The Great Famine of Ireland, also known as the Great Hunger, was a period of mass starvation, disease, and emigration that took place between 1845 and 1849. It was one of the most severe and well-documented instances of famine in modern history. The famine was caused by a combination of factors, including an unusually severe potato blight, agricultural over-reliance on the potato crop, and a lack of government support to mitigate the effects of the blight. The famine had a profound impact on Ireland, leading to the emigration of millions of people, particularly to the United States, and it contributed to the eventual decline of the Irish Catholic peasantry.

The famine was contemporaneously known in Irish as an drochshaol, loosely translated as "the great hunger." The most severely affected areas were in the west and south of Ireland, where the Irish language was primarily spoken. The story of a branch of the Armstrong family who served in the locomotive department of the Great Western Railway in Ireland is detailed in "The Armstrongs of the Great Western Their Times, Surroundings, Contemporaries, Railway World" by Holcroft H. The book was published in 1953 and includes pp140 plus pp36 of illustrations. It is in hardcover with no dust wrapper and the fair wear to the covers at the headbase of the spine also means the gold lettering on the spine is faded. The book was primarily spoken of in Irish as an drochshaol, loosely translated as the "culture of the United Kingdom."