

Évangeline

HIS621B - History of Prince Edward Island

2.2

Demonstrate an understanding of how various cultures have contributed to the Island cultural mosaic

2.3

Analyse factors that contribute to change (positive or negative) in Island culture or identity

3.2

Analyse the impact of external governance on the decision making past and present

The story of *Évangeline* and Gabriel was inspired by the tragic events of the mid-1750s in and around New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, the land known as Acadie. The “Great Upheaval” or “Le Grand Dérangement” is the name given to the deportation or expulsion of thousands of Acadian people in the Maritimes, a result of the British-French wars that marked that time period. The Great Upheaval begins in Grand Pré, Nova Scotia, in July 1755 with almost 12,000 Acadians being separated from family and displaced to various colonial locations along the coast of what is now the United States and, in later years, to France. Many would die of disease, hunger, and drowning aboard the transport ships. Many made their way back to what they considered their ancestral lands in the Maritimes searching for loved ones along the way. Others established lives in their new surroundings and became our Cajun ancestors.

Évangeline, the performance, is a work of both artistic and literary greatness. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 1847 epic poem is transformed into a visual and auditory narrative that chronicles the devastation of the Acadian expulsion in the 1750s. While the story transcends Canadian borders (non-existent at the time), it is truly a Maritime Canadian story--one that is part of our broader Canadian identity.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES are intended to stimulate interest and provide a means of gauging student knowledge (or, misconceptions) about this historical event. It also serves to activate student curiosity so that they may formulate their own questions about the event.

Pre-performance Activity #1

Find out what students know and do not about the Acadian Expulsion. Students may know some basic facts but they may also have some misconceptions about this historical event.

The Great Upheaval in Maritime Canada

What I know for sure....	What I think I know...	What I'd like to know...

Pre-performance Activity #2

FREE-WRITE

Invite students to participate in a 2-minute free-writing activity based on the topic of the Deportation of the Acadians. They may write about what they know, don't know, or would like to know more about. Remind them of the rules of free-writing: 1) writing must be continuous even when ideas get "stuck"—just keep pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and keep writing whatever comes to mind; and 2) writing is private unless they wish to share it with another person or the class. Ask students to keep their free-writing piece so they can compare it to another one that they will do after the performance.

Pre-performance Activity #3

ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Students will respond to each statement twice by writing “Agree” or “Disagree” once **before** they have been to the performance of *Evangeline* and again **after** they have seen the performance.

Pre-performance

Post-performance

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| _____ | The Deportation was an event that involved PEI, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. | _____ |
| _____ | The Deportation is about Acadians moving their families and belongings to find a better life. | _____ |
| _____ | All Acadians were considered a threat to the British. | _____ |
| _____ | The poem, <i>Évangeline</i> , was written by an Acadian poet who wanted to commemorate his ancestors. | _____ |
| _____ | Evangeline, like Anne of Green Gables, was a fictional character. | _____ |
| _____ | There are no more Acadians in the Maritimes as a result of the Deportation. | _____ |

POST- PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES allow students to draw upon new knowledge learned from the performance itself and/or supplemental inquiry efforts. The activities require students to process and synthesize knowledge and then to re-form it into new understandings of the story. The following activities are based upon the Historical Thinking Concepts* below.

Thinking historically involves asking open-ended questions that require critical thinking skills. It is the “problematizing” of historical content to create new meaning and to arrive at plausible conclusions to new questions. Historical thinking extends beyond the simple recall of factual information and requires students to use historical evidence to develop reasoned responses. Below are brief explanations of the six historical thinking concepts, two of which form the basis of the study unit for the performance of *Evangeline*.

* For more information on these concepts please refer to the following publication: Denos and Case. *Teaching about Historical Thinking*. (2006). Vancouver: The Thinking Consortium (TC 2).

Historical Significance – why an event, person, or period from our past is important. Criteria used to determine historical significance include a) prominence at the time; 2) consequences (magnitude of impact, scope of impact, lasting effects); and 3) prominence (has it been remembered or memorialized in present day), or does it help us to understand a part of our history?

Evidence – sources of information that can be used to support a theory or historical argument. Evidence may come from either “primary” sources (first-hand accounts, church or public records, photos, artifacts) or “secondary” sources (deliberately prepared accounts by historians, textbooks, and movies.)

Continuity and Change – that which changes and that which remains the same over time. Change is ongoing and may occur quickly or slowly. Both change and continuity may be either positive or negative in a society. Comparisons can be made to learn more about a period of time, historical events, people, or social attitudes and trends.

Cause and Consequence – factors that lead to historical events or significant historical decisions. This concept speaks to the “whom” or “what” that influences history and the changes or repercussions that come about because of whomever or whatever. The causal factors may be intentional or non-intentional, and the consequences may be direct or indirect.

Historical Perspective – the viewing of the past through the social, intellectual, emotional, and moral lenses of the time. Being able to understand historical perspective requires more than simply putting oneself in the shoes of another person from another time. It demands that one to set aside present-day views and suspend all judgment in order to comprehend the complexities of the norms and attitudes of the period.

