

# Exploring the Explorers

## JACQUES CARTIER

### Description of the Activity

Students compare a postage stamp featuring Jacques Cartier with the entry about Cartier in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada (DCB/DBC). They assess similarities and differences between these two representations of the “explorer” of Canada, and they redesign the stamp in accordance with their understanding of Cartier’s role in Canadian history.



### Suitable Grade Levels and Subjects

Grades 5 to 12/ Cycles 2–3 (Primary) to Secondary IV (Quebec)

- Younger students will probably do better using excerpts from the DCB/DBC entry (supplied here: [http://www.biographi.ca/uploads/Cartier\\_excerpts.pdf](http://www.biographi.ca/uploads/Cartier_excerpts.pdf)), whereas older students are likely capable of handling the complete entry ([http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier\\_jacques\\_1491\\_1557\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier_jacques_1491_1557_1E.html)). Students in the middle or upper grades could also benefit from the optional extensions suggested for the activity.

Social Studies, History

- Optional extensions are provided for History, Language Arts, French as a Second Language, Music, Health and Physical Education, Science, Mathematics, and Geography.



### Learning Objectives

Content: Voyages of Exploration; Settlement; Native Cultures; European–First Nations Interaction

- Students learn about France and the St Lawrence in the 16th century.

Theory: Historiography

- Students learn that historical understanding changes over time and that historical interpretation can differ from person to person.

Skills: Analysis and Communication

- Students compare different presentations of the same person and use a written source to imaginatively redesign a postage stamp.

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### Background Preparation for the Teacher

- Examine images of the stamp(s) to be considered. (Images of the two stamps featuring Cartier and links to the images are provided under “Resources,” on pages 11 and 12.)
- Read the relevant entry in Volume I of the DCB/DBC (see link below).



### Necessary Materials

- Images of stamps (the images and links to the images are provided in the “Resources” section on pages 11 and 12)
- The DCB/DBC entry on Jacques Cartier:  
[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier\\_jacques\\_1491\\_1557\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier_jacques_1491_1557_1E.html)  
OR excerpts from the entry – to access click [here](#)
- Paper for group work among students
- Blackboard or whiteboard
- Pencils or pens or markers

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### Step I: Analysis of the Stamp

*The students analyze what information and messages the stamp conveys about Jacques Cartier.*

You may want to begin by discussing the significance of postage stamps, using this statement from Canada Post as a starting point:

- “Canadian stamps are recognized internationally to be among the finest in the world. The general public, special interest groups, and collectors take a keen interest in stamps because they serve as a reflection of our nation, have educational value and offer beautiful designs.”  
Source: <http://www.canadapost.ca/cpo/mc/personal/productsservices/collect/stampselection.jsf?LOCALE=en>

1. Have students examine a postage stamp featuring Jacques Cartier. (Images of two stamps featuring Cartier and links to more information on the Government of Canada website are included in the “Resources” section, on pages 11 and 12.)

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Let the students begin by describing what is on the stamp. To help the students describe what they see, consider providing them with the following questions and prompts:

- Start by taking note of as much basic, factual information as is available. Does the stamp have a title or artist's name on it? When was the stamp made? Look at what is shown on the stamp and describe it as clearly as you can. What people are portrayed? Is there a natural landscape? Are there buildings? Are there ships? Are there other objects shown? List as many facts as you can see. Next, look at design elements such as colour, form, space, and texture.

Let the students proceed by analyzing what is on the stamp. To help the students analyze what they see, consider providing them with the following questions and prompts:

- The artist makes decisions about what is shown on the stamp. Try to figure out what some of these decisions were and why they were made. What draws your eye? Why do you think you notice a particular aspect of the stamp? Do any of the other details give you information about what the artist was trying to say? What do the clothing, facial expressions, and body language of the people suggest? Does the portrayal of buildings or ships suggest anything? Do you think that the artist was trying to capture an overall mood or emotion?
- Directions for describing and analyzing the image are adapted from Laura McCoy, "Toolkit: Decoding Photographs," Library and Archives Canada: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/education/008-3080-e.html>.

After the students have described and analyzed the stamp, divide them into small groups and have them answer the following question:

- What is this stamp saying about Cartier as an "explorer"?

