

Name: _____ Date: _____

Meet Samuel de Champlain

Born: 1567 in Brouage, France

Died: 1635 in Quebec, Canada

Little is known of Samuel de Champlain's early life. From his father, a sea captain, he learned navigation and mapmaking. Champlain served in the army of King Henry IV for several years. His first known voyage was a two-year trip with his uncle around 1599 to Puerto Rico, Mexico, Columbia, the Bermudas, and Panama.

Champlain presented the king with detailed reports and drawings of what he had seen in Central and South America. He was invited by Aymar de Chaste, a fur trader, to join an expedition to Canada in 1603.

When Champlain arrived, he found the Algonquins and Hurons were in the midst of a war with their enemies, the Iroquois. Champlain and other Frenchmen became allies of the Algonquins and Hurons to protect the French fur trading interests. This alliance later caused many problems for French and English colonists.

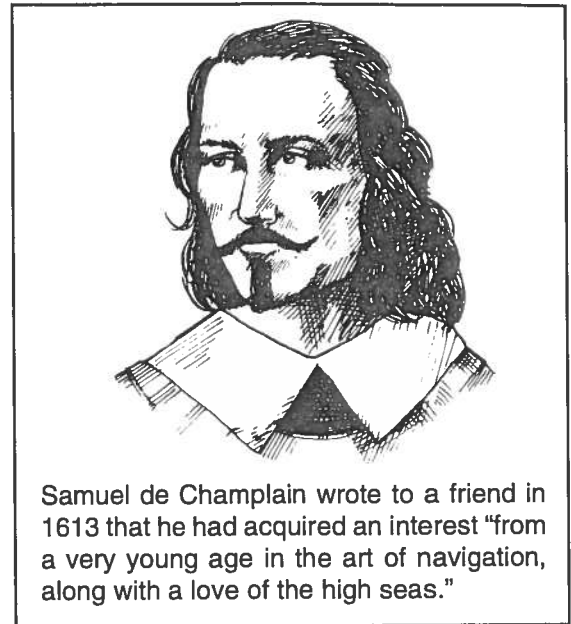
From the natives, Champlain learned of a "great water" to the west. Champlain hoped this would be the Pacific Ocean. At last he might be the one who found the elusive water route to India!

Champlain returned to the king of France with his news. The following year he sailed again to Canada as mapmaker and geographer with a group planning to establish a colony. They explored the North American coast as far south as present-day Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

After building a fort at Port Royal, Champlain explored the area and established friendly relations with the Micmacs and other natives before returning to France.

By 1608, Champlain was back in Canada. He chose Stadacona as the most suitable place for a new colony. This eventually became Quebec and was the first permanent city in North America north of Florida to be settled by Europeans.

1. Champlain was a skilled mapmaker and illustrator. Why would these skills be valuable to the king?



Samuel de Champlain wrote to a friend in 1613 that he had acquired an interest "from a very young age in the art of navigation, along with a love of the high seas."

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While in France in 1610, Champlain married Helene Boulle, who was only 12 years old at the time. She remained in France for ten years before joining her husband in Canada. Four years later she returned to France, unable to accept the harsh conditions in Canada. After he died, she entered a convent.

1. How old was Champlain when he got married? _____

Champlain made several trips between France and Canada. In France, he pleaded with the king for supplies, finances, and people for the colonies. In Canada, he continued to explore lands and waterways to the west and south. He named one of the lakes he discovered for himself, Lake Champlain. He helped establish another colony that later became Montreal. Champlain also became further involved in the war between the Hurons and Algonquins against the Iroquois, and he was wounded several times.

France and England went to war in 1628. The following year, Quebec was captured by the British. Champlain was taken to England as a prisoner. By then, however, the war had ended. Champlain returned to Canada in 1633 as governor of New France to find Quebec in ruins. He worked to rebuild the city, expand the fur trade, and encourage colonists until his death in 1635.

If you lived in Canada today and wanted to get a message to someone in France, you could make a phone call or send an e-mail. To send news to France, Champlain had to wait for a ship to sail. The trip across the Atlantic usually took four to six weeks, one way. Few ships crossed the Atlantic in winter. It could easily be six months or more from the time he sent a letter until he received a reply.

2. What types of problems might develop due to this delay in communications? Give specific examples.

3. Champlain has been called the "Father of New France." Do you think that is appropriate? Why or why not?

Check It Out:

Jacques Cartier, Samuel De Champlain and Explorers of Canada by Tony Coulter
Samuel De Champlain by W. J. Jacobs