ALL about POTATOES!

Students studying Europe learn about the history of this staple crop – where it originally came from, how it both fed and starved millions, how this impacted immigration to the U.S., etc.

1) Prompt students for prior knowledge about potatoes. Common dishes their own families make, where their families came from – any Irish heritage? European?

2) Talk about history of potatoes (see below)

3) Show students a potato – how does it grow? (show them sprouting nodes called 'eyes') What do we call the part of the plant we eat? (which underground structure is it? A tuber! Not a bulb.) Leaves are poisonous, remember what happened to the royals who first tried to eat it? (scroll down for potato diagrams next page)

4) plant potatoes with students in garden – in potato towers or their class bed.

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http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-the-potato-changed-the-world-108470605/?no-ist
http://www.potatogoodness.com/all-about-potatoes/potato-fun-facts-history/
http://www.potato.ie/history/

Potato = *Solanum tuberosum* – in the Solanaceae family along with tomatoes, peppers, eggplant. Solanaceae is the nightshade family! all leaves poisonous...., high in nutrients, starch
Native to: South America
Brought to Europe – 16th century by Spanish explorers (Conquistadors)
Became a staple crop of Europe's poor – especially in Ireland - because rich in nutrients, starch

"The potato first arrived to Ireland in 1589. Sir Walter Raleigh, British explorer and historian known for his expeditions to the Americas, first brought the potato to Ireland and planted them at his Irish estate at Myrtle Grove, Youghal, near Cork, Ireland. Legend has it that he made a gift of the potato plant to Queen Elizabeth I. The local gentry were invited to a royal banquet featuring the potato in every course. Unfortunately, the cooks were uneducated in the matter of potatoes, tossed out the lumpy-looking tubers and brought to the royal table a dish of boiled stems and leaves (which are poisonous), which promptly made everyone deathly ill. The potatoes were then banned from court."

"The "Great Famine" in Ireland from 1845-1849 was caused because the potato crop became diseased. At the height of the famine at least one million people died of starvation. This famine left many poverty stricken families with no choice but to struggle for survival or emigrate out of Ireland. Towns became deserted, and shops closed because store owners were forced to emigrate due to the amount of unemployment. Over one and a half million people left Ireland for North America and Australia. Over just a few years, the population of Ireland dropped by one half, from about 9 million to little more than 4 million."

"There are now over a thousand different types of potatoes. Potatoes have become an integral part of much of the world's cuisine. It is the world's fourth-largest food crop, following rice, wheat, and maize."

Scar of
scale leaf

Germinating
eye bud

Scar of stem

eye

Potato plant

Stem

Developing tuber

Adventious roots

Scale leaf on stolon

"Seed" piece

Roots

Young tuber