

# 1609: SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN REACHES THE LAKE

*Champlain's Battle Scene 1609. Samuel de Champlain ca. 1613.*



## SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN

By Joseph-André Senécal

Samuel de Champlain was born at Brouage around 1570. There is no known portrait of the Father of New France and little is known about his family. His father and uncle were sea captains and he informed the French court that the art of navigation had attracted him from his “tender youth.” We do not know where he learned the many skills (navigation; cartography; drawing; geography) that prepared him for his North American experience. In all likelihood Champlain learned about sailing at Brouage, a port on the French Atlantic coast, a key stopover for ships of all nations who needed to take on cargoes of salt before sailing for the fishing grounds off Newfoundland and the coast of New England. Concerning his military skills, we know that he served as a soldier in the French province of Brittany where Catholic forces allied with Spain opposed Henry IV as the rightful king of France. From 1595 to 1598, he served in the army of Henry IV with the title of sergeant quartermaster. His uncle was also involved in this final chapter of the war of religions and, at the conclusion of hostilities, we find them reunited at the port of Blavet where the two sailed for Spain in 1598. From Spain Champlain joined a fleet bound for the Spanish West Indies, a voyage that took him two years and a half. While he never published an account of this voyage, several manuscript versions exist of the *Brief discours des choses plus remarquables que Samuel Champlain de Brouage a reconnues aux Indes Occidentals* [Narrative of a Voyage to the West Indies and Mexico in the years 1599-1602]. The work includes many illustrations of the flora and fauna of the sites visited, and several maps of islands and cities such as Porto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guadeloupe, Panama, Cartagena, and Havana.

We find Champlain at Cadiz in July 1601, after which he returned to France and gravitated among a circle of Huguenots: French Protestants, many converted, like their king, to Catholicism. Several obtained royal commissions and trading privileges for commercial ventures in New France: Pierre de Chauvin de Tonnetuit secured a monopoly to trade at Tadoussac, at the mouth of the Saguenay River (1600-1601); Aymar de Chastes received a similar privilege for Acadia (1603); after their death, Pierre Du Gua de Monts, governor of Pons in the province of Saintonge, secured similar exclusive rights. Upon his return home Champlain seems to have joined this circle of veterans and to have struck a friendship with François Gravé Du Pont, a trader and sea captains who played a key role in most expeditions to the Saint Lawrence and Acadia.

Champlain’s first contact with those parts of North America already known as New France was as an explorer. In 1603 he took part in an expedition that retraced the itinerary of Jacques Cartier, a navigator from the times of Francis 1st. It was Cartier who had first explored the Saint Lawrence River (1535-36; 1541-42), identifying much of the geography with French names which have survived to this day. As he sailed all the way to Montreal Island Cartier had noted place names such as Canada; he was the one who gave the mountain Mount Royal its name. The French version of Mount Royal, Montréal, became associated with the island and the metropolis that rose at the foot of the mountain. Like Cartier, Champlain’s progress was stopped at the northern end of the island of Montreal where rapids prevented European crafts of the time from proceeding further toward the Great Lakes. Before reaching Montreal Island Champlain had also rowed upstream from the mouth of the Richelieu River but had turned back at the first rapids at Saint Ours. That brief summer, he also found time to explore the Saguenay fjord and to collect information from native informants about the system of waterways extending to the north. In this fashion he was able to deduce the existence of Hudson Bay. By questioning informants, he made an amazing reconstruction of the network of the Great Lakes (including Niagara Falls). On this first trip to the Saint Lawrence Champlain witnessed a native feast (a *tabagie*) and met tribes from the Algonquian-speaking group of Native Americans: Montagnais, Attikameque and Algonkin. These tribes were hunters and collected furs on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence, in the immense forest that extended south of the semi-artic domain of the Inuits. While the Amerindians were celebrating and trading with the

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French, Champlain studied their customs, costumes and ways of life at great length. On his return to France he presented a map of the St. Lawrence (now lost) to the king, and published an account of his observations of native tribes: *Des sauvages* [Of the Savages].

The following year, in 1604, Champlain was encouraged by Pierre Du Gua de Monts to accompany another expedition which sought to establish a permanent outpost on the Bay of Fundy (then known as Acadia) or the Atlantic shores of New England (then known as Norumbega). As a member of that party Champlain was given the responsibility of exploring the coasts and finding a suitable site for a permanent post. He explored the shores of Nova Scotia and spent much time mapping the Bay of Fundy and the coast of Maine. Champlain played a leading role in these explorations that lasted nearly three years. In 1605 and 1606 he mapped the coastline as far south as Cape Cod. He spent three winters in Acadia, the French name for the lands circling the Bay of Fundy (the contemporary Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia). During that time he became convinced that Acadia was too vulnerable to attacks from foreign competitors such as the Basque and the English. He also became aware of the vast native network of trade that transported European goods deep inside the continent in return for the movement of furs to the Atlantic shores. In his dealings with various Abenaki nations Champlain learned about the trade rivalries that existed between the nomadic tribes of the east and north and the Iroquois nations established on the Great Lakes and south, in the present state of New York.

In 1608, after a brief return to France, Champlain made a third voyage to North America, this time with orders to select a site along the Saint Lawrence that could be defended and serve as headquarters for the fur trading company of Du Gua de Monts and associates. Champlain selected a place known to the natives as *Kebecq* (today Quebec City) a name that translated as “the place where the river narrows.” That summer he built a *habitation*, a trading post which included a warehouse and three small buildings to house the staff and their workshops. The compound was protected by a moat and a palisade. For twenty five years, from 1608 to 1633, Quebec and New France would remain little more than this precarious toehold deep along the Saint Lawrence. Champlain was absent frequently, returning to France to report to noble patrons and deal with traders who did everything to impede the permanent settlement of the valley. On the average little more than fifty men would be left to winter at Quebec; (often, the number was far less). Most of these employees of the fur companies were on short contracts and returned to France after as little time as two years. When Quebec was captured by English privateers (pirates with royal commissions) in 1629, only three French families were settled at Quebec and involved in substantial land clearing and the harvest of crops.

After spending a harsh winter at the Quebec *Habitation* Champlain journeyed to the mouth of the St Maurice River (the modern city of Trois-Rivières) to meet with Native allies from the interior and the north. Trading took place at this major junction and two others: Tadoussac, at the mouth of the Saguenay, and the St Louis Rapids, at the northern end of Montreal Island. Through bartering and diplomacy Champlain was hoping to obtain a safe conduct and guides to explore further towards Hudson Bay and westward, towards the Great Lakes. To enlist the help of the trading partners assembled at Trois Rivières he renewed his pledge of an alliance and military assistance. On this occasion Champlain met the Wendat from Lake Huron for the first time, along with the Montagnais and the Algonkin who came. The combined force invited him to accompany them on a raid deep into Iroquois territory. On June 28 Champlain entered the *Rivière des Iroquois* (Richelieu River). His boats could not negotiate the Chambly Rapids but he opted to continue the journey in the frail birch bark canoe of his native allies. Taking two other Frenchmen with him he paddled upriver and reached the lake to which he would soon give his name. The men moved slowly hugging the shores of Lake Champlain. Soon the party traveled only by night for fear of discovery and attack. On the evening of July 29, probably at Ticonderoga (New York), the war party encountered Iroquois. The next dawn, as the two sides clashed, the French allies opened



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their ranks to reveal Champlain and his arquebus, a cumbersome but lethal early type of gun. He killed two Mohawk chiefs. Shots fired from the woods by Champlain's companions produced panic among the Iroquois. As a result of this expedition Champlain discovered a major strategic route to travel from the Atlantic coast to the interior of the continent. Had he lingered in the area another month and pushed further south he would have encountered Henry Hudson whose vessel the *Halfmoon* reached Albany in September of that year. Upon his return to Quebec Champlain made preparations to return to France.

The following summer, in 1610, the three groups of native allies were expecting Champlain to participate in another expedition against the Iroquois. As prearranged, the war party met at the mouth of the Richelieu River where the enemy was found well entrenched behind a makeshift fort. Champlain played a major role in the siege and the attack. It would be his last triumph over the Iroquois. The campaign of 1610 gave Champlain the opportunity to cement the trade partnership between the Wendat (Huron) and the French. The trade and military alliance was formalized by the exchange of a French youth, Étienne Brûlé (who was instructed to learn the Wendat's language and ways) for Savignon a Wendat whom Champlain took with him to France. Brulé was the first of many interpreters (the French called them *truchements*) who would be welcomed among the native partners. The *truchements* played a vital role in learning native ways and languages, and laying the ground works for further exploration. They were the ancestors of the coureurs de bois of the next generation and the voyageurs of the British Regime.

