



Summer Assignment U.S. History 8th Grade

Academic Integrity: All work should be completed independently and without the assistance of unapproved resources. Any work violating academic integrity will be subject to a “0” and any additional consequences as outlined in the Knox Academic Integrity Policy attached to this assignment.

Due Date: Your work is due the first day of your 8th Grade US History class. All late work will be subjected to a grade reduction or penalty as outlined in the course syllabus and copied below:

All major assignments not submitted on the due date will face a 10% deduction of max points per day for up to five (5) days and up to a 50% deduction.

Summer Assignments for AP Classes that are not submitted on time will result in the student being dropped from the course.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this assignment, please contact the History Department Chair, Mrs. Mandia, at kmandia@knoxschool.org or the Dean of Academics, Mrs. Pergola, at dpergola@knoxschool.org .

Name:

Grade 8 U.S. History

Date:

The Irish invade Canada (Reconstruction Era)



Depiction of the Battle of Ridgeway

In 1866, as the United States recovered from the tragedy and horrors of the Civil War, Irish troops living within the Union and former Confederacy began to set up plans to assist in the cause for Irish independence.

For almost 700 years, Ireland had been under occupation by the British Empire. Before the start of the American Civil War, many Irish people fled to the United States in order to escape the horrors of the Potato Famine. Over a million people in Ireland would die as a result of the shortage of food during the famine. Upon entering into the United States, the Irish immigrants were treated harshly by the Americans. As the Civil War began to break out, many Irish men found themselves thrown into a conflict for a country that did not show them any appreciation.

The year is 1865. The Civil War has come to an end. The Union has emerged victorious. The Irishmen who were fortunate to survive the brutal fighting were able to return home. As discrimination by the Americans continued, many Irish saw themselves as Irishmen first.

As President Andrew Johnson began to address the issues of Reconstruction, he was approached by members of the Irish Republican Army. Although it is noted that the United States did not give official support, the government did not oppose the plan put into place by the IRA. What was the plan? To invade and occupy Canada in order to secure Ireland's independence from Great Britain. Canada had become a safe haven for Confederate spies during the Civil War and it was reported that Confederate troops conducted raids against Union border states throughout the war. It is rumored that John Wilkes Booth was in Canada before conducting the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

1866. Thousands of Irishmen gather in Buffalo, New York. Wearing green uniforms, the Irishmen set off towards their destination of Canada, hoping to achieve their goal of holding Canada ransom and forcing Britain to grant Irish independence.

In the middle of 1866, the first battle between the Irish brigades and the Canadians took place at the Battle of Ridgeway. The grand majority of the Irishmen had fought in the Civil War and participated in the battles of Antietam, Gettysburg and Bull Run. In fact, the Irish were the Union troops stationed at Fort Sumter when the war broke out. The men of the Irish brigades were experienced combat veterans. In comparison, the men of the Queen's Rifle brigade had never fired weapons before. Many of them were between 18-21 year old volunteers. When the commanders of the Irish brigades ordered the troops to charge, the Canadians attempted to form a defensive line. However, they were outnumbered and outgunned. When the battle was over, the Canadians had retreated from the area and the Irish were victorious. The victory was short lived, as the British military were sent in to reinforce the Canadians and after three days of Irish occupation, Ridgeway was taken back by the British and Canadians.

Between 1866-1871, the Irish brigades launched five different raids against Canada. However, the only successful attack was the first, in which the battle of Ridgeway took place. Despite the

failures, these raids proved to not only the British but the rest of the world that the Irish were dedicated to the cause of Irish independence.

1. Describe the Fenian raids.
2. How was the United States government involved?
3. What was the significance of these invasions?
4. What took place at the Battle of Ridgeway?