



**KENTUCKY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

PRIMARY SOURCE
EDUCATOR PACKET



IRISH IMMIGRATION



PRIMARY
SOURCE
PACKET



Kentucky Academic Standards for Social Studies

Third Grade

3.G.KGE.1 Describe the impact of cultural diffusion and blending on Kentucky in the past and today.

3.G.MM.1 Analyze how human settlement and movement impact diverse groups of people.

Fifth Grade

5.G.HI.2 Analyze how and why cultural characteristics diffuse and blend with migration and settlement.

Eighth Grade

8.G.MM.1 Interpret how political, environmental, social and economic factors led to both forced and voluntary migration in the United States from the Colonial Era to Reconstruction from 1600-1877.

8.H.KH.2 Examine patterns of collaborations and conflict between immigrants to Kentucky and those already in residence from 1775 to 1877.



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Historical Overview

Kentucky has been a home for Irish immigrants since the establishment of Fort Boonesborough in 1776. Historians note two major waves of Irish migration to Kentucky. The first occurred in the 1700s, when immigrants brought their agricultural skills, significantly boosting the state's early agricultural development. The second wave was driven by the devastation caused by the Irish Potato Famine between 1845 and 1852.

This collection features the experiences of Irish immigrant Michael Masterson, who made Kentucky his home as part of this second wave of immigration. However, this did not mean he left behind his thoughts of home. Michael maintained contact with family both in Ireland and in other cities across the United States, providing valuable insight into the Irish immigrant experience.



Primary Source Reference Guide

Source 1: A letter from Jane Masterson to her father Michael Masterson, an Irish immigrant to the United States. Writing from Ireland Jane discusses the Great Famine and other family members who have immigrated to the United States, October 10, 1850. Accession Number SC2_F1_007.

Source 2: A letter from Jane Masterson to her father Michael Masterson. She writes that she forgives him for leaving her but says she is not sure if she will immigrate herself yet, January 26, 1851. Accession Number SC2_F1_009.

Source 3: A letter from John Muldoon to his relative Michael Masterson, both Irish immigrants to the United States. He recounts what happened to him when he arrived in New York and asks about their family, March 12, 1851. Accession Number SC2_F1_010.

Source 4: A letter from Bryan Masterson to his brother Michael Masterson, both Irish immigrants to the United States. He mentions the desperate conditions in Ireland, as well as factory work, high prices, and travel difficulties in the United States, March 29, 1852. Accession Number SC2_F1_011.

Source 5: A letter from Bryan Masterson to his brother Michael Masterson. He writes of other people they know who have immigrated to the U.S. and their locations, November 8, 1852. Accession Number SC2_F1_012.

My Dear Father, Ithaca Oct. 19th 50

I take up my pen for the first time in my life to answer a parent's letter, thank God the wished for event has come at last after being so long disappointed of, I shall now cease to remember you as the being of another world. Am happy to hear you are in good health, and has had the good fortune of escaping from the war with so little wounds. Dear Father I suppose you disremembered to whose care you committed me, as you would not have written to him who never came to visit me since your exit. My Grand Mother and uncles are rejoiced to hear from you, it is very cozy you asked for them who were my benefactors
may

may my more than parents,
who were yet deaf to my entreaties,
who reared, clothed and educated me
till this period. Reluctant to my going to
that country, I cannot tell at present
where I'll go, on account of my friends not
giving their consent, but as you neglected
me till now I hope you will bestow on
me in your next letter, some mark of
paternal affection. You wish to know
the condition of Ireland, it is not so bad
this year as it was the three preceding ones,
we have thanks Providence abundant
crops of oats and wheat and the potatoes are
reasonably safe. Two years last Summer
there broke out a dreadful cholera, it
swept away myriads and made a terrible
havoc in the work houses and particularly
Kells and its vicinity. My uncle Bryan
sailed to New York last May. I heard from
his Mother in law he went from that to
Boston

It was she received your letter and
sent it to me. My uncle Edward is
away three four years in America
I heard no account of him since
my coming. John Muldron imigrated
also to America ^{should be in} three years last
August, he is in the city of Lowell
State of Massachusetts. It would be
too tedious to relate all particulars.
be satisfied with all I have dis-
cribed until you write again.
(which I hope will be soon) then I'll
let you know more about your dear
father land. Farewell my much
beloved parent, and pardon me
for my feeble reproaches, so I conclude
by expressing your ever affectionate
unwining
daughter
your
daughter
Jane Weston
Therston.

