

# Harvest and Halloween in Fingal



Exploring past and present  
(Second to Fourth class)





## Fingal's food heritage

Welcome to Blas, Fingal's Food Heritage project! In Fingal we have strong traditions of horticultural, farming and fishing. Our food heritage encompasses everything from grandparent's recipes, cooking and utensils, traditional ways of farming and fishing, to folklore, the famine, and fieldnames.



*Newbridge House Kitchen*

## What is Blas?

BLAS explores, records and shares traditions, attitudes, beliefs, and practices that surround how we produce and consume food and introduces different food traditions to new audiences.

## What is Fingal's food heritage digital story map?

As part of the project, we've created a [website](#) and [digital story map](#) celebrating food heritage in Fingal, which is part of our social history. The story map features food memories gathered from the community in Fingal, old photos, and recipes.

## How can schools take part in the Blas project?

- Pupils are asked to create a piece of artwork to depict an autumn feast in Fingal, or create a photo collage of signs of the harvest in Fingal.
- We ask teachers to send in a photo of the artwork/collage either as a class entry, or to submit a selection of three pieces from the class.
- A selection of submissions will be represented on the Blas website.

## Win a school tour to Newbridge House and Farm!

All classes that submit their work will be entered into a prize draw for a class tour of **Newbridge House and Farm**.

# Teacher's Guide

## Lesson Overview

Classes	Subject	Strand	Strand Unit	Curricular Links	Cross-curricular Links
Second to Fourth Class	History	Second Class: Myself and my Family	When my grandparents were young	<p>The child will be enabled to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore and record aspects of the lives of people when his/her grandparents were young - their food, farming and traditions</li> <li>examine simple historical evidence</li> <li>compare lives of people in the past with the lives of people today, noting differences and similarities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English</li> <li>Digital Literacy</li> <li>Art</li> </ul>
			Feasts and festivals in the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore and discuss the origins and traditions of some common festivals</li> </ul>	
		Third and Fourth Class: Local studies	Feasts and Festivals in the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>become familiar with the origins and traditions associated with some common festivals in Ireland</li> <li>explore, discuss, and record some of the ceremonies, stories, legends, and games associated with these feasts and festivals</li> </ul>	
			My locality through the ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>study a period/periods in the history of the local village, town, townland, parish, or county</li> <li>become familiar with important events in the history of the locality, referring to the wider national context</li> </ul>	
		Life, society, work and culture in the past	Life in Ireland ranging from Medieval times to 1930's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>become familiar with aspects of the lives of these people</li> <li>examine and become familiar with evidence from the periods studied, especially evidence which may be found locally</li> </ul>	

## Lesson: 'Harvesting and Halloween' (Festivals and Food)

**Resources:** Whiteboard, Activity Sheet: 'Harvest Time', Image 'Harvesting image from Luttrell Psalter Manuscript', Sticky Notes, Selection of materials for a fabric and fibre activity, Camera (optional).

### Learning outcomes:

Pupils will be enabled to:

- Identify similarities and differences between how food was harvested and stored in the past and nowadays
- Identify connections between the harvest and Halloween
- Discuss Halloween traditions and folklore
- Identify food associated with Halloween
- Compare their lives with those of people in the past
- Examine simple historical evidence
- Create a piece of artwork to show an 'Autumn Feast in Fingal'
- (Optional: Food Walk – Identify signs of the harvest in the local area)

### Introduction

*Picture this!*



Harvesting image from Luttrell Psalter manuscript<sup>1</sup>

1. Show pupils the image above which depicts harvesting in the past (medieval times). Discuss.

(You can find a copy of the picture on page 7 of this lesson, or on the Blas website [here](#).)

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<sup>1</sup> [Luttrell Psalter](#) is justifiably considered one of the British Library's greatest treasures. It was created c. 1320-1340 in Lincolnshire, England, and takes its name from its first owner and patron, Sir Geoffrey Luttrell (1276-1345).

Some suggested questions:

- What is being harvested? Wheat.
- Why was wheat important? It was ground into flour, which was used to make bread. This was one of the main foods in the past. In places like Skerries Mill, the millers would have made flour from wheat.
- How do you know this is a picture of harvesting in the past? Clothes, tools etc.
- How are the workers cutting the wheat? Using sickles.
- What time of year do you think it is? It is autumn as the harvest is being collected.
- What machines would be helpful for the workers?/Why are they not using machines? Machines like tractors and combine harvesters were not available at this time.

## Development

### *Read and Reap Three Interesting Facts*

1. Give pupils in groups/pairs, a copy of Activity Sheet : Harvest Time. Ask them to read about 'Harvest Time' and to record their Top 3 interesting facts.
2. Invite each group to share with the class.

### *Then and Now*

3. Now ask pupils, as a class, to contrast and compare the harvesting and storage of food in the past and present. Record on the whiteboard in two columns – Past/Present.

