



Smithsonian Associates

The Great Hunger: The Irish Potato Famine

Jennifer Paxton

Smithsonian Associates

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The Fields of Athenry

[Pete St. John](#)

By a lonely prison wall
I heard a young girl calling
Micheal they are taking you away
For you stole Trevelyn's corn
So the young might see the morn.
Now a prison ship lies waiting in the bay.

Low lie the Fields of Athenry
Where once we watched the small free birds fly.
Our love was on the wing we had dreams and songs to sing
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of Athenry.

By a lonely prison wall
I heard a young man calling
Nothing matters Mary when you're free,
Against the Famine and the Crown
I rebelled they ran me down
Now you must raise our child with dignity.

Low lie the Fields of Athenry
Where once we watched the small free birds fly.
Our love was on the wing we had dreams and songs to sing
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of Athenry.

By a lonely harbor wall
She watched the last star falling
As that prison ship sailed out against the sky
Sure she'll wait and hope and pray
For her love in Botany Bay
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of Athenry.

Low lie the Fields of Athenry
Where once we watched the small free birds fly.
Our love was on the wing we had dreams and songs to sing
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of Athenry.

Famine, a sequence

Desmond Egan

1.

the stink of famine
hangs in the bushes still
in the sad celtic hedges

you can catch it
down the line of our landscape
get its taste on every meal

listen
there is famine in our music

famine behind our faces

it is only a field away
has made us all immigrants
guilty for having survived

has separated us from language
cut us from our culture
built blocks around belief

left us on our own

ashamed to be seen
walking out beauty so
honoured by our ancestors

but fostered now to peasants
the drivers of motorway diggers
unearthing bones by accident
under the disappearing hills