Johnstown Oct. 10th, 50

My Dear Father,

I take up my pen for the first time in my life to answer a parents letter, thank God the wished for event has come at last after being so long despaired of, I shall now cease to remember you as the being of another world. Am happy to hear you are in good health and has had the good fortune of escaping from the war with so little wounds. Dear Father I suppose you disremembered to whose case you committed one, or you would not have written to him who never came to visit me sin your exit. My Grand Mother and uncles are rejoiced to hear from you, it is very cooly your asked for them who were my benefactors nay my more than parents, who never yet was deaf to my entreaties, who cared clothed, and educated me till this period. Relative to my going to that country, I cannot tell at present when I'll go, on account of my uncles not giving their consent, but as you neglected me till now I hope you will bestow on me in your next letter, some mark of paternal affection. You wish to know the condition of Ireland, it is not so bad this year as it was the three preceding one, we have thank providence abundant crops of oats and wheat and the potatoes are reasonable safe. Two years last Summer there broke out a dreadful cholera, it swept away myriads and made a terrible havoc in the work house particularly Kells and its vicinity. My uncle Bryan sailed to New York last May, I heard from his Mother in law he went from that to Boston It was she received your letter and sent it to me. My uncle Edward is away there four years in America I heard no account of him since My cousin John Muldoon emigrated also to America three years last August, he is in the city of Lowell state of Massachusetts. It would be too tedious to relate all particulars, be satisfied with all I have described until you write again (which I hope you will be soon) then I'll let you know more about your dear father land. Farewell my much beloved parent. And pardon one for my feeble reproaches so I [illegible] by remaining your affectionate daughter

Jane Masterson
Johnstown

Johnstown, January 26th/57

My Dear Father

I have had the inexpressible
pleasure ^{have} ^{high} ^{the} of receiving your
dear letter on the 23^d January
which gives me to understand,
you are sorry for your neglect:
I forgive you, my dear parent for all,
as I have never thank God, known
the want of one. I am quite de-
lighted, to hear the inclosure
you bestowed on my letter, indeed,
you have overrated my poor abilities.
Dear Father I am grateful for the
excellent advice you were pleased
to send me,

with Divine assistance I shall
follow it punctually as far as I am
able, I shall be sorry to hear you with
Annie sorry to relate, that my uncle
Michael is in a precarious state of health
also my aunt Judith, all my remaining
friends are well. It is almost impossible
to give you a direct answer as to my
emigration, as they will not consent
to it just now, therefore it is better
give them more time to deliberate.
You will think, no doubt, that
I dislike to go on - banish the
thought as soon as formed. You
spoke of Margaret Masterman, would
I accept her company, she was

wholly unknown to me. precious to
your writing, but now she has claimed
acquaintance with me, I hope the
female friends I like much better
I though not your side, do ~~for~~
~~at~~ as you think proper. My friends
brother and uncles are very happy to hear
from you, and send you their love
and good wishes. Dear Father I entreat
you to write soon, we'll be anxious to
hear from you, as you forgot to let us
know anything about your health. I hope it
perfect, and always to remain so is the ar-
dent prayer of your ever dutiful and
attached daughter.
Direct as before
Jane Watson

Johnstown January 26th 51

My dear Father

I have had the inexpressable pleasure of receiving your dear letter on the 25 January which gives one to understand, you are sorry for your neglect: I forgive you, my dear parent after all, as I have never (thank God) known the want of one. I am quite delighted, to hear the encomium you bestowed on my letter, indeed, you gave overrated my poor abilities. Dear Father I am grateful for the excellent advice you were pleased to send me, with Divine assistance I shall follow it punctually as far as I am able, I shall be anything you wish I am sorry to relate, that my uncle Michael is in a precarious state of health also my aunt Judith, all my remaining friends are well. It is almost impossible to give you a direct answer as to my emigration, as they will not consent to it just now, therefore it is better give them more time to deliberate you will think, no doubt, that I dislike to go-no- banish the thought as soon as formed you spoke of Margaret Masterson, would I accept her company, she was wholly unknown to me previous to your writing, but now she has claimed acquaintance with me; I have other female friends I like much better though not your side, do for her as you think proper. My Grandmother and uncles are very happy to hear from you, and send you their love and good wishes. Dear Father I entreat you to write soon, we'll be anxious to hear from you, as you forgot to let us know anything about your health, I hope its perfect, and always to remain so is the ardent prayer of your ever dutiful and attached daughter

Direct as before Jane Masterson

Please let us know in your next letter did my cousin John come to you

My Dear Michael... write an immediate answer to this & let me know how you are or is your health good, mine is perfect, thank God direct to me 81 Grand Street New York

New York March 12th 57
My Dear Michael Masterson

No doubt ere this you have pronounced me ungrateful, but a few moments' perusal I trust will not only cause such a feeling (if ever cherished) to vanish but also will I am certain astonish you when you learn thereby a narrative of my mysterious silence. Immediately after I wrote latterly from Lowell to you, I got disemployed and on the 31st of December when your letter (in my care) to your Brother came to hand my trunk was at the Rail Road Depot. which left me only time to deliver it and depart from thence. I got into this City on the 1st of January and remained here silently since but I think you will sympathize a little when you know the reasons. The day I came here I had \$145 in my pocket and lost it I know not how about an hour after I left the Boat, at which time you may easily guess my condition it being all I saved for my time in America. At the time I did not know what to do or what to have recourse to for a livelihood. I could get no employment so I deposited my ^{with a pawnshop} Water Top-coat, Books & a few things I had, which supported me untill I got a situation just a week since at \$18 day as entry Clerk with a Commission Merchant.

