

The Northeast: America's Gateway to the World

Petit-Canada

Franco-Americans in New England

INTRODUCTION:

When we think of French-speaking people, we think, naturally, of France, and maybe the Canadian province of Québec. But few of us know that there are Francophones living here in the "good old USA." They have their own culture and traditions. They even have their own flags! Look at three examples of Franco Flags of New England. (CLICK HERE). After discussing them with the class, write down here what symbols are used on these flags, and what they represent.

Like most French-speaking people, they trace their ancestry back to France, but the Franco-Americans came here from Canada. Let's look at the history and the culture of these immigrant people.

PART ONE: Who are the Franco-Americans and where do they live?

1. Download the thematic map of French-Canadian Ancestry:

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/maps/ancestry/us/frcan.gif>

Name six states that have a very high percentage of people claiming French-Canadian heritage:

Louisiana is a special case. Most of these people are *Cajuns*. What does that mean?

Most other people of French-Canadian ancestry are found in the Northeast, especially in New England. They call themselves **Franco-Americans**. Most of them come from (or their grandparents came from) the Canadian province of _____.

2. Now you are going to make a population map of Franco-American communities in New England.

Look at the **Table of Towns and Places of 10,000 or More in New England by Rank Order of Size of French Mother Tongue**, at the end of this packet. Thirty-two towns are listed along with the number of people of French ancestry.

On the New England map provided, place color dots over the towns to show how many Franco-Americans live there. Use **red** dots for towns with more than 20,000 Franco-Americans, **blue** dots for towns with 10,000 to 19,999, **green** dots for towns with 5,000 to 9,999, and **yellow** dots for towns with less than 5,000 Franco-Americans.

****Make sure you make a key for this map! ****

3. *What do this map show?* First, there is a small cluster of Franco-towns in northern Maine. Many of these people are Acadians, like the Cajuns of Louisiana. Most of their relatives live in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia in Canada. Make a sketch of the flag of Acadia there.

4. Most of the other Franco-towns are farther south. These people came from Québec. They moved here to work in the textile mills. Why are most of these towns on rivers?

The mills are mostly gone now, but the Franco-Americans remain in these communities.

PART TWO: Why did the French-Canadians come to the United States?

Your teacher will give you a short reading assignment called the French Canadian Experience in New England. As you read, answer the questions below:

(1) When did most people leave Québec to come to New England?

(2) Did they originally plan on staying in the United States? _____

What was the reason for their staying?

(3) Why were the Franco-American communities (called Petit-Canada or " _____
_____") isolated from other New Englanders?

(4) Were the French-speaking people treated well? _____ What evidence did you find for this answer?

(5) Why was the Catholic Church so important in Franco-American communities?

(6) What were the two most important obligations children had to their families?

(7) Are the Franco-communities as isolated in the 21st century as they were 100 years ago? _____

PART THREE: What can we find out about the culture of Franco-Americans?

For this part, you are going "on-line" to the website called Franco-American Connections (<http://www.mainewriter.com/index.html>).

You will be assigned one article to read. The author is Juliana L'Heureux, who writes for the Portland, Maine newspaper. Summarize the article you read here:

After a class discussion, so you can share what you have learned, you will be asked to write a short paragraph about Franco-American people and their culture en français! It can be about the family, holidays, going to church, working at the mills, or food.

PART FOUR: French Language - lost and found!

Over the years, many of the children and grandchildren have become Americanized. This happens to most immigrant people. Why do you think that many Franco-Americans no longer speak French?

Why do they have fewer ties to the Church?

However, this is only part of the story. Many young Franco-Americans, especially in Maine, are rediscovering their French heritage. There is a Franco-Studies program at the University of Maine. In Lowell, Massachusetts there is a school that teaches all subjects in French. And there are performers in music and theater that perform in French. One example is Josée Vachon. Learn about her at this website: <http://pages.map.com/josee/>

Why does Josée sing in French?

Your teacher will play for you a selection from one of her albums, *Entre Moi*. Your teacher will supply you with the lyrics. Discuss what she is trying to say about her experiences as a Franco-American in this song:

PART FIVE: Food!!