By 1611, Champlain's trading advantage was evaporating as other merchants followed him to his rendezvous points and captured most of the furs offered that year and the next. Disgusted by the tactics of these unauthorized traders, the natives were coming in smaller numbers. He was also frustrated with his allies, especially the Montagnais and the Algonkin from the Petite Nation, who were refusing to grant him access to the lands to the North, and to the West. The tribes were blocking the Saint Maurice and the Saguenay Rivers, the key waterway to reaching Hudson Bay from the South, and the Ottawa River, the first link in a series of rivers, lakes and portages toward Georgian Bay and Lake Huron and other parts of the West.

In 1613 Champlain decided to continue his exploration westward despite the obstacles put up by his trading partners. With a native guide and four of his men (among them Nicolas de Vignau who had gone up the Ottawa River and lived among the natives as a *truchement*), he reached the region of present-day Ottawa and continued to the land of the Allumettes tribe further west. There he renewed ties with an ally, Chief Tessouat, whom he had met at Tadoussac. To cement the alliance, Tessouat placed one of his sons with Champlain, a common practice of native diplomacy at the time. As part of such formal exchanges Champlain was able to send many European youths, among them Étienne Brulé, Nicolas Marsolet, Jean Nicolet de Belleborne and Jean Godefroy de Lintot, as *truchements* (interpreters). These *truchements* were keys to opening the way to trade, exploration, and the coming of missionaries. Despite the renewal of cordial relations, the Allumette Algonkin dissuaded Champlain from going further to the land of the Nipissing. Towards the end of 1613, Champlain published an account of the journey that he had just made, *Les Voyages du Sieur de Champlain*, as well as a map of New France.

At about the time when Champlain published the first edition of his *Voyages*, the French court was falling under the increased influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Priests such as Cardinal Richelieu and the Capuchin Father Joseph [François LeClerc du Tremblay] would play critical roles in the running of the state and many influent courtiers were pursuing a devout life, seeking to increase the dividends of the Counter Reformation by promoting the conversion of the aboriginals on newfound continents. Champlain sought to recruit these new actors, to enlist priests and devout lay people for his plan to provide New France with a permanent population. In 1615 he recruited four Recollects: friars from the tradition of St Francis. The Recollects were already at work Christianizing the *Indianos* of Spanish



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America and the more distant populations of Africa and Asia. The friars set up a base of operations at Québec and immediately sent missionaries to the Wendat. In his book, *Grand voyage du pays des Hurons* [Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons] Friar Gabriel Sagard left us a precious description of his order's installation at Québec and their initial foray into Huronia on the northern edge of Lake Huron. To support their operations in New France the friars needed workers to clear land and build and maintain their base of operations. Soon they requested the help of another religious order: the Jesuits. This group was better organized and financed. After 1631, they monopolized the works of the missions. The Jesuits played a dominant role in expanding the French presence in Huronia, among the Iroquois south of the Great Lakes, and at Trois-Rivières and Cap-de-la-Madeleine at the mouth of the Saint Maurice River. By 1629 most of the permanent and semi-permanent population of Europeans living in New France were priests and their male hired help. The fur ventures had attracted no more than three families, including women, and several interpreters who were shuttling between native heartlands and French posts at Tadoussac, Quebec, and Matane (a small, seasonal outpost several hundred miles downstream from Québec).

In 1615 Champlain set out again for the Saint-Louis Rapids to rendez vous with the natives. This time he was determined to reach the heartland of Huronia and explore further. With two Frenchmen, he went up the Ottawa River and reached the Mataouan River. Via Lake Nipissing and the French River, he finally reached Lake Attigouautau (Lake Huron) where he found the Wendat and other allies who were waiting for him to conduct a raid against the Iroquois south of Lake Ontario. The military rendezvous was at Cahiagué on Lake Simcoe. Champlain went there by easy stages, visiting villages and gathering much information. The expedition crossed Lake Ontario at its eastern tip; and followed the Oneida River to an Iroquois fort (on the east side of Lake Onondaga, probably at Nichols Pond, near Perryville, N.Y., to the south of Lake Oneida). The assault failed and Champlain was wounded. He spent the winter of 1616 among the Wendat. During that enforced stay he met with the Recollect friars working among the Wendat and he visited the Tobacco Nation to the south of Nottawasaga Bay, and the Cheveux-Relevés (the Ottawas) to the south of Georgian Bay. This lengthy expedition was to be Champlain's last voyage of exploration. The administration and promotion of the fragile French presence along the Saint Lawrence were to absorb the rest of his life.

In February 1618, he attempted a major move by addressing two reports, one to the king and the other to the Chamber of Commerce of Paris, outlining a comprehensive settlement program. Champlain proposed the founding of a true settlement at Québec, a town which would be named after the new king: Ludovica. The fortified city would rise along the banks of the St Charles River, north of Cape Diamond. Three hundred families, more than one thousand persons, would arrive in quick succession to settle the land.

Champlain's plan was not acted upon until 1627. That year Cardinal Richelieu established the Hundred Associates Company. Well financed, the associates acted swiftly to implement a colonisation program. Unfortunately their move coincided with the opening of hostilities between France and England. Sanctioned by the British Crown a group of pirates, the Kirke brothers, invested the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and the river. They intercepted several fleets that were bringing supplies and men to New France. After seizing Tadoussac, they laid siege to Québec. Champlain held out until the summer of 1629. But by then, reduced to stark necessities, he was forced to capitulate and surrender the outpost. Negotiations for the return of New France were to drag on until the treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1632. Upon leaving the Saint Lawrence, acting against the articles of the treaty, the Kirke brothers reduced most installations to ruins and stole the fur inventories. In March 1633, Champlain was instructed to take command of New France once again.



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During 1632 he had published his *Voyages de la Nouvelle-France Occidentale dicte Canada*. [Voyages to the New France of the West Also Called Canada]. The work contains an historical retrospect, his voyages from 1603 to 1629, and an account of what occurred in 1631. Champlain included an updated map of New France, his most beautiful and accurate.

Champlain returned to Quebec in May 1633. The Jesuits had reached the restored lands the year before and they dominated the final three years of Champlain tenure. Families began arriving and settling in the region of Québec and at Trois-Rivières. In both cases the Jesuits played a large role in the recruitment and employment of the permanent workforce. In 1635 Champlain's health declined rapidly. He died that Christmas. He was spared a final disappointment and humiliation. The king had already appointed a successor to the Father of New France in the person of Charles Huault de Montmagny but the news of this development did not reach New France before the death of Champlain.

Champlain was man of vision and discernment. He was the first European to grasp the geography and ecology of Eastern North America. Once he understood that the fur trade would limit the implantation of France in Eastern North America, he applied his many moral and intellectual skills to an evolving plan that anticipated a large and generous role for the Native partners. Frustrated at every step by rapacious merchants who perpetually undermined his plans of permanent settlement, he showed uncommon fortitude and resourcefulness in attracting the protection of the mighty and pursuing his plans for the transplantation of a French population. When Champlain died the colony counted little more than 150 souls. But the foundations of New France were laid.

## FOR FURTHER READING

Biggar, Henry Percival, ed. *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*. Toronto: Champlain Society, 1922-1936.

### On Champlain:

Armstrong, Joe C. *Champlain*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1987.

Bishop, Morris. *Champlain: the life of fortitude*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963.

Trudel, Marcel. *The beginnings of New France, 1524-1663*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

### On New France:

Greer, Allan. *The People of New France*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

### On the Amerindians:

Delâge, Denys. **Bitter feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600-64**. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993.

## CHAMPLAIN'S JOURNEY TO THE LAKE

LCMM

<b>Grade Level</b>	4-12
<b>Content Areas</b>	Social Studies, Language Arts
<b>VT Grade Expectations</b>	VT R2:12: Demonstrate initial understanding of informational texts by... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Locating and recording information to show understanding when given an organizational format</li></ul>
<b>NY Standards</b>	NY Language Arts Standard 1: Key Idea 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select information appropriate to the purpose of their investigation...</li><li>• Select and use strategies they have been taught for note taking, organizing, and categorizing information</li><li>• Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information...</li></ul> NY Social Studies Standard 1: Key Idea 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• View historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music, and artifacts.</li><li>• Describe historic events through the eyes and experiences of those who were there.</li></ul>
<b>Duration</b>	50 minutes
<b>Learning Goals</b>	<b>Students will identify and record specific information from primary source material.</b>
<b>Description</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Discuss Champlain's explorations of New France</li><li>2. Read aloud or have students read silently Champlain's description of his first encounter with Lake Champlain.</li><li>3. List the physical characteristics of the lake.</li><li>4. List the animals and plants he identifies.</li><li>5. Discuss the descriptive words he uses to describe his impressions of the lake.</li></ol>
<b>Assessments</b>	Check students worksheets for accuracy and completeness.
<b>Materials/Resources</b>	Journal selection, worksheets

