

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

LA FRANCOPHONIE ET LES ÉTATS-UNIS: TEACHING ACTIVITIES

The presence of French place names—towns, rivers, and lakes—bears witness to the passage of French explorers, fur traders, and settlers in the Midwest United States. Coming from Montreal down through the Great Lakes toward the Mississippi, explorers like Nicollet, Marquette and Jolliet, and La Salle laid claim to land for France and began to establish trading relationships with various groups of Native Americans living in what is now Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri. Priests followed, as did soldiers and traders. Although the English took control of the greater part of this area following France's defeat in 1763, nonetheless the early presence of French people left its mark.

The following activities will introduce students to *les États-Unis et la Francophonie* in the Midwest.

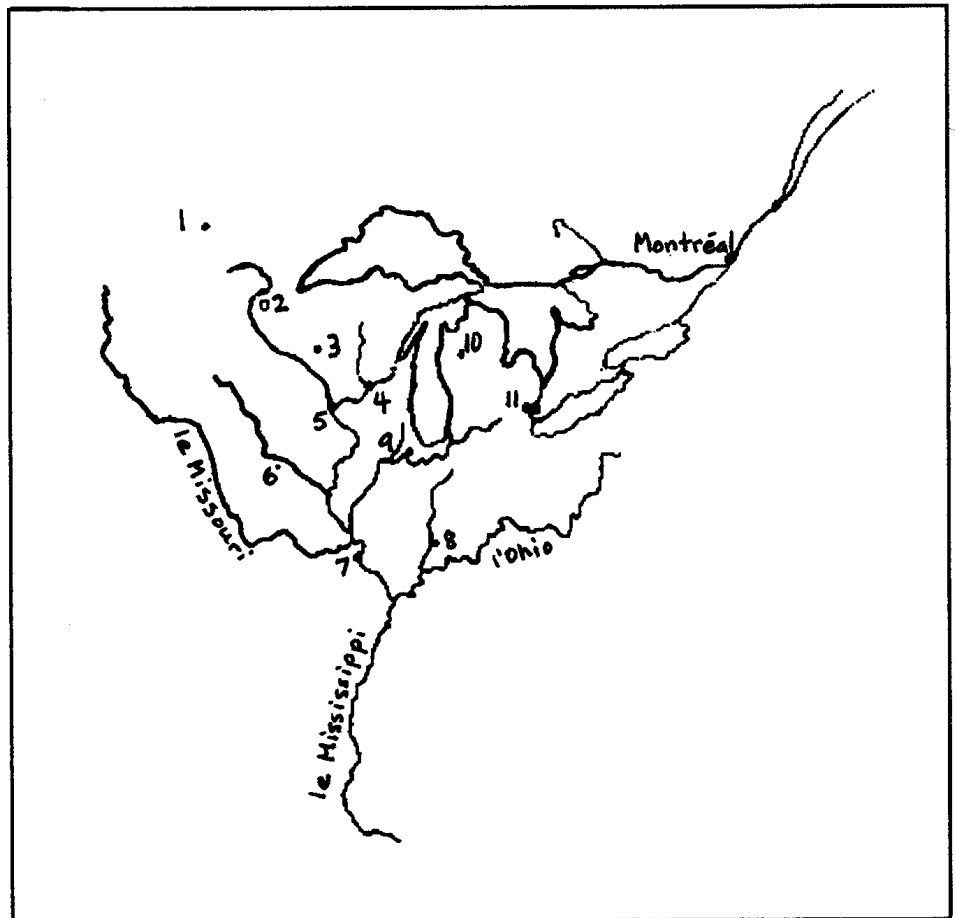
I. Quelques dates

- 1634 Jean Nicollet passe par le détroit de Mackinac (entre le lac Michigan et le lac Huron) pour aller jusqu'à la Baie Verte (*Green Bay*)
- 1650-60 Médard Chouart, sieur des Groseillers, et Pierre-Esprit Radisson explorent la région à l'ouest du lac Supérieur
- 1670 Le père Marquette établit une mission à St Ignace, au détroit de Mackinac
- 1679 Daniel Greysolon, sieur du Luth, voyage dans la région du Mississippi du nord (Minnesota actuel)
- 1682 René-Robert Cavelier, sieur de la Salle, descend le Mississippi et déclare que tout le territoire du bassin du Mississippi est désormais territoire français, la Louisiane
- 1701 Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac débarque au site de la future ville de Détroit
- 1705 Fondation de la ville de Ste Geneviève, dans le Missouri actuel
- 1732 Le poste de Vincennes, sur la rivière Ouabache dans l'Indiana actuel, est établi
- 1764 Le poste de St. Louis, ensuite ville, est établi par Pierre Laclède Liguist

II. Des noms de lieu français: Activités

A. Regardez la carte!

Find the following places on the accompanying small map, and match them with the right state:



- _____ Mille Lacs (*lake*)
- _____ Joliet
- _____ Détroit
- _____ Des Moines
- _____ Portage
- _____ Vincennes
- _____ Cadillac
- _____ Roseau
- _____ Prairie du Chien
- _____ Eau Claire
- _____ St. Louis

B. Quelle est l'origine des noms?

—Which place names indicate a natural characteristic of the place?

—Which places are named after people?

C. Regardez encore!

Find a larger map of Midwest states and identify more place names that are French in origin.

III. Les Voyageurs

A. Some background

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the French were most interested in establishing a trade empire in the territory they called *le pays du nord*, and, in the lower Great Lakes area, *le petit nord*. The principal item for

which they traded was, of course, fur: mostly beaver pelts, but also mink, otter, lynx, bear, muskrat, and so on. Indians provided the furs in exchange for manufactured goods; the furs were shipped to Europe through Montreal.

