstacles, it succeeded in delivering over 2.3 million tons of cargo over 277,000 flights.

The operation had far-reaching consequences beyond immediate famine relief. It boosted morale among West Berliners, strengthened the Western Allies' resolve in the face of Soviet pressure, and became a symbol of the Cold War struggle.



Famine can often be caused or made worse by the actions of the government or the powerful elites within a society. As a result, those affected by famine may feel that they need to take direct action themselves to end the famine and alleviate its impacts.

This can see local communities develop innovative solutions to their own problems and take their own action to secure food, either by working together at the local level, or reaching out to wider networks for help and support, and to raise awareness of their plight.





INDIGENOUS CANADIAN SUPPORT & RELIEF FOR THE IRISH FAMINE

In 1847, representatives of the Indigenous Canadian Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Wendat, amongst other North American Indigenous peoples including the Choctaw Nation, sent financial aid to Ireland to help with relief efforts for the famine. The Aid was prompted by pleas from Ireland for help that were issued around the world.

The solidarity that existed between Ireland and the indigenous Peoples was in large part informed by a shared experience of colonial authority in their lands.

The aid that was provided from the Tribes came at a time when they were themselves suffering great hardship from economic collapse and the impact of settlers on their traditional lands. Despite their own dire situation, the tribes still felt it important to show their support for the Irish Famine people, with hunger and starvation a key part of the history of the First Nation Peoples.

The remarkable gesture of the Tribes is today remembered in both the Irish Famine Museum in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon and in Canada, and in gestures such as Philip Cote's Sacred Feathers painting - which pays tribute to the generosity of the Indigenous people in their famine relief efforts.



"It gives my soul and spirit a great feeling of warmth to know that my ancestors back in that difficult period were kind enough to send relief funds from their community to the Irish. I am very proud that my people were there reaching out across a great ocean to our Irish brethren."

Dr Duke Redbird, Anishinaabe Elder from (Ojibway) Saugeen First Nation (Ontario, Canada), Courtesy of the Honouring Indigenous Aid Project





OPTIONAL LEARNING TASKS







SIMULATION GAME

Create a classroom

Have students create a short digital story or video about a historical example of community solidarity during a famine, using images, text, and narration.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

mock social media campaign

to raise awareness about a

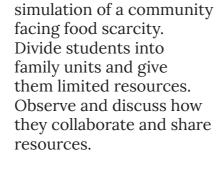
current or historical famine,

focusing on community-led initiatives and how others

can support them.

Ask students to design a

DIGITAL STORYTELLING



Use the Heritage of Hunger

CREATIVE WRITING

Ask students to write a short story or journal entry from the perspective of someone experiencing a famine, focusing on how their community comes together to support one another.



ARTEFACT ANALYSIS

repository to locate historical artefacts and memorials related to community solidarity during famines (e.g.letters and donations between peoples, commemorations). Have students analyse these in groups and present their findings to the class.





Image Credits

Image Credit 1

Nationaal Archief, 1944 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_ famine of 1944%E2%80%931945#/ media/File:Twee_deelnemers_aan_ <u>de_hongertochten_tijdens_de_</u> hongerwinter.jpg

Image Credit 2

Amsterdam Tulip Museum 1945

https://amsterdamtulipmuseum.com/ cdn/shop/articles/Were_bulbs_ eaten during world war 2 delf3f5ac88b-4092-a8ba-cb38c852d0b5. jpg?v=1508363087&width=600

Image Credit 3

Johannes van Rhijn, 1945 https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_image_ view/95

Image Credit 4

Emmanoiul Zepos, 1945 https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_image_ <u>view/176</u>

Image Credit 5

Philip Cote, 2024 https://www.irishamerica.com/2024/06/ bronze-shoes-and-moccasins/

Image Credit 6

Alex Pentek, 2015 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meeting_ https://hunger.rich.ru.nl/detail_ memorialsite_view/69

Image Credit 7

Choctaw Nation 2022 https://www.choctawnation. com/wp-content/ uploads/2022/01/011922kindred-spirits.

Credits

This learning resource was co-developed by the Heritages of Hunger research consortium and Nerve Centre Derry

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