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

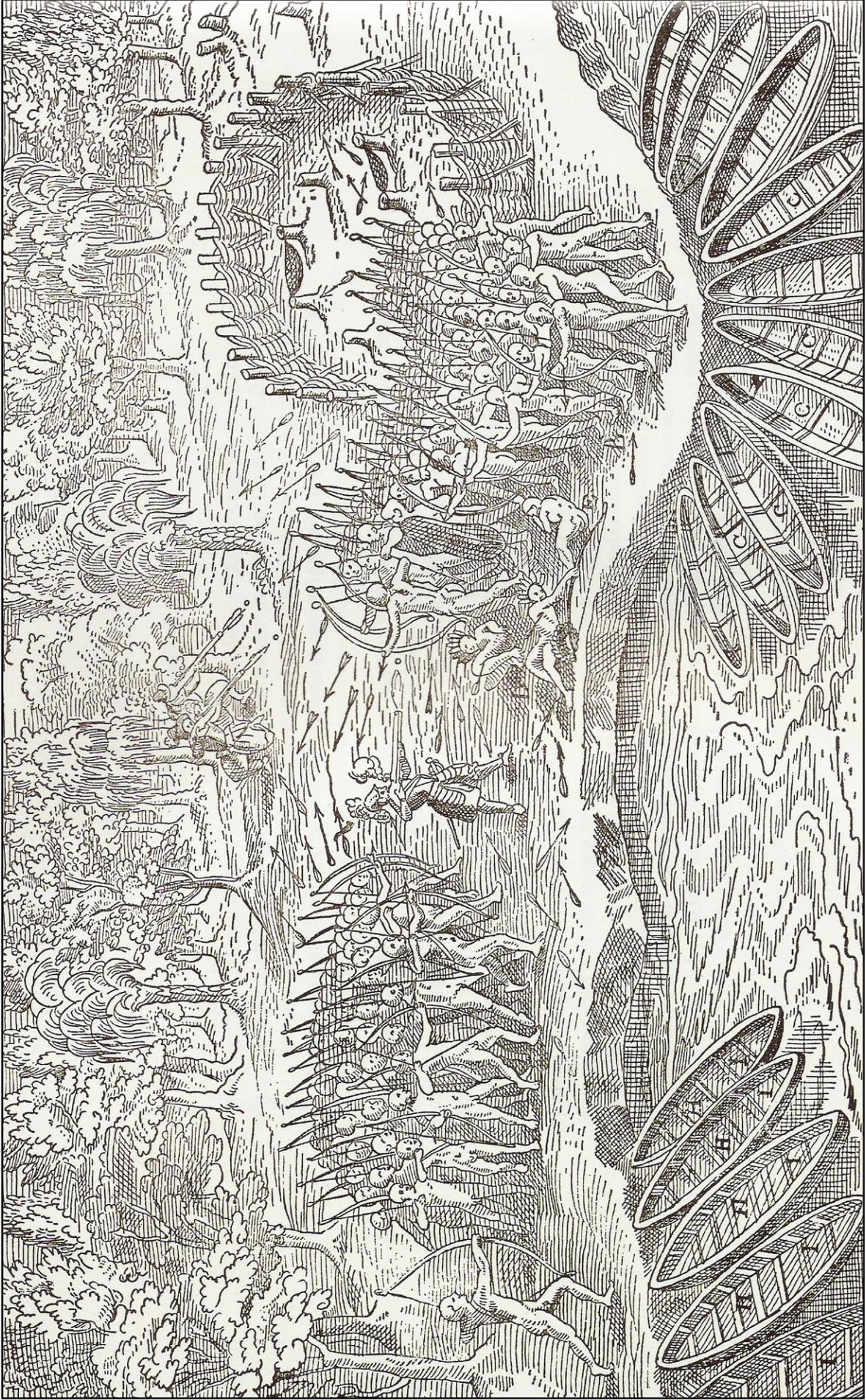
Read or listen to Samuel de Champlain's Journal entries about his trip to lake the now bears his name. List on your worksheet the things he mentions in the appropriate category.

Land Features	Water Features	Plants/Animals	Descriptive Words

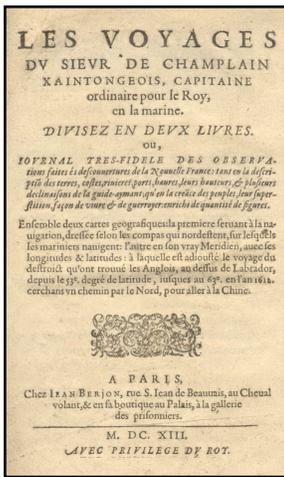
## BATTLE WITH THE IROQUOIS

LCMM

<b>Grade Level</b>	4-12
<b>Content Areas</b>	Social Studies, Language Arts
<b>VT Grade Expectations</b>	<p>VT R4:10: Demonstrate initial understanding of key elements of literary text by...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paraphrasing or summarizing key ideas/plot, with major events sequenced, as appropriate to text</li> </ul>
<b>NY Standards</b>	<p>NY Reading Standard 1: Key Idea 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books ...</li> </ul> <p>NY Social Studies Standard 1: Key Idea 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View historic events through the eyes of those who were there.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	50 minutes
<b>Learning Goals</b>	<b>Students will gather and interpret information gathered from reading primary source material.</b>
<b>Description</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discuss how Champlain hoped to reinforce his relationships with the Council Fire Nations by helping them in their attack on the Iroquois, their traditional enemies</li> <li>2. Read aloud or have students read independently Champlain’s description of the battle with the Iroquois, and examine Champlain’s own drawing of the battle.</li> <li>3. Individually or as a group list the sequence of events that took place from the initial meeting to their departure with captives.</li> <li>4. Discuss how Champlain’s presence affected the outcome of the encounter.</li> <li>5. Guiding questions:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who initiated the attack plan?</li> <li>• What preparations were made for the expedition?</li> <li>• How were First Nations and European military practices different?</li> <li>• What advice did Champlain give his companions?</li> <li>• How did Champlain affect the battle?</li> <li>• What was the reaction of the Iroquois warriors?</li> <li>• What was Champlain’s reaction to the outcome?</li> <li>• How do you think you would react if you were confronted with a new weapon? (e.g. ray gun)</li> <li>• Do you think Champlain’s decision to help his friends was a good or bad idea?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Assessments</b>	Informal assessment of student participation or formal assessment of students’ written responses.
<b>Materials/Resources</b>	Journal selection, Champlain’s drawing of the battle.
<b>Special Considerations</b>	<p>Depending upon the age of the students and the goals of the teacher, this activity can be done orally as a class discussion, or independently in writing.</p> <p>The journals of Samuel de Champlain are also reproduced online at <a href="http://www.historiclakes.org">www.historiclakes.org</a></p>



Champlain's Battle Scene 1609. Drawn by Samuel de Champlain ca. 1613.



*Iroquois River* is now named the Richelieu River.

Samuel de Champlain. 1567-1635. *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain.*  
 Edited by Edmund F. Slafter, (Boston: Prince Society 1878)

... I set out accordingly from the fall of the Iroquois River on the 2d of July. All the Savages set to carrying their canoes, arms, and baggage overland, some half a league, in order to pass by the violence and strength of the fall, which was speedily accomplished.

They then put them all in the water again, two men in each with the baggage; and they caused one of the men in each canoe to go by land some three leagues, the extent of the fall, which is not, however, so violent here as at the mouth, except in some places, where rocks obstruct the river, which is not broader than three hundred or four hundred paces. After we had passed the fall, which was attended with difficulty, all the savages, who had gone by land over a good path and level country, although there are a great many trees, re-embarked in their canoes. My men went also by land; but I went in a canoe. The savages made a review of all their followers, finding that there were twenty-four canoes, with sixty men.

After the review was completed, we continued our course to an island, three leagues long, filled with the finest pines I had ever seen. Here they went hunting, and captured some wild animals. Proceeding about three leagues farther on, we made a halt, in order to rest the coming night...

We set out the next day, continuing our course in the river as far as the entrance to the lake. There are many pretty islands here, low, and containing very fine woods and meadows, with abundance of fowl and such animals of the chase as stags, fallow-deer, fawns, roe-bucks, bears, and others, which go from the main land to these islands.

We captured a large number of these animals. There are also many beavers, not only in this river, but also in numerous other little ones that flow into it.

These regions, although they are pleasant, are not inhabited by any savages, on account of their wars; but they withdraw as far as possible from rivers into the interior, in order not to be suddenly surprised. The next day we entered the lake, which is of great extent, say eighty or a hundred leagues long, where I saw four fine islands, ten, twelve, and fifteen leagues long, which were formerly inhabited by the savages, like the River of the Iroquois; but they have been abandoned since the wars of the savages with one another prevail.

There are also many rivers falling into the lake, bordered by many fine trees of the same kinds as those we have in France, with many vines finer than any I have seen in any other place; also many chestnut-trees on the border of this lake, which I had not seen before.

Champlain is describing Lake Champlain and the northern islands - North Hero, South Hero, Isle la Motte, etc.

This fish is now known as  
a longnose gar.