The cycle of the fur trade was basically as follows: in spring, canoes laden with goods to trade for furs left Montreal, bound for trade centers such as Michilimackinac (located at the strait between Lakes Michigan and Huron). From here, the goods were divided and smaller groups of canoes set out at mid-summer on smaller lakes and rivers, bound for Indian villages where they would exchange the trade goods for furs during the fall and winter. The following spring the canoes, laden with furs tied up in bales covered with canvas, arrived back at the trade centers. From here the furs were shipped to Montreal.

This trade continued, more or less regularly, from the mid-17th century to the mid-1800s. Perhaps the best-known part of the French fur-trade world were the boatmen—the canoe paddlers—*les voyageurs*. Even when the English and then the Americans came to dominate the fur trade, the *voyageurs* were almost all French-Canadian. Their physical strength,

colorful dress, rousing songs, and good cheer have made them a legendary group. The mid-summer gatherings of *voyageurs*, those heading back toward Montreal and those heading out into *le pays du nord* and *le petit nord*, were rowdy, joyful gatherings called *rendez-vous*.

Read more about *voyageurs* in Grace Lee Nute's book *The Voyageurs* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987) (reprint). Also see the Web site of the White Oak Society Learning Centre at [www.whiteoak.org/learning/Irn-online.shtml].

B. *Un voyageur du Michigan et de l'Indiana*

The following series of texts and activities is based upon the account books of a fur trader/*voyageur* of the late 18th and early 18th century, Joseph Bailly. He was an independent trader, born in 1774 near Montreal, who was based for most of his career in Michilimackinac—today Mackinac Island—and who traded throughout Michigan and Indiana, into Illinois, and even into Minnesota. He settled on land just south of Lake Michigan in the new state of Indiana, in about 1822, and died there in 1835. Visitors can see his homestead today in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

Joseph Bailly kept detailed account books—in French—for his fur trade business. In them he kept records of the goods he purchased for trade with the Indians, the goods he purchased to outfit and feed the *voyageurs* who worked for him, the furs that he and his *voyageurs* received from the Indians in trade, and the wages of the *voyageurs* who were his employees. He also recorded when he lent or borrowed money.

The currency unit most frequently used by Bailly is *la livre*, the old French-Canadian currency. Its units are: 1 *livre* = 20 *sols*; 1 *sol* = 12 *deniers*. In today's terms, one *livre* is worth about \$2.85. Bailly carefully noted the price of each item—the value of each fur he purchased, the value of axes and kettles and gunpowder and fabric and moccasins.

