A growing townland.
A shrinking parish.

Purpose: distinguish a recorded population change from an explanation for it; read a historical table at two geographic scales.

Audience: curious adults and approximately age 13 upwards. Time: about 20-30 minutes. These are proposed levels and timings, not classroom-tested or curriculum-approved.

What learners need

The two-page learner sheet, a pencil and discussion space. Internet access is optional: all core questions can be answered from the printed table. The web activity adds guided views of the original page. Do not require learners to decipher small print.

Suggested sequence

Orient - 3 minutes
Locate the townland within the civil parish and county. Ask why the two population totals should not be added.

Read - 5 minutes
Check dates, row labels and measures. Separate population from inhabited houses; read totals rather than male or female subcolumns.

Compare - 5 minutes
Describe direction and absolute change before asking why. Percentage calculation is an optional extension.

Discuss - 5-8 minutes
Consider each claim and ask which part the record supports. Accept reasoned explanations, not only a verdict.

Conclude - 3 minutes
One supported finding, one limit and one further research question. No score, competition or timed response.

Sensitive discussion

Population counts concern people and loss. Do not frame growth as success or decline as failure. Do not ask learners to disclose personal family losses or migration experiences.

Checked figures & answers

Place / measure	1841	1851
Tullynascreen Population	90	159
Tullynascreen Inhabited houses	15	29
Killanummery parish group Population	4,605	3,719

Learner question 1

Tullynascreen: 159 - 90 = 69 more people. Killanummery parish group: 3,719 - 4,605 = 886 fewer people. Use 1841 and 1851 as endpoint dates, not a year-by-year account.

Learner question 2

29 - 15 = 14 more inhabited houses. This does not establish room size, comfort, food supply or individual household experience. Accept questions about occupancy, building condition or who lived there.

Learner question 3

A. Supported by this comparison. One part can grow while the wider area declines. The parish total includes Tullynascreen and other places; these are nested counts, not totals to add together.

B. Not established. The difference is a net population change. Births, deaths and movement in or out can affect it. These two totals do not separate those contributions.

C. Not established. A larger count does not describe food, health, income or loss within individual households. Those questions need other evidence.

Optional calculations

Tullynascreen: 69 / 90 x 100 = about 76.7% increase.
Parish group: -886 / 4,605 x 100 = about 19.2% decrease.
Different starting populations explain why the larger percentage here represents fewer people.

An explanation needs more.

Model conclusion

"The table records opposite population changes at townland and parish scale. It does not separate births, deaths and movement, or show how individual households experienced the period."

Accept equivalent careful wording. The point is to identify the record's limits, not to reproduce a prescribed sentence.

Source-reading cautions

Find the right total. The separate townland named Killanummery has its own row. It is not the parish total. Page 98 continues a parish list from the preceding page; the total below Tullynascreen is the wider statistical grouping.

Keep the period clear. The 1841-1851 comparison begins before the first blight and does not cover the whole commonly used 1845-1852 Famine period. Two endpoints cannot show when a change occurred.

Keep net change distinct from deaths. Births, deaths and movement can affect totals. These figures cannot apportion the change between them or identify named survivors.

Further questions

Parish registers might identify births or burials; relief records might describe distress and assistance; correspondence might preserve an individual account. Ask which question a proposed source could answer and what its gaps might be. Do not imply that a local family relief record has already been found.

Support and extension

Read the table aloud or use the accessible web table. Offer sentence starters; let a pair discuss before writing. For extension, compare absolute and percentage change, or explain why the townland total cannot be added to the parish total.

Source & reuse

Census of Ireland 1851, Leitrim, printed p.98 (PDF p.12), published 1852; via CSO. Government of Ireland. Statistical information: CC BY 4.0. Selected transcription and teaching material by The McPadden Project, 13 November 2026.

Original table: https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/statistics/archive/census1851/THE_CENSUS_OF_IRELAND_1851_-_Leitrim.pdf#page=12

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