There is also a great abundance of fish, of many varieties: among others, one called by the savages of the country Chaoufarou, which varies in length, the largest being, as the people told me, eight or ten feet long. I saw some five feet long, which were as large as my thigh; the head being as big as my two fists, with a snout two feet and a half long, and a double row of very sharp and dangerous teeth...Continuing our course over this lake on the western side, I noticed, while observing the country, some very high mountains on the eastern side, on top of which there was snow. I made inquiry of the savages whether these localities were inhabited, when they told me that the Iroquois dwelt there, and that there were beautiful valleys in these places, with plains productive in grain, such as I had eaten in this country, together with many kinds of fruit without limit. They said also that the lake extended near mountains, some twenty-five leagues distant from us, as I judge. I saw, on the south, other mountains, no less high than the first, but without any snow. The savages told me that these mountains were thickly settled, and that it was there we were to find their enemies; but that it was necessary to pass a fall in order to go there (which I afterward saw), when we should enter another lake, nine or ten leagues long...

The lake is now known as  
Lake George.

Now as we began to approach within two or three days' journey of the abode of their enemies, we advanced only at night, resting during the day...

Historians do not agree  
whether this is the  
peninsula of Crown Point,  
NY, or of Ticonderoga, NY.

When it was evening, we embarked in our canoes to continue our course; and, as we advanced very quietly and without making any noise, we met on the 29th of the month the Iroquois, about ten o'clock at evening, at the extremity of a cape which extends into the lake on the western bank. They had come to fight. We both began to utter loud cries, all getting their arms in readiness. We withdrew out on the water, and the Iroquois went on shore, where they drew up all their canoes close to each other and began to fell trees with poor axes, which they acquire in war sometimes, using also others of stone. Thus they barricaded themselves very well.

Our forces also passed the entire night, their canoes being drawn up close to each other, and fastened to poles, so that they might not get separated, and that they might be all in readiness to fight, if occasion required. We were out upon the water, within arrow range of their barricades. When they were armed and in array, they dispatched two canoes by themselves to the enemy to inquire if they wished to fight, to which the latter replied that they wanted nothing else; but they said that, at present, there was not much light, and that it would be necessary to wait for daylight, so as to be able to recognize each other; and that, as soon as the sun rose, they would offer us battle. This was agreed to by our side. Meanwhile, the entire night was spent dancing and singing, on both sides, with endless insults and other talk; as, how little courage we had, how feeble a resistance we would make against their arms, and that, when day came, we should realize it to our ruin. Ours also were not slow in retorting, telling them how they would see such execution of arms as never before, together with an abundance of such talk as is not unusual in the siege of a town. After this singing, dancing, and bandying words on both sides to the fill, when day came, my companions

*Arquebuse*: a matchlock  
weapon - the precursor to  
the musket.

and myself continued under cover, for fear that the enemy would see us. We arranged our arms in the best manner possible, being, however, separated, each in one of the canoes of the savage Montagnais. After arming ourselves with light armor, we each took an arquebuse, and went on shore. I saw the enemy go out of their barricade, nearly two hundred in number, stout and rugged in appearance. They came at a slow pace towards us, with a dignity and assurance which greatly amused me, having three chiefs at their head. Our men also advanced in the same order, telling me that those who had three large plumes were the chiefs, and that they had only these three, and that they could be distinguished by these plumes, which were much larger than those of their companions, and that I should do what I could to kill them. I promised to do all in my power, and said that I was very sorry they could not understand me, so that I might give order and shape to their mode of attacking their enemies, and then we should, without doubt, defeat them all; but that this could not now be obviated, and that I should be very glad to show them my courage and good-will when we should engage in the fight.

Here the translator  
chooses the word *musket*  
to refer to Champlain's  
arquebuse.

As soon as we had landed, they began to run for some two hundred paces towards their enemies, who stood firmly, not having as yet noticed my companions, who went into the woods with some savages. Our men began to call me with loud cries; and, in order to give me a passage-way, they opened in two parts, and put me at their head, where I marched some twenty paces in advance of the rest, until I was within about thirty paces of the enemy, who at once noticed me, and, halting, gazed at me, as I did also at them. When I saw them making a move to fire at us, I rested my musket against my cheek, and aimed directly at one of the three chiefs. With the same shot, two fell to the ground; and one of their men was so wounded that he died some time after. I had loaded my musket with four balls. When our side saw this shot so favorable for them, they began to raise such loud cries that one could not have heard it thunder. Meanwhile, the arrows flew on both sides. The Iroquois were greatly astonished that two men had been so quickly killed, although they were equipped with armor woven from cotton thread, and with wood which was proof against their arrows. This caused great alarm among them. As I was loading again, one of my companions fired shot from the woods, which astonished them anew to such a degree that, seeing their chiefs dead, they lost courage and took to flight, abandoning their camp and fort, and fleeing into the woods, whither I pursued them, killing still more of them. Our savages also killed several of them, and took ten or twelve prisoners. The remainder escaped with the wounded. Fifteen or sixteen were wounded on our side with arrow-shots; but they were soon healed.

After gaining the victory, our men amused themselves by taking a greater quantity of Indian corn and some meal from their enemies, also their armor, which they had left behind that they might run better. After feasting sumptuously, dancing and singing, we returned three hours after, with the prisoners. The spot where this took place is in latitude 43<sup>o</sup> and some minutes, and the lake was called Lake Champlain...

## DRAMATIZING THE BATTLE WITH THE IROQUOIS

Joan Robinson, Flynn Center for the Performing Arts

**Grade Level** 3-12

**Content Areas** Reading, Theater, Social Studies

**VT Grade Expectations** VT R4: 13 Analyze and interpret elements of literary texts, citing evidence where appropriate by providing examples of thoughts, words or action that reveal characters' personality traits.  
VT A7-8: 7 Students show skill development when creating theater by demonstrating development of character using physical and vocal expression.

**NY Standards** NY Reading Standard 1: Key Idea 1  

- Interpret and analyze information from textbooks and non-fiction books

 NY Social Studies Standard 1: Key Idea 4  

- View historic events through the eyes of those who were there

**Duration** 60 minutes

**Learning Goals** **Students interpret their understanding of Samuel de Champlain's account of the battle with tableaux, from various points of view.**

**Description**

1. Define for students what a tableau is: a frozen picture created by a group using physical expression to communicate the essence of a scene or idea.
2. Divide the students into groups of 5-6. Ask each group to choose three key scenes in which to show various points of view of the battle. Examples: Agreeing to Battle; Shooting the Arquebuse; Taking Prisoners.
3. Once scenes are decided by each group, instruct students to cast themselves in different roles. If their choices of character play roles in all three scenes, they should plan on remaining in that role throughout.
4. Give students five minutes maximum to create tableaux of the three scenes they chose. Ask them to decide where their audience will be and set their poses accordingly. Encourage them to create dynamic pictures using different levels, active body positions, and expressive faces. Remind them that every part of their bodies should be still when in position, even their eyes.
5. When all groups have created tableaux, rehearse them all together, encouraging the students to move from one scene to the next fluidly.
6. Ask each student to create one line that he or she will say during one of the tableaux, to further communicate the feeling they want to convey. Encourage each to consider how the line can be said to communicate the attitude most effectively. Give the groups time to practice doing their series of tableaux adding the lines.
7. Ask each group to present their tableaux to the rest of the class. If possible, take a digital photo of each tableau so that each group may see themselves in action. Discuss similarities and differences in interpretation.

**Assessments** *Pre/Diagnostic:* Ask students to list characters who were a part of the battle scene described by Champlain in his journal.

*Formative:* During rehearsal, observe every group's tableaux for misunderstandings of the time and/or event.

## DRAMATIZING THE BATTLE WITH THE IROQUOIS (CONT'D)

*Summative:* Follow this exercise by asking students to identify the words in Champlain's journal that they are interpreting. Then have them write – or speak -- creatively about this event from the point of view of the character they were playing.

**Materials/Resources** Digital camera (optional)

**Special Considerations** This activity will vary considerably depending upon the concentration ability of the students. If silliness prevails during the first rehearsals, try it again!

This technique is one of many included in the Flynn Center's *Words Come Alive!* publications, created with teachers through its professional development program of the same name. The *Words Come Alive!* toolkit features drama and movement techniques designed to help students strengthen reading comprehension. Supplements to this *Words Come Alive!* toolkit, three booklets were published of lesson plans that present ways that the techniques have been applied: *Picture Books Come Alive!*, *Novels Come Alive!*, and *Creating Performances in Dance, Storytelling and Theater*. For more information and/or to order copies, go to the Flynn's website: [http://www.flynncenter.org/education\\_pages/words.shtml](http://www.flynncenter.org/education_pages/words.shtml) or call 802-652-4548.

Flynn teaching artists are also available to lead *Words Come Alive!* workshops in classrooms on topics related to Lake Champlain. Contact [education@flynncenter.org](mailto:education@flynncenter.org) or 802-652-4548 for more information.