Bailly purchased several kinds of furs from the Indians, not just beaver pelts. While the other furs were counted individually, beaver pelts were always purchased by the pound. The Indians with whom he dealt were principally Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Miami. His wives were both half-Ottawa; Bailly apparently spoke several Indian languages.

The men who worked as *voyageurs* for Bailly were nearly all French-Canadian. They were paid different wages according to the role that they played. Men who sat at the front or rear of the canoe, to direct or to steer the vessel, were paid more than the

men in the middle. Experienced men were paid more, as were men who were the leaders of a given expedition or *aventure*. Each *voyageur* was also allotted certain items according to a standard list, including a blanket, shirts, handkerchiefs (frequently worn on the head), and tobacco. Etienne Lamorendiere, who made more money than other *voyageurs*, as we can see in the account book lists, worked frequently for Bailly and led numerous *aventures* for him.

IV. Le journal de Joseph Bailly (excerpts used with permission of the Old Jail Museum—Porter County Historical Society)

Following are three brief excerpts from Bailly's account book or *journal* of around 1800. The three groups of items are (1) furs purchased, (2) goods traded to the Indians or carried to feed and clothe his *voyageur* employees, and (3) a list of his employees on one particular expedition and some of the supplies he was required to furnish for them.

For each account book excerpt, there are pre-reading exercises, the text itself, vocabulary, and activities that help the students to understand the world of Joseph Bailly and the fur trade.

In the texts: £ = livres (currency); lb = pounds (weight). Bailly gives first the number of items, then the name of the item, then the price per unit, then the total price.

A. *Les pelleteries (peltries, furs) achetées par Bailly*

1. Pre-reading:

—What kinds of furs might Bailly have purchased?

—Would one kind of fur be worth more money than another?

—Which would be more valuable?

2. *Le texte du Journal de Bailly:*

Pelleteries 1800 Grand Riviere		
531	peaux de chevreuille	£5 = £2655
61	louttres	£24= £1464
24	ourssons	£9 = £146
31	ours	£24 = £744
67	peccants	£5 = £335
11	renards	£6 = £ 66
40	foutras	£2 = £ 80
245	martres	£3 = £435
222	chats	£2 = £444
1934	rats	£5 = £1934
1	pichou	£5 = £5
172	lb de castor	£10 = £1720
TOTAL		£ 10328

3. Vocabulaire

Quels mots savez-vous déjà?

Quels mots pensez-vous savoir?

Quels mots ne savez-vous pas?

4. Des comparaisons

—Quelles pelleteries sont les plus nombreuses?

Combien est-ce que Bailly en achète?

—Quelles pelleteries sont les

moins nombreuses?

Combien est-ce que Bailly en achète?

—Quelles pelleteries sont les plus chères?

Quel est leur prix?

—Quelles pelleteries sont les moins chères?

Quel est leur prix?

5. *La multiplication*

Students might do an activity to practice numbers and/or to practice conditional sentences:

—Si Bailly achetait 550 peaux de chevreilles à 5 livres chacune, combien de livres est-ce qu'il payerait?

—Si Bailly achetait 70 louttres à 24 livres chacun, combien de livres est-ce qu'il payerait?

B. *Les marchandises vendues par Bailly*

1. Pre-reading:

—What kinds of goods would the Native Americans need or want to buy from the *voyageurs* in exchange for their furs?

—Are there goods that would be difficult to carry in canoes from Montreal out into the forests and prairies?

