

Exploring the Explorers

SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN

Description of the Activity

Students compare a public monument to Samuel de Champlain with the entry about Champlain in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada (DCB/DBC). They assess similarities and differences between these two representations of the founder of the settlement of Quebec, focusing on portrayals of Champlain as an “explorer,” and they redesign the monument in accordance with their understanding of Champlain’s role in the history of Canada.



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/Champlain_excerpts.pdf), whereas older students are likely capable of handling the complete entry (http://biographi.ca/en/bio/champlain_samuel_de_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, Visual Arts, Music, Health and Physical Education, Science, Mathematics, and Geography.



Learning Objectives

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

- Students learn about France and New France in the 17th 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 public monument.

Dictionary of Canadian Biography
Dictionnaire biographique du Canada
www.biographi.ca

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Background Preparation for the Teacher

- Examine photographs of the monument to be considered (see images provided on page 12).
- Read the relevant entry in Volume I of the DCB/DBC (see link below).

Necessary Materials

- Photographs of the Champlain monument in Quebec City (see images provided on page 12)
- The DCB/DBC entry on Samuel de Champlain (http://biographi.ca/en/bio/champlain_samuel_de_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



Step I: Analysis of the Monument

The students analyze what information and messages the monument conveys about Samuel de Champlain.

1. Have students examine the monument featuring Champlain. (For photographs of the monument as well as a transcription of what is written on the monument's plaque, see the "Resources" section on pages 11 and 12.)

For additional information on the planning and dedication of the monument, including reports and photographs from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see this site from McGill University, Montreal: <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/champlain/browse.php?p=002>.

Let the students begin by describing what is on the monument. 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 monument have a title or artist's name on it? When was it made? Look at

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what is shown on the monument and describe it as clearly as you can. What people are portrayed? Are 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 monument. 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 monument. 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 monument? 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? Do you think that the artist was trying to capture an overall mood or emotion? Does the location of the monument add anything to your understanding of what the artist was trying to convey?
- 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 monument, divide them into small groups and have them answer the following question:

- What is this monument saying about Champlain as an “explorer” and the founder of Quebec?

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 with generating ideas, the teacher may want to help them think about the following:

- Champlain’s background
- Exploration in the Americas (including what he is said to have “discovered”)
- Relations with native peoples (both allies and enemies)
- Political career at the settlement of Quebec
- Imagery on the monument (who and what is shown, what people are doing)
- General portrayal of Champlain (a short phrase to sum up how he is depicted)

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Step II: Rethinking the Monument

The students assess similarities and differences between the monument and the entry on Champlain 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 to fill 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 Samuel de Champlain (http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/champlain_samuel_de_1E.html) or excerpts from the entry (http://admin.biographi.ca/uploads/Champlain_excerpts.pdf). Each group should concentrate on finding where the DCB/DBC entry agrees with the monument and where it disagrees with the monument. These areas of agreement and disagreement can be basic and factual (e.g., a date of birth) or more subtly interpretive (e.g., whether the subject is presented as relying on the assistance of others for his discoveries). 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 Champlain Monument,” found on page 9.

Step III: Redesigning the Monument

The students redesign the monument 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 monument 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 monument.

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Step IV: Presenting the Redesigned Monuments

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

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

Step V: Deciding on a Monument

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

1. All proposed changes to the monument are reviewed.
2. The class as a whole redesigns the monument in light of the DCB/DBC entry, with special attention to the role of Samuel de Champlain 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 monument or monuments to 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 Champlain:

- Consult another secondary source and repeat this series of exercises.
 - For example, compare the DCB/DBC entry on Champlain with the portrayal of Champlain in TV documentaries, such as *Canada: a people's history* (<http://www.cbc.ca/history/>), or, if that is not available, the readily accessible National Film Board film *Samuel de Champlain (Québec 1603)* (1964, directed by Denys Arcand, 14 min 43 seconds), http://www.nfb.ca/film/samuel_de_champlain_quebec_1603.
 - You may wish to encourage students to watch a Champlain documentary without sound and to write their own voice-over, drawing on the biography.
- Consult a primary source (e.g., writings by Samuel de Champlain) and repeat this series of exercises.
- Compare a primary source (e.g., writings by Samuel de Champlain) 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 is remembered in a monument and who has 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 Samuel de Champlain since then, and adjust part or all of the information in the DCB/DBC entry to reflect this new knowledge.
- One example of what has been learned recently is that the astrolabe generally considered to have been Champlain's may, in fact, have belonged to a different explorer. See this article in the *Ottawa Citizen*, 7 August 2013: <http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/national/Discovery+19th+century+document+sheds+light+unearthing/8759997/story.html>. See also http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-293/Champlain%E2%80%99s_astrolabe:_the_journey_of_a_mythical_Canadian_heritage_object.html.

Language Arts

Creative Writing

- Write a short story from the perspective of Samuel de Champlain.

- Write a short story from the perspective of someone who knew Samuel de Champlain (e.g., his wife, his fellow explorer, his enemy).

French as a Second Language

Reading

- Read a French-language history textbook's account of Samuel de Champlain and compare this with your history textbook's account.

Writing

- Write a new plaque for the monument in French.

Speaking

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

Visual Arts

Model-building

- Build a scale model of the original and the redesigned monument.

Music

Music history

- Find out what music was popular in France during the time of Samuel de Champlain and write a biography of one of the composers.
- Research what kind of music both French settlers and natives enjoyed in 17th-century Canada.

Music performance

- Learn to sing or play one of the songs that Samuel de Champlain likely would have known.

Health and Physical Education

Dancing

- Learn a dance from France or New France during the time of Samuel de Champlain.

Health and well-being

- Research one of the leading causes of death in 17th-century 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 Samuel de Champlain and describe how we still benefit from it today.

Ecology

- Compare some aspect of the ecology around Quebec City as it was in the early 17th 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 Champlain's various voyages in different units (e.g., kilometres, miles, leagues).
- Research how an astrolabe works as a navigational tool.

Geography

Maps

- Trace Samuel de Champlain's voyages on a map.
- For help, see the maps at the Virtual Museum of New France:
<http://www.historymuseum.ca/virtual-museum-of-new-france/the-explorers/samuel-de-champlain-1604-1616/>.
- Compare one of the maps made by Samuel de Champlain with a map made today.

Comparing and Contrasting the Dictionary of Canadian Biography/ Dictionnaire biographique du Canada and the Champlain Monument

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	Monument
Date and place of birth		
Voyages prior to 1608		
Founding of Quebec City		
Allies and enemies		
Political leadership at Quebec		
Physical appearance		
Most significant accomplishments and failures		
Other		

**Answer Key for
Comparing and Contrasting the Dictionary of Canadian Biography/
Dictionnaire biographique du Canada and the Champlain Monument**

	Dictionary of Canadian Biography/ Dictionnaire biographique du Canada	Monument
Date and place of birth	(see Excerpt #1) About 1570, perhaps in 1567, or about 1580 Brouage, France	Around 1567 Brouage, Saintonge [France]
Voyages prior to 1608	(see Excerpts #1, 2, 3, 4) West Indies, Saguenay River, Acadia, St Lawrence River	On plaque: “Explored the West Indies from 1599 to 1601 and also Acadia from 1604 to 1607”
Founding of Quebec City	(see Excerpt #5) Acadia vs. the St Lawrence, constructing the first buildings	On plaque: “Founded Quebec in 1608” Monument is located in Quebec City
Allies and enemies	(see Excerpts #6, 8) Allies: Montagnais, Algonquin, Huron Enemies: Iroquois, English	On plaque: “Led several Expeditions against the Iroquois from 1609 to 1615” Also on plaque, but with no mention of allies who helped him: “Discovered the region of the Great Lakes”
Political leadership at Quebec	(see Excerpts #7, 8) Many points to choose from, including a marriage that brought financing; several advancements in official position; writing reports to secure more support from France; attempts to prevent and then end English occupation	On plaque: “Was successively lieutenant Governor and Governor of New France”
Physical appearance	No authentic portrait	Determined, independent Note: These are by no means the only possibilities, but rather just a few suggestions
Most significant accomplishments and failures	(see all Excerpts, including #9) Many possibilities, including the following. For accomplishments: surviving the winter; establishing a permanent settlement at Quebec; mapping; creating alliances with First Nations; securing support from France. For failures: a lot of deaths among the French settlers; temporary English occupation of Quebec; inability to find a route to China	Many possibilities, but the location of the monument suggests the founding of Quebec City; the plaque emphasizes exploration. Consider also the other features of the monument, e.g., an angel blowing a trumpet.
Other		

