



Lesson Plan to accompany the short story
"Succession" in the collection "The
Illustrated Ulysses S. Grant in China and
Other Stories."

HIGH MAYA CORN BLIGHT

For most of human history, the survival or starvation of civilizations depended on extensive agricultural endeavors. The bulk of human history is based on farming, with rural life comprising the vast majority of people until the turn of the twentieth century. Diseases and insect infestations could bring starvation, poverty, and ruin to thousands of people if not properly prepared against.

Even in more modern times, plant diseases can have devastating, long reaching effects. The Potato Famine in Ireland during the nineteenth century is an extreme and complex example. Even in an era of urbanization, pesticides, and careful selective breeding, diseases and insects can ravage crops, with far reaching consequences.

A modern instance of such an event is the southern corn leaf blight epidemic of 1970-1971. This incident destroyed fifteen percent of the United States' corn production, causing over \$1 billion in damages. A corn disease mutated and preyed on a particular breed of corn, which at the time comprised 85% of the strains of corn grown in the country. It took work and careful selection of resistant strains to provide a proper harvest in the ensuing years, and greater genetic diversity has been advised for crops as a result.

ASSIGNMENT

Please visit these sites and answer two questions:

[Southern Corn Leaf Blight: A Story Worth Retelling - USDA ARS](#)

<https://www.ars.usda.gov/research/publications/publication/?seqNo115=336830>

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/171/3976/1113>

<https://alphahistory.com/frenchrevolution/harvest-failures/>

- 1) What ramifications did the Corn Blight Epidemic have on corn crops afterward?
- 2) What other harvest failures occurred history, besides the Irish Potato Famine?

Length: your essay should be roughly 300 words