A great time to study about Franco-American people is Christmas time. They know how to celebrate Noël! If you have a kitchen available, try out one of their desserts. One recipe that is highly recommended is a holiday treat, called *croquignoles*. These rich French-Canadian doughnuts are traditionally served during the Christmas holidays in Quebec. They are also popular in *Petit-Canada*.

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 4 cups flour
- 4 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 cup light cream
- Icing sugar

Cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Add vanilla. Sift dry ingredients together. Stir into egg mixture alternately with cream. Chill at least 3 hours.

Working with a quarter of the dough at a time, roll to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut in 1/2-inch strips 7 inches long. Twist each strip, fold in half and pinch ends together. Fry in deep fat (375° F) until golden brown. Drain on paper. Dust with icing sugar if desired. Makes 3 to 4 dozen.

Or maybe you like cookies?

Biscuits de Grand'Mère (Grandma's Cookies)

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup shortening
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup molasses
- 4 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons ginger
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

1. Cream shortening. Add sugar, beaten egg and molasses. Beat until mixture is very creamy.
2. Sift together flour and other dry ingredients. Add bit by bit to batter, until it has just enough flour to roll out well.

3. Roll thinly, cut half the batter into circles, the other half with a doughnut cutter (circles should be the same size). Bake at 350°F for 10 to 12 minutes. Cool. Form a sandwich with two cookies, one of each kind, with the following filling:

1 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup icing sugar
1/4 teaspoon ginger
Pinch of salt
1 tablespoon boiling water
1 1/2 cups icing sugar

Cream butter, add 1/2 cup icing sugar, ginger, salt and boiling water.

When mixture is creamy, add remaining icing sugar and boiling water as needed to obtain a clear, smooth mixture.

Bon appetite!

**Towns and Places of 10,000 or More
in New England
by Rank Order of Size of French Mother Tongue**

| Rank and Place | French population | Percent French |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Manchester, N.H. | 27,777 | 31.7 |
| 2. Woonsocket, R.I. | 26,579 | 56.8 |
| 3. Lewiston, Maine | 25,037 | 59.9 |
| 4. Lowell, Mass. | 24,467 | 20.4 |
| 5. Pawtucket, R.I. | 20,209 | 17.4 |
| 6. Fitchburg, Mass. | 17,316 | 23.5 |
| 7. Fall River, Mass. | 17,115 | 17.6 |
| 8. Springfield, Mass. | 15,330 | 7.8 |
| 9. Nashua, N.H. | 15,289 | 27.4 |
| 10. Saco/Biddeford, Maine | 15,199 | 61.4 |
| 11. New Bedford, Mass. | 14,260 | 14.0 |
| 12. Worcester, Mass. | 14,008 | 7.0 |
| 13. Chicopee, Mass. | 13,589 | 20.4 |
| 14. Hartford, Conn. | 12,073 | 7.6 |
| 15. Boston, Mass. | 10,452 | 1.6 |
| 16. Berlin, N.H. | 9,220 | 60.5 |
| 17. Auburn, Maine | 6,938 | 28.7 |
| 18. Augusta, Maine | 6,419 | 29.3 |
| 19. Southbridge, Mass. | 6,078 | 35.6 |
| 20. Gardner, Mass. | 6,023 | 30.5 |
| 21. West Warwick, R.I. | 5,947 | 24.4 |
| 22. Waterville, Maine | 5,456 | 30.0 |
| 23. Madawaska, Maine | 3,915 | 47.7 |
| 24. Rochester, N.H. | 3,810 | 21.2 |
| 25. Bellingham, Mass. | 3,531 | 25.3 |
| 26. Laconia, N.H. | 3,173 | 21.3 |
| 27. Plainfield, Conn. | 3,100 | 25.9 |
| 28. Northbridge, Mass. | 2,550 | 21.6 |
| 29. Caribou, Maine | 2,470 | 23.7 |
| 30. Amesbury Town, Mass. | 2,278 | 19.6 |
| 31. Ft. Kent/St. John, ME. | 2,130 | 56.2 |
| 32. Van Buren/Keegan, ME. | 1,952 | 53.7 |