
Activity: Family Stories
Age Range: Grades 8–8
Arts Skill: Storytelling
Culture: Franco-American

Skills to Develop: To understand that family stories have different flavors, and that storytelling is an interactive a creative process that is deeply connected to history.

Historical Clues: Many Franco-Americans are descended from the explorers who came to Canada from France in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the late 19th century, because of hard times for farming, much of the population of Quebec headed south to live in New England and work in the textile mills. Today, there are 3 million people in the northeast United States that are of French heritage. Their heritage is kept alive through storytelling, music, and dance.

Vocabulary to explore:

raconteur: (rock-on-TUR) *storyteller*

voyageur: (voi-ah-JUR) *traveler, explorer*

chez-nous: (shay-NEW) *at our place, home*

Memere, Pepere:(memm-AIR, pepp-AIR) *Grandmother, Grandfather*

Allons-y!: (ah-lon-ZEE) *Let's go!*

Directions:

1. Is there someone in your family who likes to tell stories? Are the stories made up, or about real people and real events?
2. Think about a specific story. Write down a sketch of the story: What happens? What are the characters? How does the story end?
3. Tell the story out loud using your notes. Think about gestures, speaking loudly and softly, different voices, and pauses.
4. Did you change the story? Did you add new characters, new events, new ideas? How would you tell the story differently next time?

Goal/Outcome: Students will learn to improvise and elaborate stories told orally.

Curriculum Link: Language Arts Curriculum Standard 3: "Students will demonstrate the interest and ability to speak purposefully and articulately, as well as listen and view attentively and critically."