## CHAMPLAIN & THE SILENT ONE STUDY GUIDE, CHAPTER ONE

Kate Messner

*Champlain & the Silent One* is written by Historical Fiction author Kate Messner, and will be released by North Country Books in September of 2008. It will be available through the Ship's Store at LCMM, at your favorite bookstore, or online. For more information, visit Kate Messner at her website: [www.katemessner.com](http://www.katemessner.com).

### Historical Note:

In Chapter 1 is not set in *Silent One's* regular village on the Saguenay River because it is winter. In the winter, people in Montagnais villages leave would break up into smaller family groups to form hunting parties. They'd head south, setting off on snowshoes to hunt animals like moose and beaver once their summer supplies of food had run out. In this case, the Montagnais had traveled south to the woods near Samuel de Champlain's French settlement at Quebec.

The Iroquois who lived further south had more permanent villages because they had developed agriculture. They lived in a slightly warmer climate and were able to grow corn and other crops that would see them through the winters. The Montagnais, though, were still hunters and gatherers in the early 17th century, relying very much on whatever animals and plants were available at any given time of year. In some seasons, as in the winter of 1609, food was extremely scarce, and starvation was common.

### Discussion and Journaling Questions:

- What do you think you would have done if you were faced with the decision of whether or not to try and cross the river?
- Why don't you think *Silent One* speaks any more?
- In the last line of this chapter, *Silent One* says, "We are saved." But he adds the words "for now." As a reader, what does this make you think about what might lie ahead for *Silent One* and his people?

### Interdisciplinary Connections:

#### *Social Studies/Language Arts...*

Look at this picture of the French settlement at Quebec from the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Imagine that you are *Silent One*, viewing the Habitation from across the icy river. Write a journal entry about the Habitation as if you are describing it to someone back in your village.



# CHAMPLAIN STUDY GUIDE: CHAPTER 1

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## VOCABULARY

sapling: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

waning: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

treacherous: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. A *simile* is a figure of speech where a writer describes something by comparing it to something else using the word like, as, or than. Which of the following is NOT an example of a simile from this chapter?

- a. Hunger gnaws at my belly like a wolf.
- b. The ice chunks are too large to carry – heavier than a full-grown moose.
- c. The current tosses huge blocks of ice like children playing ball.
- d. Nearly the entire river has turned to stone this winter

2. In Chapter 1, Silent One says that his people call to the Frenchmen but they shake their heads. Why are they most likely unwilling to cross the river?

- a. They do not want the Indians to survive.
- b. They do not have any food and know they cannot help the Indians.
- c. They know the river is too dangerous to cross.
- d. They do not have permission from their leader.

3. Based on the context in which it is used in Chapter 1, the Montagnais word *mitshim* means:

- a. danger
- b. food
- c. ice
- d. river

Answer the following question in a short paragraph: Why was Silent One's old name, Uhumish, appropriate for him before he stopped speaking? Use details from the text to support your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# CHAMPLAIN & THE SILENT ONE: CHAPTER ONE

by Kate Messner

*On the 5th of February, it snowed violently, and the wind was high for two days. On the 20th, some Indians appeared on the other side of the river, calling to us to go to their assistance, which was beyond our power, on account of the large amount of ice drifting in the river.*

-Voyages of Samuel de Champlain

“Ishkutshuan—” My brother, Brave One, grabs a pine sapling and pulls himself to stand, though his knees buckle. He stares into the river.

“Ishkutshuan—” It is our word for a place in the current where the ice does not form. Brave One points to the one spot where the water flows freely. Nearly the entire river has turned to stone this winter.

He looks across the water. “Mitshim—”

Food.

He can barely raise his arm, but he points to the wooden buildings where the one called Champlain takes shelter for the winter.

Our people came to this place to hunt. We thought moose would be plentiful. We journeyed many days from our village by the north river. We watched in the season of falling leaves, as Champlain and his men packed this dwelling with seeds, beans, and barrels that they brought in their giant canoes from beyond the horizon. They call this place Quebec and give their buildings the name Habitation.

Inside those buildings, there is food.

“Mitshim—” Brave One drops his arm to his side but still stares across the raging river.

He is right.

It is our only chance.

The older men know. Those who are strong enough pull themselves up to lean on frozen trees along the shore. Others crawl toward their canoes on hands and feet, like the raccoon. Some drag themselves on the frozen ground on their bellies, like the snake.

I can still stand. Just barely, if a tree is kind enough to hold me up. I have seen twelve winters, and winters are always hard. But I have never gone this long without food. Hunger gnaws at my belly like a wolf, but there is nothing to eat.

Nothing.

My uncle, Singing Bear, was one of our strongest hunters. Without him, we have barely made it through the cold season.

The dried eel has been gone since the moon was new. We can no longer find the beaver. The water is too high. We have eaten our dogs and cut pieces from the furs that keep us warm. We chew them and force down bits of animal skins.

Anything to give us a bit of strength.

But our strength is waning like the moon. The oldest and the youngest have already gone to sleep and will not wake.

Those who remain have come to the river, though it is impossible to cross. The current is swift and tosses huge blocks of ice like children playing ball.

“Ishkutshuan.” Brave One points to the spot in the river where the fierce wind has cleared



an opening, where the water flows free of the ice all the way to the other side. On the opposite shore, four of Champlain's men stand watching us.

We call to them, but they shake their heads. They will not come.

The river is too treacherous.

They know.

I know.

I do not speak. I let the older men push me ahead. My mother, Crying Wren, staggers forward. Laughing Seal, my baby sister, rides in a cradleboard on her back. We load the canoes, and I know that soon, we will launch and the ice will come back to crush us.

I know.

I know because I see things. I always have.

When I was younger, the elders named me Uhumish, Little Owl, for I had visions. Sometimes, I would see in dreams when our enemies the Iroquois were to raid our village. I would warn our chiefs.

They know that dreams are true.

They listened.

They gathered our warriors so we were prepared, so we were watching when our enemies came. With waiting arrows and spears, we sent them fleeing, back to their river to the south. Back to the lake between the mountains.

The last time they came, two winters ago, they captured Singing Bear. They took him when they left, and my mother cried for her brother five nights. My uncle was a brave, big man who raised me. My father died on a hunting trip before I was born, so I never knew him to miss him.

Singing Bear, I miss.

I told them the raid was coming.

I had seen it in my dream.

I told Singing Bear I had seen him carried off in the mouth of a giant wolverine, its pointed teeth sinking into his sides. I told him I had seen his burial hut, lonely in the woods.

But he shook his head.

"I must go, but I will return," he smiled down at me. "You promise to look after your mother and your sister while I am gone."

"And Brave One, too," I promised, even though he is two winters older than me.

"Brave One, too. Sometimes, he has too much courage, so perhaps he will need the most looking after of all," Singing Bear laughed and squeezed my shoulder.

I promised.

And he went.

He did not return.

I still see things. I still dream. But no longer do I speak.

To my people now, I am not Uhumish – but Silent One. I have swallowed this name deep into my belly and own it. Silence has become a part of who I am.

And so I stumble with the others from tree to tree, toward the canoes. The women climb in first, and the men push off into the frothing waves.

The wind stings my eyes like a swarm of hornets, and tears freeze on my cheeks. A rough hand pushes me forward. I stumble into the last canoe as my brother steps in and pushes us off from shore. The ice of the shallows cracks and crunches under our weight. Finally, we slide into open water behind the other canoes.

I cannot feel the paddle in my hands, but I pull it through the water, wrestling against the current. The small crowd of Frenchmen on the other side has grown. They have called their friends to come and watch the river swallow us up.

In the front of our canoe, my brother shouts something, but his words fly off into the snow before they reach my ears. The wind grows stronger. It changes direction, and the waves on the river clash and swirl.

We are halfway across, halfway to the Frenchmen and their shelters and their bread, when the ice closes in on us. Nothing has melted for three moons. The winter has been so fierce, so long. The ice chunks that move toward our boats are not like the ones we gather from the banks in springtime and carry back to our village. They are too large to imagine carrying – heavier than a full-grown moose. Some are longer than three of our huts put together. And they are closing in.

I paddle harder, but my body is tired and angry with me. I can no longer see the far shore. Black and purple spots crowd my vision the way the ice chunks close in on us.

Our five canoes crowd together in the narrow strip of open water. Children cry on their mothers' backs. Women scream over the howling wind. I look for my mother and sister but cannot find them. Great chunks of ice nudge our canoes, clunking against them and moving away, taunting us the way a dog plays with a captured rabbit.

I push as hard as I can with my paddle, willing our canoe to move forward more quickly, to cut through the ice between us and the shore. A great gust of wind launches us forward. For a moment, I think it will take us where we need to go, but the same gust heaves a giant mass of ice and slams it into us.

The jolt throws me from our canoe just before it is crushed to pieces. I land hard on a giant ice slab and slam my head on its cold blackness.

My head throbs. I close my eyes. I feel the waves toss the ice raft under my back. Frozen snow stings my face. The women cry, and I do not know if they are in the water or with me on the ice. It makes no difference. One more gust, and the wind will fling us off into the frigid waters to be crushed by the ice closing in.