I was thinking to say that I got this situation when on my way to you and that I would stay during the winter but I will not write until I hear from you for I know it makes them happy to hear from you and to have me with you.

You will wonder also why I did not write to you since I came here but I am going to assert my reason, I thought on account of the many impositions that are in America that you might probably think (if I then disclosed the event) that I would be acting on that abominable principle, but I would then sooner die than have such a thing or cause such to be said of me; therefore I was silent until God in his infinite Mercy was pleased to befriend me, hence you see I begin to get the talk once more, though since that Occurrence My Dear Mother I thought I should die, my spirits were so much depressed meditating on my inauspicious situation & being disemployed it unfortunately left a wider field to soliloquize on, a few days before I left Lowell I wrote home saying I would next address them from Kentucky and therefore that I did not expect an answer; but I could not write since from here in consequence of having nothing to build on for an apology except to reveal what happened which I would sooner be hanged than do, for I know they would feel very bad and perhaps interpret very wrongly. Oh! my dear mother how uneasy I am about not having correspondence for so long a time with my invaluable Uncles & Aunts & My dearly beloved Sister. If you have heard lately let me know all about them so as that I may know what to say.

New York March 12th 51

My Dear Michael

No doubt ere this you have pronounced me ungrateful, a few moments perusal I trust will not only cause such a feeling (if ever cherished) to vanish but also will I am certain astonish you when you learn thereby a narrative of my mysterious silence. Immediately after I wrote latterly from Lowell to you, I got disemployed and on the 31st of December when your letter (in my care) to your brother came to hand my trunk was at the Railroad Depot which left me only time to deliver it and depart from thence. I got into this City on the 1st of January and remained here silently since but I think you will Sympathise a little when you know the reason; the day I came here I had \$145 in my pocket and lost it I Know not how about an hour after I left the Boat, at which time you may easily gess my condition it being all I saved for my time in America. At the time I did not know what to do or what to have recourse to for a livelihood. I could get no employment so I deposited my watch, topcoat, Books & a few things I had with a pawnbroker which supported me untill I got a situation just a week since at \$1 a day as entry Clerk with a Commission Merchant

You will wonder also why I did'nt write to you sine I came here but I am going to assert my reason, I thought on account of the many impositions that are in America that you might probably think (If I then disclosed the event) that I would be acting on that abominable principle, but I would then sooner die than have such a thing or cause such to be said of me; therefore I was silent until God in his infinite mercy was pleased to befriend me. Thence you see I begin to get the talk once more, though since that occurence my Dear Mich I thought I should die my spirits were so much depressed indictaing on my inauspicious situation & being disemployed it unfortunately left a wider field to soliloquize on, a few days before I left Lowell I wrote home saying I would next address them from Kentucky and therefore that I did not expect an answer; but I could not write since from here in consequence of having nothing to build on for an apology except to reveal what happened which I would sooner be hanged than do, for I know they would feel very bad and perhaps interpret very wrongly. Oh! My Dear Michael how uneasy I am about not having correspondence for so long a time with my inestimable Uncles & Aunts & My Dearly beloved Jane. If you have heard lately let me know all about them so as that I may know what to say.

My Dear Michael write an immediate answer to this & let me know how you are or is your health good, mine is perfect thank God I was thinking to say that I got this situation when on my way to you and that I would stay during the winter but I will not write until I hear from you for I know it makes them happy to hear from you and to have me with you.

