

Character Backgrounds and Instructions for Hot-Seating

Meaghan:

- you are understandably distressed by what has happened to your people as a result of the Famine.
- In your opinion, the culprits are the English and their Irish "lap-dogs" (like Callow) who do their dirty work for them.
- you have heard that the English have taken the best food for themselves and sent it to England.
- you think that they could have sent more relief to help the Irish, but you've heard that they chose not to do so.
- your father's told you that English lords and their government are effectively "cleansing" Ireland of the true inhabitants, people who have been there for thousands of years. The English are newcomers and should let Ireland look after itself. (*The English finally conquered Ireland in the 1600's and quickly began to colonize the country by importing settlers from Scotland, Wales, and England. These people mostly Protestants as opposed to the Catholic beliefs of the original inhabitants of Ireland)
- you don't understand why they did not relax the laws and the rent payments to help the people during this difficult time.
- while you have had had minimal schooling, you have been taught to read and write by the local priest

Callow:

- while you consider yourself Irish, your ancestors were originally from Scotland and you attend a Protestant church, unlike the Irish peasants who you oversee, who are Catholics
- like any responsible person, you are simply doing a job to put food on the table for your family.
- you didn't make the laws or set the amount of the rent payments. It is your job to simply enforce the laws of the land, like any policeman and to collect the rent payments for the rightful owner of the land, Lord Farnsworth.
- by acting as a policeman/bailiff for the lord, you are working for everyone be seeing that riots and looting do not break out and that everyone is safe.
- you are not responsible for the blight that has affected the potatoes. Perhaps, your neighbours should have been smarter and grown other crops than just potatoes.

Lord Farnsworth:

- your family has owned this land for 200 years. As the rightful and legal owner of the land, you are entitled to collect rent from the families that settle on your land.
- you have not told your tenants what they should grow. If they decided to grow only potatoes, then they will have to live with the consequences.
- you have the right to use your land as you see fit. Small holdings are obviously inefficient and these families would be much better off by moving to a land where they will be able to farm for themselves.
- you have heard that it is a wonderful country, with all sorts of possibilities for families that are willing to work hard and to make sacrifices.

- as the agent of the British Government, you have done your bit to help by setting up the Public Works programs that pay workers, and for maintaining the work-houses that give shelter and food to those people that have lost thier homes.
- you have also helped pay the passages of those who wish to leave the country.
- but above all, you are not a charity. The Irish people have largely brought this on themselves because of ignorance and poor farming methods.
- in line with the attitude of the English government of the time, you feel that too much help will make the Irish people lazy and rob them of the ability to look after themselves.

Teacher:

Instruct both the class and the witnesses that, while they will have their own opinions and bias in this scenario, they should try to respond to the facts as outlined in Meaghan's diary and not introduce new material.