

AGRICULTURE

Dear Diary,...

Teacher's Workbook
For Highschool



**QUEBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM:
HISTORY OF QUEBEC AND CANADA (2017)**

Secondary Three or Secondary Four

Description of the Learning Task

In the Eastern Townships region, the beginning of the 19th century was characterized by extensive land clearing and subsistence farming. Approximately 85% of the population lived of agriculture, which represented some 5000 families. This activity will lead students to reflect of the daily lives of these individuals. This learning situation aims to examine various archival documents related to rural life in the 19th century. Upon reading the daily diaries of certain farmers of this period, students will reflect on the lives of farmers and inhabitants of the Eastern Townships region in the first half of the 19th century.

Upon analyzing the reality of a 19th century farmer with the help of various documents, students will write a diary entry describing a day in the life of an Eastern Townships farmer.

Upon completing this activity, students will know more about a local farmer's way of life and about the state of agriculture in general throughout the province at this time. The various documents contained in the Documentary Record make it possible to establish relationships between the Training Program and the local history of the Eastern Townships region.



PERIOD AND SOCIAL REALITY

The period under study is the 19th century. In the Training Program, this period is divided into two social realities. One of these is covered in Secondary Three, the other, in Secondary Four. It is therefore possible to conduct this learning task in either level.

Demands and National Struggles, 1791-1840

The 19th century was a pivotal moment for agriculture in Lower Canada. New regions were opened up for settlement in 1792. However, agriculture evolved differently in the new townships than in the old seigneuries. Encouraged by preferential tariffs on wheat (*Corn Laws*), colonies of the British Empire attempted to produce a surplus with a view to exporting the grain. During the 1830s, Lower Canada suffers an agricultural crisis. The seigneuries had terrible harvests for several reasons: land was overexploited, farmers used dated methods and the environmental conditions were poor. For these reasons, Lower Canada needed to import wheat from Upper Canada to meet its population's needs. The Eastern Townships, on the other hand, had excellent harvests. However, due to difficult road conditions, inhabitants were unable to export their grain to Lower Canada markets. The agricultural difficulties experienced by Lower Canada had many consequences: they led to a rural exodus, a dip in British immigration, and a reorientation of agricultural practices. The Eastern Townships region distinguished itself from the rest of the colony by its agricultural output over the 19th century.

HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

DEMANDS AND NATIONAL STRUGGLES 1791-1840

/ Agriculture

// *Organization of the territory*

// *Crisis in the 1830s*

THE CREATION OF A CANADIAN FEDERAL REGIME 1840-1896

/ Farms

// *Dairy production*

// *Mechanization*

The Creation of a Canadian Federal Regime, 1840-1896

The Eastern Townships finally integrated the economy of Lower Canada with the development of transportation routes and industrialization. Agricultural outputs continued to be twice as high as elsewhere in Lower Canada. Very early on, the Eastern Townships specialized in dairy farming, whereas the rest of the province would begin this type of farming only in the 1870s. As of the 1830s, several farms within the region were producing their own dairy products (ex. cheese, butter, milk, cream). In the 1850s, these dairy products were sold in urban markets (Montreal, Quebec, Trois-Rivières). The development of the railroad and the deployment of wagons allowing produce to remain fresh enabled the distribution of produce towards various markets in Quebec and in the United States.



PEDAGOGICAL INTENT / COMPETENCIES

- / Development of historical thought
 - // Enable the learner to rely on facts (proof from original sources)
 - // Adopt a historical perspective (historical empathy)
- / Characterize a period in the history of Quebec and of Canada (Competency 1, QTP, 2017)
 - // Select important documents
 - // Consider societal aspects
 - // Identify a historical actor
 - // Determine the spatio-temporal framework
 - // Highlight elements of the territory

TECHNIQUE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS

The following technique for the analysis of sources may serve as a guide for students when analyzing primary sources:

Step 1: Read (Observe and identify important information)

- / Who? What? Where? When?

Step 2: Interrogate the document

- / **External analysis (bearing on the context in which the document was produced)**

With regards to the author (origins, intentions, religion, sex, etc.) and the source (ex. genre?)

Questions that must be answered:

- // Who is the author? Is the author an actor in the events that occurred, or merely a witness to them?
- // To whom was this document destined? Why was it written?
- // What are the origins of this document? Where does it come from? When was it produced?
- // Is this document an original document or a translation?
- // Does this document contain only an excerpt of the original document, or it is a reproduction of the original in its entirety?

- / **Internal Analysis (bearing on the content of the document)**

Questions that must be answered:

- // What are the main themes discussed within this document? What is the main message?
- // Is the content of the document plausible? Does it correspond to what we already know about this period and its context?
- // Does the document offer facts* or opinions*?

Step 3: Interpretation

- / Give meaning to the content of the text and to the themes that you have identified:

- // What do you think was the purpose of this document and of the message it contains? What questions does it answer? To what other documents is it related?