I see it happening behind my closed eyes.

But when I open them, it happens a different way.

Another gust of wind blasts down from the clouds. A giant slab of ice, the size of a small village, barrels toward us. I clench my jaw and brace for the blow, the impact that will send us sliding into the river.

The ice slams into us, but instead, it lifts us up, up, up, and throws our ice raft onto shore. For a moment, I expect the river to reach up with icy hands and claim us again, drag us back into its churning water. I watch with wary eyes, but the ice does not return.

A baby whimpers, and I dare to hope. I push myself up and turn. My mother clings to my sister.

I take a deep breath and let it out.

We slither off our ice raft, exhausted. The Frenchmen stare.

I look up into their pale eyes.

I look over at their dwellings and know what waits inside.

Mitshim.

They have food.

We are saved.

For now.

*Champlain & the Silent One* is written by Historical Fiction author Kate Messner, and will be released by North Country Books in September of 2008. It will be available through the Ship's Store at LCMM, at your favorite bookstore, or online. For more information, visit Kate Messner at her website: [www.katemessner.com](http://www.katemessner.com).



<b>Grade Level</b>	4-12
<b>Content Areas</b>	Language Arts
<b>VT Grade Expectations</b>	<p>VT W8: In reflective writing, students make connections between personal experiences and ideas by...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using concrete details and sensory language to establish context</li> <li>• Establishing or evolving focus</li> <li>• Establishing individual voice</li> <li>• Having coherent organization through a natural progression of ideas</li> </ul>
<b>NY Standards</b>	<p>NY Language Arts Standard 1: Key Idea 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce oral and written reports on topics related to all school subjects</li> <li>• Use details, examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences to explain or clarify information</li> <li>• Organize information according to an identifiable structure, such as compare/contrast or general to specific</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	Two 50 minute periods
<b>Learning Goals</b>	<b>Students will organize and write a travel log narrative of a trip they have taken modeled after Champlain’s account of his trip to the lake.</b>
<b>Description</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This activity should follow a reading of Champlain’s exportations in New France.</li> <li>2. Discuss the elements Champlain included in the description of his travels, e.g. events, physical environment, his impressions and feelings.</li> <li>3. Have students identify a trip they have taken. It could be simple, like the ride to school, or a more exotic experience to an unfamiliar place.</li> <li>4. Have students use an outline or cognitive map to identify the various elements of their experience.</li> <li>5. Have students write a personal travel log of their trip including the various elements of the trip they have identified.</li> <li>6. Have students share and discuss how their travel logs are similar or different from Champlain’s.</li> </ol>
<b>Assessments</b>	Assess using VT Narrative Writing Rubric
<b>Materials/Resources</b>	<p>Champlain’s journal of his trip to the Lake - we’ve reproduced the portion of this journal that describes his journey to Lake Champlain.</p> <p>Find more of this translation at <a href="http://www.historiclakes.org">www.historiclakes.org</a>, or in one of the many published translations.</p>

## WOMEN IN THE NEW WORLD: THE DAWNLAND, THE PLACE OF THE FLINT, NEW FRANCE & NEW ENGLAND

Eloise Beil, LCMM

The year 2009 marks the 400th anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's exploration of the lake now known by his name. This beautiful and strategic body of water was then, and still remains both a bridge and a boundary between people, states, and nations. Champlain's journeys encompassed coastal New England as well as the St. Lawrence and Champlain Valleys; his explorations, settlements, maps and publications are benchmarks in a cultural watershed for the region. Combing through historical records of exploration and colonization, military action, and missionary activity in the region reveals glimpses of the women of various cultures who lived in New France and New England in the changing times of the 1600s.

The women living in the area known as New France at the time of Samuel de Champlain's explorations came from four distinctive cultural traditions: Algonquin, Iroquoian, French, and English. They had many similar responsibilities: raising children, caring for elders, helping to provide food and clothing, helping to furnish their dwellings, and helping to provide for the spiritual well being of themselves, their families and their communities. Also, all of the women in this region in the early 1600s were living through times of enormous change. They needed to be strong, resilient, and resourceful. While some of the information and customs that they had learned while growing up was very useful to them, they also adapted to new situations and acquired new information.

### Women of the Dawnland

Much of the territory between the Atlantic Coast and Lake Champlain that the French explored, mapped, and claimed as New France during the 1600s was the homeland of Wabanaki or Abenaki people of many nations. In the region east of Lake Champlain, most Abenaki women lived in small bands with members of their extended family – parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

As the seasons changed, the band would travel to the best places for various kinds of food. Each spring they camped at fishing grounds beside the newly thawed rivers. In the later spring and summer, Abenaki women living in villages near Lake Champlain planted and tended fields of corn, squash, and beans. When they went to gather berries, nuts, and other edible plants, they brought their children with them to learn and to help. When the men had a successful hunt, the women cooked meat from deer, beaver, moose, bear, or smaller animals, and made clothing from the animal hides. Some of the meat or fish was placed on a rack above the fire and smoked to preserve it for later eating. Women also made pottery vessels, baskets, and birchbark containers for cooking and storing food. Dried corn, berries, nuts, smoked and dried meat and fish were stored for the winter in bark-lined root cellars.

When an Abenaki family was traveling and needed a temporary shelter, they often built a wigwam. The men cut poles and lashed them together in a conical framework. The women covered the framework with animal hides or with sheets of bark. At their villages, more permanent longhouses were built in a similar manner. An arched framework of saplings was lashed together, and then the women stitched bark panels into place to form the roof and walls. The women brought green spruce boughs to line the interior walls and sleeping areas. A longhouse might be the home for six or eight families, each with their own cooking fire.

Traditional Abenaki families were very close-knit. Aunts and uncles helped to raise children, and cousins called one another "brother" and "sister." The ties between families held Abenaki society together. When a major decision had to be made, all members of a band, including men, women, and children,

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had the opportunity to speak in council.

The French were not the first Europeans to visit the Dawnland. For several hundred years, the Eastern Abenaki people along the Atlantic Coast had been visited occasionally by ships manned by Vikings, Basques, Portuguese, Bretons, Spanish, Irish, French, and English fishermen and whalers. Trade with these Europeans had provided some new goods that the Abenaki women found useful: kettles, needles, cloth, knives, and axes.

But contact with Europeans also exposed the Abenaki people to new illnesses. An epidemic swept the region from 1617-1619. In some areas, three quarters of the Native Americans died. In 1633-34 deadly smallpox attacked communities from the St. Lawrence Valley down the Connecticut River valley, and throughout New England. New epidemics recurred every few years. Some historians estimate that by 1650, out of 10,000 western Abenaki people in Vermont and New Hampshire, only 500 survived.

Life was very different for the people who survived. They grieved for the relatives and friends who had died. Important information and skills were lost, and it became more difficult to live in the traditional ways.

Among the Europeans who had begun to visit the Dawnland, the French formed the closest relationships with the Abenaki people. While trading ships stayed briefly and then departed, Jesuit priests came to live among the Abenaki. They established missions in the villages, and learned the Abenaki language so that they could provide religious instruction. Abenaki women, seeking the best care for their children and elders, saw the French immunity from diseases as evidence of their spiritual power, and adopted some of the new beliefs and practices as well as learning the language of the newcomers.

Letters and reports sent back to France by the Jesuit priests describe some of the experiences of Abenaki women at this time. Attending mass, saying prayers, and making confession helped the women to feel that they could appeal for spiritual protection for their children or other relatives, or for themselves. Even if illness or death could not be avoided, they found a sense of security and peace of mind. However, many of the women held onto some of their traditional beliefs and practices, and raised their children with a combination of old and new ways.

The French provided their Abenaki allies and their families with new kinds of food and had firearms for protection against attacks from the English and Iroquois who were trying to expand into Abenaki territory. French fur traders whose success depended on good relationships with Abenaki guides, hunters, and chiefs, sometimes married Abenaki women. Within a few years, a Franco-Abenaki culture emerged, with language, clothing, food, work, and religious practices that came from both backgrounds.

## **Women of the Iroquois**

A fortified village of St. Lawrence Iroquois, called Hochelaga, was visited and described by French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1535, but this village had disappeared by the time of Samuel de Champlain's visit to the area. In the early 1600s, the term Iroquois referred to the members of a confederacy of five nations, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, whose homelands were situated in the territories west of Lake Champlain. The Mahicans were centered in the Berkshires and Hudson Valley. The Iroquois were actively expanding their territory north and east, and earned a reputation among the Abenaki and the French settlers as fierce warriors.

Iroquois and Abenaki women had similar responsibilities and methods for planting and cultivating crops,



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gathering seasonal fruits and nuts, preparing smoked or dried meat and fish, and making and decorating clothing for their families.

