

Thème 3 – De la plante sauvage à la plante domestiquée
3-B - La domestication des plantes

A mould¹ that changed the course of history

Use the documents to justify the title.

Document 1:

Hunger to the point of starvation was the main cause that pushed many Irish people to go to the USA in the 19th century. The cause was the potato blight², a pest that is still difficult to control today, although there are several ways to try to prevent it.

Potatoes, originally from the Andean regions of South America, were introduced into Ireland in the mid-16th century. In the 17th century the crop spread throughout the island, supplementing the Irish diet that had consisted mainly of cereals and dairy³ products. By the early 18th century, potatoes had become the staple⁴ food of the poor during the winter, and its culture became more and more widespread.

Nowhere in Europe did the potato blight have such disastrous consequences as in Ireland. In fact, the diet of a portion of the Irish people depended on potatoes and the blight devastated Ireland's potato crop between 1845 and 1852. During those years, Ireland lost a large part of its population because of starvation, diseases resulting from malnutrition and emigration. That was how the great wave of Irish emigration to North America began. Without the plague⁵ caused by a fungus¹, *Phytophthora infestans*, the history of the USA would have been different. And the history of Ireland might also have been different. The Great Famine, and the way Irish people felt they were treated by the British during this crisis, may have been one of the causes that sparked Irish nationalism and made it possible for most of the island to become an independent country.

By Mercè Piqueras, November 18, 2009, <http://schaechter.asmblog.org>

("The purpose of this blog is to share our appreciation for the width and depth of the microbial activities on this planet").

1 : moisissure ; 2 : mildiou de la pomme de terre (plant disease) ; 3 : produits laitiers ; 4 = basic ; 5 : épidémie (here).

**Document 2: Population
of Ireland and Europe**
 From <http://www.learnnc.org>