2. Ask students to brainstorm answers to the question and then, as a group, decide on their three or four best answers.

3. Take up answers as a whole class and write on the board a list of what students say. If the students need assistance generating good ideas, the teacher may want to suggest that they think about the following:

- Cartier's background
- Exploration in the Americas
- Relations with native peoples (both allies and enemies)
- Imagery on the stamp (who is shown, what they are doing)
- General portrayal of Cartier (a short phrase to sum up how he is depicted)

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### Step II: Rethinking the Stamp

*The students assess similarities and differences between the stamp and the entry on Cartier in the DCB/DBC.*

*You should tell students that this entry was written in 1966 by Marcel Trudel, a history professor at the Université Laval in Quebec City and Carleton University in Ottawa as well as an author of many books and articles on New France. It is important to note that although Trudel was a pre-eminent historian in his field, this biography is now almost 50 years old and current historians would not necessarily agree with all of its content.*

1. You may wish to divide the class into groups and assign to each the responsibility of filling in one or more areas of the chart described below in Part 2; otherwise, all students are responsible for the whole chart.
2. Distribute either copies of the complete DCB/DBC entry on Jacques Cartier ([http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier\\_jacques\\_1491\\_1557\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier_jacques_1491_1557_1E.html)) or excerpts from the entry ([http://www.biographi.ca/uploads/Cartier\\_excerpts.pdf](http://www.biographi.ca/uploads/Cartier_excerpts.pdf)). Each group should concentrate on finding where the DCB/DBC entry agrees with the stamp and where it disagrees with the stamp. These areas of agreement and disagreement can be basic and factual (e.g., a date of birth) or more subtly interpretive (e.g., Cartier's intentions in his relations with the natives). To help make the comparisons, copy and distribute the black-line master chart "Comparing and Contrasting the Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada and the Cartier Stamp," found on page 8.

### Step III: Redesigning the Stamp

*The students redesign the stamp in accordance with what they have learned from the entry in the DCB/DBC.*

1. The students in each group draw a picture of the stamp that reflects which changes (if any) they think should be made to it.
2. Consider also having each group write a short report justifying why they decided to keep some elements the same and/or change some elements. This report should make specific reference to both information from the DCB/DBC and the redesigned stamp.

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### **Step IV: Presenting the Redesigned Stamps**

*Each group presents its recommended redesign to the rest of the class.*

1. Each group may begin by showing the drawing of its redesigned stamp, and the rest of the class tries to figure out what (if anything) has been changed when compared with the original stamp. (Note: If you would like to include this step, either direct students to make very large drawings of the stamp or photocopy the drawings so that each group has a copy of every other group's drawings.)
2. Each group presents its redesigned stamp to the rest of the class and explains the changes that have been made.

### **Step V: Deciding on a Stamp**

*The class as a whole decides what the stamp should look like.*

1. All proposed changes to the stamp are reviewed.
2. The class as a whole redesigns the stamp in light of the *DCB/DBC* entry, with special attention to the role of Jacques Cartier as “explorer.”

### **Sharing Students' Work**

We hope that you have enjoyed this “Exploring the Explorers” package, and we would be interested in seeing what your students have produced! Please consider sharing their work with us by sending a photograph or scan of the students' redesigned stamp or stamps to [dcb.admin@utoronto.ca](mailto:dcb.admin@utoronto.ca) (subject line: “Exploring the Explorers”) or to “Exploring the Explorers,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, University of Toronto, 130 St George St., Toronto ON M5S 3H1. We will acknowledge all submissions by sending a note to the class, and we may even feature some examples on the DCB/DBC website.

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### Optional Extensions

*The following suggestions are provided for teachers who wish to extend this assignment to other history lessons or to other subjects.*

#### History

Expanding this assignment about Cartier:

- Consult another secondary source and repeat this series of exercises.
- Consult a primary source (e.g., writings by Jacques Cartier) and repeat this series of exercises.
- Compare a primary source (e.g., writings by Jacques Cartier) against the entry in the DCB/DBC.

Repeating this assignment but focusing on another person from Canadian history:

- Choose another subject from Canada's past who has both a stamp featuring his or her image and also an entry in the DCB/DBC. Repeat the steps of the main exercise for that person.

Rewriting history:

- Think about when this entry in the DCB/DBC was written, conduct research into what we have learned about Jacques Cartier since then, and adjust part or all of the information in the DCB/DBC entry to reflect this new knowledge.
- One example is what has been learned recently through the interpretation of a series of archaeological finds at Cap-Rouge, site of an attempted French settlement in the 16th century. Go to *The rediscovered colony* on this site: <https://www.mcq.org/en/expositions>.

#### Language Arts

Creative Writing

- Write a short story from the perspective of Jacques Cartier.
- Write a short story from the perspective of someone who knew Jacques Cartier (e.g., a member of his family, his fellow explorer, his enemy).

#### French as a Second Language

Reading

- Read a French-language history textbook's account of Jacques Cartier and compare this with your history textbook's account.

Writing

- Write a new inscription for the stamp in French.

Speaking

- Deliver a brief report to your classmates in French about the original stamp or your redesign.