Some suggestions:

- In the past, most food was grown in the spring and ready for harvest in the autumn.
- Nowadays food can be grown at other times of the year using polytunnels, glasshouses and modern technology, to keep the temperature and conditions right for growing. This means, for example, that you can get off-season food in the winter.
- In the past people had to harvest food when it was ripe and ready.
- Nowadays we have fridges and freezers to preserve and store food for longer.
- In the past some food like gourds ( e.g. pumpkins) were good to store with their hard skin but other foods could be more difficult to store and could rot easily. People sometimes used a 'pickling technique' to preserve vegetables, for example, putting vegetables into brine.
- In the past, most people ate what they grew themselves, or they bought local food at the local market.
- Nowadays we can buy food at supermarkets and even online. Some of this food has travelled from faraway places – bananas, avocados, passionfruit. (Teacher note- you can ask pupils to find out where these and other vegetables have come from).

### *Harvest and Halloween*

4. Divide the class into two groups, giving each group sticky notes. Ask one group to write words/draw pictures associated with the **harvest** and the other group to focus on **Halloween**. Then ask the pupils to stick up the notes, looking for connections between the harvest and Halloween, making a sort of Harvest/Halloween Venn Diagram.
5. Discuss as a class.

Some ideas for discussion:

- Halloween, or 'Samhain' as it was originally called, celebrated the end of the Harvest season and the beginning of the winter.
- There was a lot of food available after the harvest, therefore food was a big part of the Halloween celebration.

- Colcannon (potato, kale and onion) was eaten at Halloween. Kale is harvested in autumn.
- Barmbrack (Bairín breac ) was made of dried fruit.
- Apples were harvested in autumn. Bobbing for apples in a basin of water was a well-known Halloween tradition. There was also a tradition of hanging an apple from a door frame on a piece of string, with hands behind your back, trying to take a bite from the apple.
- Pumpkin carving and the Jack-o-Lantern is a well-known Halloween tradition, but this originated in Ireland. The tradition was to carve a spooky face out of a turnip to keep away bad spirits. The tradition changed in more recent times, to using pumpkins, as Irish people emigrated to America and brought their traditions with them.

## Conclusion

### Option 1: Fabric and Fibre 'Autumn Feast in Fingal'

Ask pupils as a class, individually, or in groups, to create a fabric and fibre picture of an 'Autumn Feast in Fingal'. This could be a feast in the past or present. It could depict the harvest season, or Halloween, or both.

Competition – Take a photo of the finished artwork. Submit either a class entry or choose three individual entries to represent the class. Submit with your class and school's details to Blas [foodheritage@fingal.ie](mailto:foodheritage@fingal.ie)

### Option 2: I-Spy Autumn Food Walk

Go on a walk in your local area and find, list and photograph any of the following:

- Fruit or vegetables growing at this time of year e.g. blackberries, gooseberries, apples, pumpkins, cabbage.
- Machinery connected with food production e.g. combine harvester, tractor.
- Places connected with food production e.g. barns, old mills.

Competition – Create a class photo collage of your Autumn Food Walk. Submit a clear photo with your class and school's details to Blas [foodheritage@fingal.ie](mailto:foodheritage@fingal.ie)

## Activity Sheet: Harvest Time

**Read the following passage and find three interesting facts:**

In the past, Lúnasa marked the beginning of harvest season. This was one of the busiest times of the agricultural year. The whole family and community helped with reaping the harvest. Reaping means to cut and gather the harvest. Lúnasa was celebrated either on the last Sunday in July, or the first Sunday in August.

In medieval times harvesting was done by hand, using a tool called 'a sickle'. Scythes (a long-handled sickle) were also used. The harvest lasted for many days with breaks for Sundays and feast-days. The stalks of wheat were gathered together and left to dry for a few days before being bound into sheaves and assembled into 'stooks' (heaps) in the fields.

Storage was difficult in the past because there were no fridges or freezers, like we have nowadays, so wheat was stored in a barn, in the haggard (enclosed place on a farm for keeping grain), or in open air stacks. This was useful because the main insect pest called 'the weevil' couldn't survive winters outside the barn. Once a stack of wheat was dry, it would be untied and the grain was 'threshed with a flail' (hit by swinging a stick at it to remove the wheat kernels from the stalks).

A record from Balscadden in the School's Manuscript Collection, 1937, showed things changed little for hundreds of years:

*'Before machines came into use, meadow were cut by the scythe. Harvest men as they were called, came to the district and other places all over the Co Dublin and cut the meadows by contract. Those men came from the County Cavan and County Longford. They brought their scythes with them and slept in the barn near the farmer's places. There would be forty or fifty of them in each batch. They started work at about six o'clock in the morning. On an average each man would cut an acre per day. Now with the modern means of mowing, it is a common thing to see a machine cutting down five acres on a good day. Those harvest men remained to treat the harvest in the same way as they did the hay. Some of those harvest men remained and married in this district and hence the County Cavan names to be met with here. John Lynch a local man could mow an acre per day with the scythe' (Volume O783, p.170 © National Folklore Collection, UCD.).*

**Our Three Interesting Facts:**

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Harvesting image from Luttrell Psalter Manuscript