I remain your ever faithful friend
John Muldoon
Direct to me 81 Frankfort
Street New York

Lowell Mass March the 29th — 1852

Dear Brother I write these few lines to you
Hoping to find you in good health as this
leaves us all at Present thanks be to god for
it Dear Brother this is the second letter
I wrote and received no answer which leaves
us all very uneasy I wrote a letter to you
about eight weeks before I wrote this one and
received no answer yet which we all thought
that something happened you Dear Brother we
Should like to hear from you every Month
or If Possible every week let us know did
you receive a letter from your Daughter Jane
yet Dear Brother the old country is gone to
the bad all that can come any way out
of it has left it Michael Kelly and Family
is coming to this county the Boston Pilot
Says they have made a new rail-road from
here to Chicago that Passengers can come
from Boston or New York to Chicago in
three Days and then a few hours will
take one to Mississippi river Dear Brother
we all regret very much that we are not
able to go out to you but If John or
Jane would leave me I would be in a poor
way hear as the times is so very hard hear

Dear Brother John Jane and Mary is working
in the factories they dont get very good Pay
there the Provision is so high here that
we cant save any thing flour is 86 dollars
per Barrel and every thing else rates high
According Dear Brother we could not
Purchase a ticket in Boston any farther
than Cincinnati that would take \$104 dollars
to go to Cincinnati So I see that I never
could go to you it would be easier for you
to come to us than for us to go to you
No More at Present from your Loving
Brother Bryan Masterson

Direct as Before.
to me in care of Patrick
Blood Cross St Lowell Mass
John Masterson

Lowell Massachusetts March the 29th 1852

Dear Brother I write these few lines to you Hoping to find you in good health as this leaves us all Present thanks be to god for it Dear Brother this is the Second Letter I wrote and received no answer which leaves us all very uneasy. I wrote a letter to you about eight weeks before I wrote this one and recieved no answer yet which we all thought that something happened to you. Dear Brother we Should like to hear from you every month or if Possible every week let us know did you receive a letter from your Daughter Jane yet Dear Brother the old country is gon to the bad all that can come any way out of it has left it. Michael Kelly and Family is coming to this country. The Boston Pilot Says they have made a new railroad from hear to Chicago that Passengers can come from Boston to New to Chicago in three days and then a few hours will take on to Mississippi river. Dear Brother we all regret very much that we are not able to go out to you but if John or Jane would leave me I would be in a Poor way hear as the times is so very hard hear

Dear Brother John Jane and Mary is working in the factories. they Don't get very good Pay there the Provision is so high here that we can't Save any thing flour is \$6 dollars per Barrel and every thing else rates high. According Dear Brother we could not Purchase a ticket in Boston any farther than Cincinnati that would take \$109 dollars to go to Cincinnati. So I see that never could go to you it would be easier for you to come to us than for us to go to you. No more at Present from your Loving Brother Bryan Masterson

Direct as Before to me in care of Patrick Flood Cross St. Lowell Massachusetts

John Masterson

Lowell Mass November the 8-1852
Dear Brother I write thoes few lines to
you hoping to find you in good health as
we are at Present thanks be to god for it
Dear Brother this is the second letter for me
to write to you and received no answer
yet which leaves us very uneasy Dear Broth
you spoke of coming to see us before you
would settle down for life we would
be very happy to see you and to have ^{you} to
spend Part of the Winter with us Dear Brother
it would be easier for you to come and
see us than us to go and see you but if
we were able to go to you we would
not be here one day so I hope you will
perform your Promise Dear Brother I and
Jane and the children is expecting you
every day to shake hands with
you once more Let us know when have
you herd from your daughter Jane or
did she come out to you
Dear Brother they say is low hear it
only Brings them from one Month to
another Dear Brother I have herd that
all they conlons come hear to america
the are in tate of New York Mr Smith
of New castle is living in christopher
Conlons how you may guess it is
low times with him have you herd
any account of Brother Edward or his
family it is said that John Muldoon is
gon to California Dear Brother we are all
expecting you and your Mrs again chismas
us all joins in Sending our love and
best respects to you and Mrs
No more at Present from your



No More at Present from your
affectionate Brother Bryan Masterson

Direct your letter to the of Thomas
cartin ~~howe St.~~ howe St. Belvidere
Lowell Mass

Lowell Massachusetts November the 8th 1852

Dear Brother I write thoes few lines to you hoping to find you in good health as Dear Brother this is the second letter for me to write to you and received no answer yet which leaves us very uneasy Dear Brother you spoke of coming to see us before you would settle down for life we would be very happy to see you and to have you to spend part of the winter with us Dear Brother it would be easier for you to come and See us than us to go and See you but if we were able to go to you we would not be here one day So I hope you will Perform your Promis Dear Brother I and Jane and the children is expecting you every day to have a shake hands with you once more Let us know when have you herd from your daughter Jane or did She come out to you Dear Brother they Pay is low hear it only Brings them from one month to another Dear Brother I have herd that all they Conlans come hear to america they are in state of New York Mr. Smith of New Castle is living in Christopher Conlans house you may guess it is low times with him have you herd any account of Brother Edward or his family it is Said that John Muldoon is gon to California Dear Brother we are all Expecting you and your Mrs. again Christmas us all joins in sending our love and Best respects to you and Mrs

No more at Present from your affectionate brother Bryan Masterson

Direct your letter to the Thomas Carlin home St. Belvideer

Lowell Massachusetts