## Music

### Music history

- Find out what music was popular in France during the time of Jacques Cartier and write a biography of one of the composers.

### Music performance

- Learn to sing or play one of the songs that Jacques Cartier likely would have known.

## Health and Physical Education

### Dancing

- Learn a dance from France during the time of Jacques Cartier.

### Health and well-being

- Research one of the leading causes of death in 16th-century France or New France (e.g., smallpox, scurvy, drowning) and discuss its prevalence in Canada today.

## Science

### Technology

- Research a scientific discovery made in the time of Jacques Cartier and describe how we still benefit from it today.

### Ecology

- Compare some aspect of the ecology around Quebec City as it was in the 16th century with how it is today (e.g., temperature, pollution in the St Lawrence, species of trees, crops grown in agricultural areas, population of beavers).

## Mathematics

### Numbers

- Translate all the relevant dates into Roman numerals.
- Calculate the distances of Cartier's various voyages in different units (e.g., kilometres, miles, leagues).

## Geography

### Maps

- Trace Jacques Cartier's voyages on a map.
- For help, see the maps at the Virtual Museum of New France: <http://www.civilization.ca/virtual-museum-of-new-france/the-explorers/jacques-cartier-1534-1542/>.

## Comparing and Contrasting the Dictionary of Canadian Biography/ Dictionnaire biographique du Canada and the Cartier stamp

**Instructions:** Fill in as much of the chart as you can. Some of the information will be obvious, but other information will require careful searching or interpretation. Some information may not even be given at all in one of the sources – just write “not indicated” in such a case.

	Dictionary of Canadian Biography/ Dictionnaire biographique du Canada	Stamp
<b>Date and place of birth</b>		
<b>Reasons for making the initial voyage to North America</b>		
<b>Significance of the first voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>		
<b>Significance of the second voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>		
<b>Significance of the third voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>		
<b>Physical appearance</b>		
<b>Most important accomplishments and failures</b>		
<b>Other</b>		

## Answer Key for the 1934 Stamp

	<b>Dictionary of Canadian Biography/ Dictionnaire biographique du Canada</b>	<b>Stamp</b>
<b>Date and place of birth</b>	(see Basic Facts and Excerpt #1)  Probably between 7 June and 23 Dec. 1491, Saint-Malo, Brittany, France	Not indicated
<b>Reasons for making the initial voyage to North America</b>	(see Excerpt #2)  For the first voyage, in 1534: discovery of gold and other precious things; route to China	Not indicated
<b>Significance of the first voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>	(see Excerpt #2)  Naming places; contempt for the land, which he called “the land God gave to Cain”; encounters with Beothuks, Micmacs (Mi’kmaq); longer encounters with Laurentian Iroquois and their leader Donnacona; returned to France with two of Donnacona’s sons	Commemoration of year 1534: The stamp illustrates the alleged moment of “discovery” of Canada by Cartier. He and his men look stern and determined.  Note: Teacher could discuss the importance of the issuing of this stamp in 1934 – i.e., exactly 400 years after Cartier’s first voyage along the St Lawrence
<b>Significance of the second voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>	(see Excerpt #3)  Larger number of people and ships than on the first voyage, including Donnacona’s sons; further travels on the St Lawrence, hearing tales of the kingdom of Saguenay; visits to Stadacona (site of present-day Quebec City) and Hochelaga (site of present-day Montreal); very difficult winter for the French; capture of several natives, including Donnacona	Not indicated
<b>Significance of the third voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>	(see Excerpt #4)  None of the natives taken with Cartier to France returned to Canada, and Cartier lied about this to the people at Stadacona	Not indicated
<b>Physical appearance</b>	(see Excerpt #5)  Not indicated; no authentic portrait is known	Determined, strong-willed, authoritative; his clothes are darker than those of the other men, perhaps to highlight his importance  Note: These are by no means the only possibilities, but rather just a few suggestions.
<b>Most important accomplishments and failures</b>	Many possibilities, including the following. For accomplishments: the “discovery” of the St Lawrence River and Canada; leadership in the settlement of Charlesbourg-Royal in 1541–42. For failures: antagonizing the First Nations, especially the people of Stadacona, through intimidation and deceit; a lot of deaths from disease among his men; inability to find precious metals or a route to China	The discovery of land
<b>Other</b>		The placement of Cartier’s name immediately underneath “CANADA” connects them as a unit.