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Resources

Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada

- Dictionary of Canadian Biography English-language entry on Samuel de Champlain:
http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/champlain_samuel_de_1E.html

The Champlain Monument

- Photo of the monument's inauguration, 1908:
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayEcopies&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3362498&rec_nbr_list=3384348,3377519,3361887,3330926,3330902,3329372,3328680,3362498,3213895,3401340&title=Inauguration+of+Champlain+Monument%2C+Quebec%2C+P.Q.+&ecopy=a023977&back_url=%28%29
- Another photo of the monument:
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3517622

Plaque on the Monument

<http://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/rpcq/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=116976&type=bien#.VBC1ZEjd7m5>

Né à Brouage en Saintonge vers 1567. Servit à l'armée sous Henri IV en qualité de maréchal des logis. Explora les Indes Occidentales de 1699 à 1601 - l'Acadie de 1604 à 1607. Fonda Québec en 1608. Découvrit les pays des G Lacs, commanda plusieurs expéditions contre les Iroquois de 1609 à 1615. Fut successivement lieutenant-gouverneur et gouverneur de la Nouvelle-France et mourut à Québec le 25 décembre 1635.

Born at Brouage in Saintonge about 1567. Served in the French Army as Marechal des Logis under Henri IV. Explored the West Indies from 1599 to 1601 and also Acadia from 1604 to 1607. Founded Quebec in 1608. Discovered the region of the Great Lakes. Led several Expeditions against the Iroquois from 1609 to 1615. Was successively lieutenant Governor and Governor of New France. Died at Québec 25th Dec 1635.

Other Recommended Resources for Exploring Samuel de Champlain

- The “Virtual Museum of New France” from the Canadian Museum of History:
<http://www.historymuseum.ca/virtual-museum-of-new-france/the-explorers/samuel-de-champlain-1604-1616/>
- The writings of Samuel de Champlain, published by the Champlain Society:
<http://www.champlainsociety.ca/champlains-own-works/>
- Excerpts of one of the voyages of Samuel de Champlain from the Wisconsin Historical Society's “American Journeys” site: <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/aj/id/9151>
- David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain's dream* (New York and Toronto, 2008)

Images

- photos (monument): Mairi Cowan and Julia Armstrong
- photos (plaque): Pascale Llobat 2008, © Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, <http://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/rpcq/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=116976&type=bien#.VA-V70ipry4>
- illustration, page 1: Bibliotheque et Archives Nationales du Québec, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/1956819>
- illustration, page 2: Library and Archives Canada, *Champlain Trading with the Indians*, C. W. Jefferys, 1911, http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2014-09-08T20%3A36%3A58Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=2837451&rft_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Aapam&lang=eng
- on the website (http://www.biographi.ca/en/article/explorers_champlain): *Champlain en canot indien, 1603* (image in middle), Library and Archives Canada, http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2895971&rec_nbr_list=2895971,2837518,3066564,3074212,3070820,3809355; monument (image at bottom), Wikimedia Commons

Monument



Plaque