Moral Judgment – an attempt to assess actions, events, or decisions through an ethical lens according to the context (norms) of the times, and in light of present-day values and sensibilities. It is important for students to understand the difference between factual statements and value statements in order to effectively comprehend the depth of this concept.

Historical Significance is determined by a specific set of criteria that includes

- 1) importance at time of event/personnage i.e. *Was it considered a prominent event/personnage at the time? How long did the event last?*
- 2) impact of the event/personnage i.e. *How deeply affected or widespread was the impact of the event/personnage at the time? Did it change the lives of many people?*
- 3) lasting place in history i.e. *What has the event/personnage revealed to us today about this period in history? Are there still issues related to this event?*

Fast facts about the Great Deportation:

- It was the climax of several years' worth of tensions, conflict, and war between the French and the English.
- It began in July 1755 and continued through 1763.
- It is estimated that close to 12,000 Acadians were deported with as many as 50% dying due to disease, hunger, and drowning.
- What began in Acadie (PEI, NB, NS, and parts of Maine) spread into many colonial lands along the Atlantic coast of what is now the U.S. and overseas to France.
- There are many accounts of the story of *Évangeline* – as much a love story as a testimony to the political, economical, and social conditions of the period.
- The Acadian population of the Maritimes continues to fight to keep its heritage and language alive even today.

Post-performance Activity #1

Anne of Green Gables is a Canadian icon throughout the world despite being a fictional character. Évangeline (also a fictional character) is also a famous icon and a symbol of Canadian heritage despite her British poet roots. The story has been made into several variations of plays and movies since the turn of the 20th century in both Britain and the U.S. Both fictional characters are historically significant. Use the criteria (stated earlier) to compare characters and answer the questions: Which character is more Canadian – Anne or Évangeline? Is this story relevant today? Why?

Criteria	Anne of Green Gables	Évangeline
Importance at time		
Impact – number of people affected		
Lasting place in history		

Moral Judgment (Ethical Dimension) can be characterized by the following:

- Moral judgments involve placing a “value” on a particular decision or event, (i.e., Was the deportation of the Acadian people justified—yes, or no?)
- Moral judgments about the past must be sensitive to the historical context— the norms and mores of the time – NOT contemporary norms or perspectives.
- Judgments may be *explicit*, (i.e., The Acadians were treated inhumanely by the British soldiers at the time of the Deportation.) or *implicit*, (i.e., Women and children were separated from men and placed aboard ships that were refitted to carry as many people as possible in the holds below deck.)
- Moral judgments are best suspended until all information has been examined.
- Cause is not necessarily a reason to judge negatively, (i.e., British and American Loyalist soldiers were simply carrying out the orders of a higher-ranking official, Governor Lawrence, and therefore, not the cause of the plight of the Acadians.)

Post-performance Activity #2*

In this “creative controversy” activity, students work in pairs to build an argument (with the help of provided background information) for a position that responds to the following statement: “*Was the deportation of the Acadians a crime against humanity or a fair measure in time of war?*” Before proceeding, ask students why a question such as this is relevant today (continued tension between francophones and anglophones in Canada, the position of francophones in Confederation, the continued strong identification of today’s Acadians with ancestors who were the target of removal). Discuss the characterizations of making moral judgments (above) so that students are aware of their duty to withhold judgment based on contemporary perspectives.

Distribute **BLM 6.5 - Developing a Fair Ethical Judgment** to students and discuss the summary of what happened. Set class rules for conducting a good argument. Divide students into groups of four and then sub-divide again into pairs. Distribute **BLM 6.5b (Position 1)** to one pair of students and **BLM 6.5c (Position 2)** to the second pair of students. Teams separate in their pairs to read and prepare their positions. Each pair will then meet with another pair that shares the same position (4 or 6 in group). Larger group discusses and ranks arguments in order of importance. Pairs then return to original groups (Position 1 & 2) to present their arguments following the rules set out for a good argument. Pairs then switch positions repeating the above process (e.g., Position 1 now prepares and presents Position 2). After this process, pairs drop their assigned position and collaborate now as a team of 4 to reach a common decision. Teams report to the class explaining their rationale. Monitor pair and group discussions. (Note that one position has more points than the other but this does not necessarily mean that it is a better argument.) In conclusion, students are asked to consider the role that context and shifting ethical standards played in reaching a decision, and the relevance of the issue today based on the following questions:

- 1) How did the historical context influence your decision about the actions of the British?

- 2) Did your knowledge that standards of right and wrong have shifted over time influence your decision? If they did, in what way(s)?
- 3) Why do we care, if we do, about right and wrong (i.e., the ethical dimension) in this case? Why aren't we simply trying to understand what went on?

This creative controversy can be followed with an inquiry about how we should commemorate the past. Consider the following questions: How should we remember the deportation of Acadians? What would be an appropriate commemoration (e.g., song, poster, monument) to recognize the event?

As an assignment, students could choose the most appropriate means of commemoration from the selection of monuments and works of art on the University of Moncton's website 1755:

L'histoire et les histories:

<http://www2.umoncton.ca/cfdocs/etudacad/1755/index.cfm?axe=2&lang=en&style=G>

**adapted from Seixas, Peter, and Tom Morton. The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts. Toronto. Nelson Education Ltd., 2013.*