

OLLSCOIL NA HÉIREANN GAILLIMH  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND GALWAY

B.A. DEGREE HISTORY  
AUTUMN EXAMINATIONS 1998-9  
THE GREAT FAMINE IN A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE (HI374)

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TIME ALLOWED: TWO HOURS; THREE QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED  
ANSWER AT LEAST ONE QUESTION FROM EACH SECTION (A & B)

A.

1. Explain Malthus' analysis of famine as a 'positive check'. How valid is it, in your view?

2. Why did large-scale famines disappear from Europe during the eighteenth century?

3. What was the 'moral economy' and how did it operate in times of scarcity or famine?

OR

'Last years famine was made by man and not by God' (England, 17th century). When was famine explained in supernatural terms, and when was it explained in terms of human agency?

4. How did élite attitudes to the poor change from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries?

5. Amartya Sen has argued that famine should be viewed not simply in terms of 'food availability decline' but as the result of shifts in 'entitlements' and purchasing power. Do you agree?

B.

6. 'The situation in Ireland in the 1840s was one of a teeming population of over eight million living on the brink of disaster' (McCartney). Was the Great Famine inevitable, in your view?

OR

Was Ireland significantly poorer than other European countries in the did-nineteenth century?

7. Is it accurate to describe the great Famine as a 'watershed' in Irish history?

OR

'By relaxing the peasant's desperate hold upon his land and home, [the Great Famine] destroyed the psychological barrier which had forbidden his going for so long' (McDonagh). Discuss.

8. 'The decline of the rural textile industry had thrown many people into destitution and thereby laid the groundwork for the catastrophe of 1846-50'. (Kriedte) Discuss.

9. Discuss the suitability of either public works and food depots or the Poor Law system as mechanisms of relief during the Great Famine.