—What kind of sugar would Bailly purchase in the north woods, which he could then send downriver to Montreal? (maple sugar)

2. *Le texte du Journal de Bailly:*

(Bailly does give the prices, but the system is complicated so they have been omitted here)

Grand Riviere, le 6 juin 1800

435 lb de sucre
1 baril de gresse
6 ¼ lb de poudre
4 lb de balles
¾ douzaine couteau boucheron
1 chemise flanel fleurie
1 piece d'indienne de trette
4 couteau a ressort
3 lb ½ de tabac
2 mouchoirs de soie
2 ditto Rouge
1 (rouleau) de ruban de couleur
1 paire de Cyzeau
1 peigne d'hyvoire
1 miroir Doré
36 petits Grelots

3. Vocabulaire (attention à l'orthographe!)

gresse = graisse (*animal fat*)

poudre = (*gunpowder*)

balles = (*musketballs*)

couteau boucheron = (*butcher knife*)

indienne de trette = (*lower-quality*)

calico cloth)
 coutteau a ressort = (*spring-loaded knife*)
 cyzeau = ciseaux (*scissors*)
 hyvoire = ivoire (*ivory*)
 doré = *gilded (painted with gold paint)*
 grelots = (*small bells*)

4. Classez les objets:

— tissu:
 — vêtements:
 — outils:
 — décoration:
 — autre:
 Quels objets sont peut-être pour les hommes de Bailly?
 Quels objets sont probablement pour les indiens?
 Quels objets sont peut-être pour les deux groupes?

C. Les hommes de Bailly

1. Pre-reading:

You can recognize the word "sallaire": what is its modern French spelling? What is the English word for "gages"? (wages)

2. Le texte du Journal de Bailly:

Michilimackinac Le 2 juin 1800

Les Gages et Sallaire

Louis Galliard	£ 600
Jn Bte Durocher	£ 600
Augustin Sarazin	£ 500
Jn Belerd	£ 600
Thomas Wod	£ 550
Bartelmé Clairmon	£ 600
Etienne Lamorendiere	£ 1200
Jarmin Pothier	£ 600
Pierre Prejan	<u>£ 600</u>
	£ 5850

Pour Equipement Des hommes

11 Couvert	£ 18	£ 198
18 chemises de Cotton	£ 13	£ 234
48 lb de tabac	£ 4	£ 192
19 lb de savon	£ 4	£ 76
18 mouchoir bleu	£ 6	£ 108
1 capeau bleu		£ 45

3. Vocabulaire

Jn Bte = Jean-Baptiste
 couvert = *blanket*
 capeau = *coat*

4. Des comparaisons

—Quel homme est le mieux payé?
 Pourquoi, selon vous?
 —Quel homme est le moins bien payé? Pourquoi, selon vous?

5. Je me demande...

Regardez les "équipements" que Bailly a achetés pour ses hommes. Et vous? De quoi est-ce que vous allez avoir besoin, si vous devenez voyageur? Terminez la phrase suivante:

"Si je deviens voyageur, moi, je vais avoir besoin de..." (savon? sham-

pooing? une tente? un imperméable? mon iPod? ma guitare? ...)

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SOME SUGGESTED ANSWERS FOR THE CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

II. A.

Mille Lacs	2 Minnesota
Joliet	9 Illinois
Detroit	11 Michigan
Des Moines	6 Iowa
Portage	4 Wisconsin
Vincennes	8 Indiana
Cadillac	10 Michigan
Roseau	1 Minnesota
Prairie du Chien	5 Wisconsin
Eau Claire	3 Wisconsin
St. Louis	7 Missouri

B.

Portage (portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, allowing access to the Mississippi), Detroit, Roseau, Mille Lacs, Eau Claire
 Joliet, Vincennes (post founded by François Marie Bissot, sieur de Vincennes), Cadillac, Des Moines (river and then town named after the Moingona Indians who lived in the region), Prairie du Chien (named for an Indian chief whose name, translated into French, was "Chien.")

IV. 3.

Quels mots savez-vous déjà?
 ours = *bear*
 oursson = *bearcub*
 renard = *fox*
 castor = *beaver*
 Quels mots pensez-vous savoir?
 chats = *raccoons* (chats sauvages) (*not house cats*)
 rats = *muskrats* (rats musqués)
 Quels mot ne savez-vous pas?
 chevreuille = *deer*
 loutres = *otter*
 peccants = *fisher (like a wolverine)*
 foutras = *mink*
 martres = *marten*
 pichou = *lynx*