*Verifiable information

*Opinion: Personal point of view, often arbitrary and volatile

PREPARATION

Archives: A Window into the Past

Based on the Documentary Record, you can see, on the cover, an image of a diary dated 1837, written by a Lacolle farmer. This is an ideal context in which to establish links with the political context of the time (uprisings of 1837-1838). Thus, by observing the image, you can:

- / ask students to state their pre-existing knowledge related to agriculture and to the daily lives of individuals living in this period. It would also be relevant to ask students what they know of the political, social and economic context of this period.
- / ask students what they think they can find in dairies held by farmers? What might these individuals write about?

The documents contained in the **Preparation** section of the Documentary Record also serve as a starting point to interrogate students on their prior knowledge. Use the technique for the analysis of sources to analyze the documents with the students (Steps 1 and 2).

Using the Student's Workbook, students can be made to reflect on the various traces that they leave behind every day. Today, in the digital age, we leave a great deal of information and traces of our everyday lives. For example:

- / messaging (emails, chat, text messages);
- / pictures and audiovisual documents (including what is posted on social media);
- / personal documents (bills, report cards, income tax reports, birth certificates, diplomas);
- / Personal diaries (handwritten, typed on a computer, posted on social media).

By writing a summary of their day, students will come to reflect on their daily reality and their role as subjects of history. For example:

Lennoxville, March 26th, 2019

Today, I went to visit my cousins in Victoriaville. We played on the PlayStation and watched YouTube videos. When we came home, we stopped to eat sushi at a restaurant in Sherbrooke.

With this example, we have information regarding the different types of activities enjoyed by today's youth (ex. video games, watching videos online). Moreover, we also have information about people's eating habits. This entry has markers of time (March 26th) and space (Lennoxville, Sherbrooke, Victoriaville).

To follow up on this writing activity, it would be relevant to analyze, as a large group or in small teams, and to turn to new avenues of exploration with the following:

- / students' way of life, specific to the period in which they are living;
- / the traces that they leave behind. Will they be useful for historians of the future?



TASK

In the Footsteps of a Lacolle Farmer and of a Resident of Farnham

Inferences must be made to carry out this activity. The goal is to give meaning to the information present in the diaries to propose as many hypotheses as possible about the daily lives of the people who inhabited these locations (Lacolle and Farnham) during this period. This activity can be undertaken in teams.

Using the Student's Workbook and the Documentary Record, students will be asked to highlight information that allows them to describe the daily lives of inhabitants of the Eastern Townships. This activity will allow them to pay particular attention to the concerns of people living in the 19th century. The idea is to reflect on the lives of "ordinary" people.

/ Based on the information contained in the diaries, the students will infer explanations that will allow them to describe the daily lives of people living in this period. The information they find may be related to the following themes: religion, food, transportation, social life, weather conditions.

// *The information contained in these diaries represent the concerns of the people during this period. Why were farmers writing this information down? How were their days organized? What struggles did they deal with on a daily basis? These questions are clues to guide students in this activity.*

Expected answer (model)

William James Douglas, April 1st, 1885: Fine day to village very bad roads

/ Transportation might be slowed down due to bad road conditions, which resulted in a waste of time. This trip took place in the springtime, when there was a thaw, which might explain why the roads were so bad. Transportation was difficult.



RETURN AND REVIEW

Dear Diary,...

Using the Student's Workbook and the Documentary Record, students will be asked to adopt a historical perspective (historical empathy) by taking on the point of view of an actor of the period in which the diary is to be written.

To help students write their diary entry, the teacher may ask them to include the following information:

1. **A fictitious name for their historical character;**
2. **The date of their diary entry (this date must be in the 19th century (temporal context));**

// *Watch out for anachronisms (chronological errors)! For example, Lower Canada became United Canada in 1840, and then Quebec in 1867. When students choose a date and a township, they must make sure that the township was, in fact, created by that date.*

3. **The location of the activity being described in the diary (spatial context);**

4. **A relevant link to Lower Canada's (Quebec's) economic or agricultural context;**

// *This can be the agricultural crisis of the 1830s, poor means of communication, the economy that is not yet diversified, groundbreaking dairy farming in one of the townships, etc. (See documents 1-2-3).*

5. **An element of geographical context related to the day they are describing;**

// *See Document 4. The geographical context can be related to the river systems, to the location of a township with regards to another, to the landscape, to the weather, etc.*

6. **The type of farming conducted by their character.**

Students must write a text that contains these different elements.

Further avenues of exploration:

// *The return and review activity can take many different forms based on the time available. For example, students can engage in further research to learn more about the township chosen and about its history.*

// *The diary can also take the shape of an audio recording or of a comic strip.*





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PRODUCED BY THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS RESOURCE CENTRE, 2019

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Legal Deposit: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales Québec, 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ETRC's educational materials have been made possible through generous funding by the Secretariat for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers (SQREA).

Ministère
du Conseil exécutif
Québec 

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