The Great Migration
1815-1850

Program of Studies

- 7.1.1 - appreciate the influence of diverse Aboriginal, French and British peoples on events leading to Confederation
- 7.1.2 - appreciate the challenges of co-existence among peoples
- 7.1.3 - compare and contrast diverse social and economic structures within the societies of Aboriginal, French and British peoples in pre-Confederation Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following:
  - What role did the British government play in the settlement in North America?
- 7.1.6 - critically assess how political, economic and military events contributed to the foundations of Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following:
  - How was the Great Migration of 1815-1850 in Upper Canada and Lower Canada an attempt to confirm British identity in the Province of Canada?

After the War of 1812, Britain wanted to reopen the backwoods of Canada to the thousands of jobless people in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Between the years 1815 to 1850, more than 800,000 immigrants came to Canada. The period of time became known as the great migration.
In the early 19th Century, the situation in Britain was tough depending on which clan you were from. The lower classes were facing high unemployment, a government that didn’t allow them to become wealthy and health hazards because the towns they lived in were really dirty from industrialization. In particular, the Irish were facing the great "Potato Famine".

The Irish left Ireland, because of The Great Potato Famine. In May and June of 1846, the fields were green, and it looked like a successful crop, but in July, the horrid disease appeared. In the fall, when the Irish dug up their crops, they found that they were soft, smelly, and mushy. The Irish were starving, and did not have an easy time surviving.

The Great Famine was a period of starvation, disease and mass emigration between 1845 and 1852 during which the population of Ireland was reduced by 20 to 25 percent. Approximately one million of the population died and a million more emigrated from Ireland’s shores. The probable cause of the famine was a potato disease commonly known as late blight.

In 1845, a disease infected the potato crop all over Ireland. The potato being the main food source of the Irish, made this result into a horrific, deadly famine killing millions. Some of the Irish people fled from the infected land in search of a new and pure world. They sought refuge in America and Canada. The others who stayed true to their homeland faced a life of war that shattered many dreams and put fear into the hearts of the Irish people.

*The Great Potato Famine*
• Coffin ship is the name given to any boat that has been over insured and is therefore worth more to its owners sunk than afloat.
• The term has also been used to refer to the ships that carried Irish emigrants escaping the effects of the potato famine.
• These ships, crowded and disease ridden (Typhus, Cholera), with poor access to food and water, resulted in the deaths of many people as they crossed the Atlantic.
• While coffin ships were the cheapest way to cross the Atlantic, often many of the passengers died during the voyage. It was said that sharks could be seen following the ships, because so many bodies were thrown overboard.
• People died by the thousands on these ships, thus they became known as Coffin Ships.

Coffin Ships

Life Aboard Coffin Ships
Great Migration Hyperlinks

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bByToVMWP5sM
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mZ2hUKe1xs