

The Bad Times: An Drochshaol

Christine Kinealy

John Walsh, Illustrator

XanEdu Publishing Inc (Dec 30, 2015)

Softcover \$15.19 (118pp)

978-0-9909454-1-3

The Great Irish Famine, a tragedy that led to many Irish families emigrating to America in the late 1840s, has been studied in great detail by academics and historians. Christine Kinealy and John Walsh bring that story to life through vivid color and heartbreaking pathos in their graphic novel *The Bad Times: An Drochshaol*.

Kinealy's credentials are unassailable: she serves as professor of history and Irish studies at Quinnipiac University, and is director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac. But in this book, Kinealy largely discards an academic's approach in favor of a more accessible and relatable style, focusing on three young children and their efforts to survive and aid their friends and families during the famine.

The three characters, Liam, Dan, and Brigit, are bright and appealing. Walsh's illustrations are basic, almost raw, but they deliver information and emotions without missing a beat; the story's pace gains momentum steadily as it builds toward the final fates of the children.

In their efforts to make the book read like an in-the-moment narrative, Kinealy and Walsh do sacrifice opportunities to make understanding clearer—with the exception of the first and last pages, they omit captions, which could have been used to provide translations of Gaelic expressions right in the same panel. Instead, readers must refer to the glossary at the back of the book, an obstacle that might deter some. *The Bad Times: An Drochshaol* puts a human face on the suffering of the Irish Famine; it is an admirable effort and well worth reading.

PETER DABBENE (Summer 2016)

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