Iroquois women had their own distinctive roles of power and authority, both in the home and in the wider world. The most basic unit of Iroquois society was the group of relatives who were descended from a woman ancestor. The Mohawk called this group an Ohwachira, and it was led by the eldest woman in the family. Two or more Ohwachiras formed a clan. Each child was born a member of his or her mother's Ohwachira. When they suffered many losses through war and disease, Iroquois families added new members by adoption, to ensure that their nations would survive.

The head mothers of the Ohwachiras named the men who represented the clans at village and tribal councils. When individual clans met, the women caucused separately, and their agreement was important to the final decisions. The women could also prevent or support military expeditions, because they could decide whether to supply or withhold necessary supplies such as food and moccasins.

In the late 1400s or early 1500s, five neighboring Iroquois nations united under the Great Peace, and formed the Five Nations alliance. The movement was initiated by Heyanwatha, whose three daughters had been killed in conflict with neighboring Iroquois warriors, and Deganawidah, a Mohawk chief, who offered condolences to the grieving father. According to Iroquois traditions, the first person to hear and accept the message of peace was a woman who lived along the warriors' path. Her name was changed to Jigonsasee, New Face, because she reflected the new way of thinking that would save her people. Under the alliance, the Iroquois clan mothers named the forty-nine Sachems or Chiefs who met at Onondaga as the ruling council for the confederation of Five Nations.

Dutch navigator Henry Hudson initiated a successful trading relationship with the Iroquois in 1609, during his exploration of the Hudson Valley. It was not until the 1650s that the Jesuits who had arrived in the lands to the north established missionary relationships with the Iroquois. A Jesuit priest in the early eighteenth century observed, "Nothing is more real than this superiority of the women. It is of them that the nation really consists, and it is through them that the nobility of the blood, the genealogical tree, and the families are perpetuated. All real authority is vested in them. They are the souls of the councils, the arbiters of peace and war."

Although not all of the old ways were abandoned, some of the Iroquois were interested in learning about the new religion. A young Mohawk woman born in 1656 who lost her parents in a smallpox epidemic when she was four years old, became interested in the teachings of the Jesuits. Despite family objections, she persisted, and at the age of 19 joined a religious community, taking the baptismal name of Catherine or Kateri Tekakwitha. She was very devout, and when she died at age 24, the priest who attended her deathbed reported that the smallpox scars on her face completely vanished. Over the years and centuries, miracles were attributed to her intercession. Tekakwitha was declared venerable in 1932, and beatified in 1980, two steps toward recognition as a saint by the Catholic Church.

## Women of New France

In the early 1600s, the French government did not think that New France was a suitable place for French women. The colony of New France was seen as a frontier to be explored in search of wealth, through valuable natural resources and trade. Warring Catholics and Protestants were tearing Europe apart, and competing for dominance in the New World. The religious leaders of the Catholic Church in France felt that they had a responsibility to educate the native people, and to save their souls through religious



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instruction.

Although French women were not expected to participate directly in this effort, some found ways to be involved. In 1610, twelve year old Helene Boulle married Samuel de Champlain in Paris. Her brother, Eustache Boulle, was Champlain's second in command, and her father, Nicolas Boulle, was an advisor to King Louis XIII. Samuel de Champlain invested his wife's dowry of 6,000 livres in his Quebec trading post. At the time, there were only 85 French settlers in New France. In 1612, thirty-five "distinguished" French women offered to serve as "godmothers," and give their names to newly baptized Native American women. The list included Madame la Princesse de Conde, Madame the Duchesse de Nevers, Mme. La Contesse de Soissons, and Milles. Catherine, Blanche, and Claude, the daughters of Sieur de Praslain as well as the widow of a member of Parliament and the wife of a surgeon.

For the next ten years, Helene de Champlain lived at court and managed her husband's business interests, while de Champlain continued his travels and returned to France each winter. Finally, in 1620, de Champlain invited his wife to accompany him to live in Quebec. Helene remained in Quebec for four years. Her fine clothing and courtly manners were a source of pride for the French colonists, and greatly interesting to the Native Americans that she met. She and her husband never had any children, and Helene returned to France in 1624. De Champlain adopted a Native American boy, Savignon, who traveled with him and served as his interpreter. He later also adopted two Huron girls, Charity and Hope, who were brought with him to England when he was taken there as prisoner of war in 1629.

In 1630, Helene's husband rejoined her in France. Treaty negotiations between France and England dragged on for three years. During this period, Helene and Samuel de Champlain reorganized their finances. Samuel sold property in France, and Helene received a substantial share in the Company of One Hundred Associates, chartered by the king to invest in trade with New France. In 1635, now elderly and in poor health, de Champlain returned to Quebec. At the end of the year he died and was buried in New France. Helene had already received assets from her husband and from her own family that provided for her in her widowhood. Samuel de Champlain left money for masses to be said in his memory and bequeathed the remainder of his estate to a cousin in France.

Charitable organizations in France also took an interest in the colony, and in 1635, the Societe Notre-Dame de Montreal developed plans for a hospital and mission dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Although at the beginning women were not permitted to work on the project, in 1641, Mlle Jeanne Mance persuaded the directors to hire her to run the hospital. The Ursuline monastery of Quebec City was founded in 1639, the oldest institution of learning for women in North America. The convent was established by Marie de l'Incarnation, an Ursuline nun, and Madame Marie-Madeleine de Chauvigny de la Peltrie, a wealthy widow from Normandy. They moved to Quebec and began to provide instruction for the Native American people in the area. Marie de l'Incarnation mastered both Algonquin and Iroquois well enough to create dictionaries in both languages, a sacred history in Algonquin, and a catechism in Iroquois.

Although Helene de Champlain never returned to New France, the Ursuline sisterhood was important to her as well. In 1640 she joined the convent of Sainte-Ursule in Paris, taking the name of Sister Helene de Saint-Augustin, and in 1648 she founded an Ursuline convent at Meaux, northeast of Paris. Sister Helene died in 1654 at the age of 56.

## Pioneer Women of New France

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In the early 1630s, the French realized that if they were to hold their own against the English in the New World, French people would need to settle in the area and raise families there. Instead of being forbidden to emigrate, religious groups and investors began to encourage women to consider traveling to New France. Beginning in 1634, young women known as “*Filles a marier*” or “marriageable girls” began to settle in the colony.

The *filles a marier* traveled alone or in small groups of two or three. They were chaperoned by religious groups or individuals who had to account for their good conduct. Most were in their late teens or early twenties, and came from rural areas, the daughters of peasants or farmers. A few came from urban families, and were the daughters of craftsmen, laborers, and servants. Occasionally, the daughter of a businessman, civil servant, or military man would decide to make the journey. Often, one or both of their parents had died, and times were hard. They hoped to find a better life on the frontier of New France.

In France during this same period, women under the age of 25 were placed in convent schools or sent out to work while awaiting an arranged marriage in which they had no choice. The only alternative was to become a nun. In New France, these women could choose the man that they would marry, and had freedom to change their minds before the marriage took place.

The journey to New France was not easy. Passengers and livestock traveled in crowded conditions in the hold of the sailing ships. Smoky lanterns provided a little light, latrine buckets served for sanitation, and seasickness, dysentery, and fevers were common. All of the passengers suffered in these conditions, and an estimated 10% of them died during the crossing. Those who survived found a place to stay, either at the Ursuline Convent in Quebec City, or *Filles de la Congregation Notre-Dame* in Montreal, or with an individual household. By 1663, 262 *filles a marier* had made this journey. In most years, fewer than 10 women arrived, and most were married within a year of their arrival in New France.

However, men of marriageable age still greatly outnumbered women in New France. Many men who were unable to find a wife in Quebec returned to France after completing their three-year term of work, limiting the growth of the colony. The 2,500 colonists who lived on the shores of the St. Lawrence between Quebec and Montreal felt that they were under constant threat of being overwhelmed by the Iroquois and the English.

In 1663, King Louis XIV took direct control of the government of New France, and the process of recruiting and transporting marriageable women to the colony. A new program, known as “*Filles du Roi*” – daughters of the King – was begun. Merchants and ship outfitters recruited young women in Paris, Rouen, and other northern cities. Each woman needed to be strong and in good health, and to present her birth certificate; her parish priest or local magistrate was required to testify that she was free to marry.

The program was costly: for each woman, the government spent about 10 livres on recruitment, and 60 livres for transportation. The government also provided a bonnet, handkerchief, pair of stockings, pair of gloves, ribbon, shoelaces, and an assortment of essential tools for the woman to set up housekeeping: thread, 100 needles, 1,000 pins, a comb, a pair of scissors, and two knives. Each woman was also given 2 livres in cash, and some clothing and provisions.

The ships carrying *Filles du Roi* landed first at Quebec City. Many of the women stayed there; others were sent on to Montreal or Trois-Rivieres. The women took up residence in dormitories where they were taught practical skills that they would need to manage their own homes. The suitors who came to meet



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them were encouraged to build a home of their own before making an offer of marriage, and the women had the right to ask questions about the suitor's home, finances, land, and profession. The women had the right to refuse any offer. Most of the Filles du Roi were married within four to five months of arrival, although the younger girls, aged 13-16 usually waited for over a year.