## Answer Key for the 1984 Stamp

	<b>Dictionary of Canadian Biography/ Dictionnaire biographique du Canada</b>	<b>Stamp</b>
<b>Date and place of birth</b>	(see Basic Facts and Excerpt #1)  Probably between 7 June and 23 Dec. 1491, Saint-Malo, Brittany, France	Date not indicated; place suggested by Saint-Malo coat-of arms, manor house near Saint-Malo
<b>Reasons for making the initial voyage to North America</b>	(see Excerpt #2)  For the first voyage, in 1534: discovery of gold and other precious things; route to China	Not indicated
<b>Significance of the first voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>	(see Excerpt #2)  Naming places; contempt for the land, which he called “the land God gave to Cain”; encounters with Beothuks, Micmacs (Mi’kmaq); longer encounters with Laurentian Iroquois and their leader Donnacona; returned to France with two of Donnacona’s sons	Commemoration of year 1534: Teacher could discuss the importance of the issuing of this stamp in 1984 – i.e., exactly 450 years after Cartier’s first voyage along the St Lawrence  Cartier is shown holding a clay pipe – this has associations with tobacco, a plant from the Americas and new to Europe
<b>Significance of the second voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>	(see Excerpt #3)  Larger number of people and ships than on the first voyage, including Donnacona’s sons; further travels on the St Lawrence, hearing tales of the kingdom of Saguenay; visits to Stadacona (site of present-day Quebec City) and Hochelaga (site of present-day Montreal); very difficult winter for the French; capture of several natives, including Donnacona	Not indicated
<b>Significance of the third voyage (events, challenges, encounters with First Nations)</b>	(see Excerpt #4)  None of the natives taken with Cartier to France returned to Canada, and Cartier lied about this to the people at Stadacona	Not indicated
<b>Physical appearance</b>	(see Excerpt #5)  Not indicated; no authentic portrait is known	Pensive, strong-willed, looking from France out to sea with clay pipe in hand  Note: These are by no means the only possibilities, but rather just a few suggestions
<b>Most important accomplishments and failures</b>	Many possibilities, including the following. For accomplishments: the “discovery” of the St Lawrence River and Canada; leadership in the settlement of Charlesbourg-Royal in 1541–42. For failures: antagonizing the First Nations, especially the people of Stadacona, through intimidation and deceit; a lot of death from disease among his men; inability to find precious metals or a route to China	Perhaps sailing from France to North America
<b>Other</b>		

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### Resources

#### *Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*

- *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* entry on Jacques Cartier:  
[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier\\_jacques\\_1491\\_1557\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cartier_jacques_1491_1557_1E.html)

#### Stamps

- 1934 Stamp:  
[http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=2203694&rec\\_nbr\\_list=99023,2260822,2203694,2203621,2184767,2184694,2243603,2209032,2209006,2208547](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2203694&rec_nbr_list=99023,2260822,2203694,2203621,2184767,2184694,2243603,2209032,2209006,2208547)
- 1984 Stamp:  
[http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=2267030](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2267030)

#### Other Recommended Resources for Exploring Jacques Cartier

- The “Virtual Museum of New France” from the Canadian Museum of History:  
<http://www.historymuseum.ca/virtual-museum-of-new-france/the-explorers/jacques-cartier-1534-1542/>
- Parks Canada site on the Cartier-Brébeuf National Historic Site:  
<http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/qc/cartierbrebeuf/natcul/natcul2.aspx>
- Text of Cartier’s *Voyages*:  
<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924103985341#page/n11/mode/2up>
- Excerpts from the *Voyages*:  
[http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation\\_gr5/blms/5-2-1b.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation_gr5/blms/5-2-1b.pdf)

#### Images

##### pages 1 and 12

- 1934 stamp: Library and Archives Canada, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=2203694&rec\\_nbr\\_list=99023,2260822,2203694,2203621,2184767,2184694,2243603,2209032,2209006,2208547](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2203694&rec_nbr_list=99023,2260822,2203694,2203621,2184767,2184694,2243603,2209032,2209006,2208547)
- 1984 stamp: Library and Archives Canada, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=2267030](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2267030)

##### page 2

- *Jacques Cartier*: Library and Archives Canada, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=2908070&rec\\_nbr\\_list=2908070](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2908070&rec_nbr_list=2908070)
- *Arrival of Jacques Cartier at Quebec, 1535* in *Old Quebec: The fortress of New France*, by Sir Gilbert Parker et Claude Glennon Bryan, The Project Gutenberg eBook, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30367/30367-h/30367-h.htm>

##### on the website ([http://admin.biographi.ca/en/article/explorers\\_cartier](http://admin.biographi.ca/en/article/explorers_cartier))

- *Arrival of Jacques Cartier at Stadacona, 1535*: Library and Archives Canada, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=2836742](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2836742) (image at bottom)

1934 Stamp



1984 Stamp