Even when they married, the Filles du Roi still maintained a special relationship with the King. Each couple was given livestock as a marriage gift: a pair of chickens, a pair of pigs, an ox, and a cow, as well as two barrels of salted meat. Records show that at least 250 of the women received a dowry payment of \$50. There was also an incentive program for large families: royal pensions of \$300 livres a year for families with ten children, 400 livres for twelve children, and even more for larger families.

The program was a great success. In 1671, less than ten years later, the colony reported the births of 600-700 babies that year, and recommended that the Filles du Roi program be ended so that the daughters of colonial families, with more modest dowries, would be able to find husbands. The last ship carrying Filles du Roi arrived in September 1673. In eleven years, the program had brought 768 women to New France, and the population of the colony had risen to 6,700 people. The French were reassured that they could hold their own against the colonists of Protestant New England.

## Women of New England

The English had a very different approach to colonization of the New World. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, brief visits to the seacoast of the Dawnland were made by explorers John Walker in 1580, and Martin Pring in 1603. In 1605 George Weymouth used trade goods to attract several Abenaki whom he kidnapped and carried off to England. George Popham led a group of about 120 male settlers to establish a colony at the mouth of the Kennebec River in 1607. Although the effort failed, the fact that it had been undertaken was threatening to the French as well as the Native American people in the area.

Captain John Smith, well-known leader of the successful Virginia Colony at Jamestown, made a northern voyage in 1614. To encourage English settlers, Smith renamed the region previously known as North Virginia "New England," and commented, "Here every man may be master and owner of his owne labour and land . . . If he have nothing but his hands, he may . . . by industrie quickly grow rich."

This message caught the attention of many people in England, where the political and economic situations were difficult. King James was struggling with both domestic and foreign policy, aggravated by competing religious factions. When he ended England's longtime war with Catholic Spain, he was accused of compromising with the devil. When the Thirty Years War broke out in Europe, Protestant England urged him to intervene, yet objected to the cost of financing the war effort. When his son Charles I came to the throne in 1625, and took as his wife the Catholic Henrietta Maria of France, political and religious conflicts increased. Charles I further alienated the country by dismissing the Parliament. A new Archbishop tried to rid the Anglican Church of its Puritan members, while outspoken Puritans, convinced of their righteous cause, continued their efforts to "purify" the Anglican church of any 'popish' rituals or even any centralized authority. To add to these difficulties, epidemic diseases broke out across the country.

Between 1630 and 1640, about 21,000 Puritans left the east of England and settled in Massachusetts. Seventeen vessels arrived in 1630, and within a decade nearly 200 ships had made the journey. Unlike other colonizing ventures, the emigrating Puritans traveled in family groups. Men, women, and children arrived together at their destination, and transplanted the routines of normal family to their new home. The people on board these boats were friends and neighbors, who had gone to school and church



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together, worked together, and who were related by marriage.

The women and men who came to the colony of Massachusetts were literate, they were mostly from towns and villages, many were skilled at crafts and trades, and most were economically secure. Although many could have afforded servants, they chose on principle to live simple lives and do their own work. They were active church members – the majority of men and women undertook the rigorous process of being examined for church membership within a year of arrival in New England.

Yet although from the earliest years of settlement the Congregational Churches of New England had more female members than male, women did not hold positions of authority within the congregation, nor in the leadership of the community. The father was the unquestioned head of the Puritan household; his wife and children, apprentices and household help were expected to be obedient to his authority, and he, in turn, was obligated to consider their needs. However, if a man became ill, or was absent for an extended period, his wife could manage the affairs of the household. Puritan men had the freedom to decide how they would dispose of their property, which helped to ensure the cooperation of family members. Under this system, women who did not have husbands, brothers, or sons to represent their interests were in a vulnerable position. If they tried to speak out on their own behalf in public or in the courts, they were suspected of evil-doing.

However, within their sphere, the women of New England commanded respect in the community. Many were able to read and write, and taught these skills to their children. They read religious writings and participated in discussions of topics that were of great importance to their communities both in the old country and in their new home. Some New England women became outspoken in ways that were unusual at that time. Anne Hutchinson, who was a minister's daughter, came to Boston in 1634 with her husband, a merchant. Almost immediately, she began to lead meetings for the women of her church. She encouraged them toward independent spiritual development, and questioned the role of the clergy. Soon men as well as women began to attend her meetings, while opposition to her viewpoint also grew. Although she was a respectable middle-aged mother of fifteen children, her critics described her as "a very dangerous woman to sow her corrupt opinions to the infection of many." When she insisted that elder women had the right to be teachers and to speak in public, she and her followers were excommunicated from their church and exiled from the colony. They moved to upstate New York, where Anne Hutchinson was among settlers killed by Mahicans in 1643. Anne Hutchinson is still admired by many for her defense of freedom of thought, speech, and religion.

While it was unusual for New England women to take such a public role, some of their household responsibilities were important in ways that are not evident to modern eyes. At the time that the Puritans settled in New England, cloth and clothing were very valuable items because making cloth was a specialized and labor-intensive process. Shipping records and household inventories from the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts show that stockings and cloth were more valuable than shoes, leather, tools, or spices. Five "fine old sheets" were far more valuable than two bedsteads, and worth half as much as "third of a share in a boat," which was an important business investment. Women provided most of the skilled labor to produce fabric for clothing, sheets, blankets, and pillowcases, towels, and even sacks. Men planted flax, and sheared sheep, but women worked at harvesting flax, preparing the fibers and fleeces, spinning thread and yarn. Thread or yarn were then either knitted into garments, or woven into cloth that was cut and sewn into garments and household linens. Women also were responsible for washing during fabric production, and subsequently cleaning and mending the articles that they made. Knitting remained a source of income for women in rural New England well into the twentieth century.

Similarly, women took a great part in caring for the livestock that provided for New England households.



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Chickens provided eggs, and also feathers that could be made into pillows and warm “featherbeds.” Cows provided milk and cream that were made into cheese and butter. They ended up as meat for the table. In addition to providing for their own families and feeding any hired laborers, women who kept dairy cows could sell their produce, either to neighbors, or at a town market. Boston’s first central market was established as early as 1634. Since cash money was scarce in the colonies, people would barter with crops, and with cattle, butter and cheese. If these products were not available at the time, written records were kept, and payment made when the cow had her calf, and the butter or cheese could be made. Women who cared for the cows, helped with the calving, milked the cows, and made the butter and cheese contributed directly to the prosperity of their families, and to the success of the colony of New England.

## Conclusion

While it can be difficult to find information about women in many of the historical accounts of the seventeenth century in eastern North America, records of women greatly enrich our understanding of this era. Thoughtful examination and interpretation of information about the individual women mentioned in accounts of missionary activity, immigration, marriage, trade, and colonial administration provide a great deal of insight into the diversity that existed within each of the major cultural groups that were encountering one another in this time and place. Women’s experiences also remind us that people of Algonquian, Iroquoian, French, and English heritage have differing perspectives and traditions and also share a great deal of common ground in life experience. Considering the life experience of women in the seventeenth century helps us to envision and appreciate the ways in which people confronted the challenges of daily living and responded to major the political, religious, economic and cultural encounters and changes that laid the groundwork for life in the Champlain Valley today.

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## A WOMAN'S LETTER

LCMM

**Grade Level** 3-12

**Content Areas** Language Arts

**VT Grade Expectations** VT W8: In reflective writing, students make connections between personal experiences and ideas by...

- Using concrete details and sensory language to establish context
- Establishing or evolving focus
- Establishing individual voice
- Having coherent organization through a natural progression of ideas

**NY Standards** NY Language Arts Standard 1: Key Idea 2

- Produce oral and written reports on topics related to all school subjects
- Use details, examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences to explain or clarify information
- Organize information according to an identifiable structure, such as compare/contrast or general to specific

**Duration** 50 minute period

**Learning Goals** **Students will organize and write a letter from the perspective of a European woman living in the New World in the 17th century.**

**Description**

1. This activity should follow a discussion of Samuel de Champlain's wife, and her experiences in New France.
2. Ask students to imagine what it would have been like to be a woman living in New France.
3. Initial elements to be addressed in the letter: the woman's name, and to whom she is writing.
4. Other framing questions can be:
  - What year is it? What time of year - spring, summer, winter, fall? Does the letter describe a single moment (today) or a whole season or year of activities and experiences?
  - How did she get to the New World? Did she follow her husband, or other family member, or come on her own?
  - Was she nervous, excited, or dreading the trip?
  - What was the boat ride like?
  - When she arrived, who was there to meet her?
  - Did she have many friends in the New World?
  - Did she already have children; was she planning on having a family in the New World?

**Assessments** Assess using VT Narrative Writing Rubric

**Materials/Resources** Paper & pen

**Special Considerations** This activity may be expanded by having students take the perspective of a woman in France to her husband, son or daughter in New France.

